

**Beyond tribadism: alternate discourses on female  
homoeroticism in Greek and Latin literature**

**By Jennifer Helen Oliver**



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### Abstract

Scholarly accounts of sexuality in the ancient world have placed much emphasis on the normative dichotomy of activity and passivity. In the case of female homoeroticism, scholars have focussed largely on the figure of the so-called *tribas*, a masculinised, aggressively penetrative female who takes the active role in sexual relations with women. My thesis seeks to set out a wider conceptualisation of female homoeroticism that encompasses erotic sensuality between conventionally feminine women.

The first chapter surveys previous scholarship on ancient sexuality and gender and on female homoeroticism in particular, examining the difficulties in terminology and methodology inherent in such a project. The second chapter turns to the Callisto episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, beginning with the kiss between the huntress Callisto and Jupiter, who is disguised as Callisto's patron goddess Diana. The Callisto episode contains hints of previous intimacy between Callisto and Diana, and the kiss scene can be read as an erotic interaction between the two, both of whom are portrayed as conventionally feminine rather than tribadic. The third chapter examines several Greek intertexts for the Callisto episode: Callimachus' hymns to Athena and Artemis, and the story of Leucippus as narrated by Parthenius and Pausanias. These narratives exhibit a similar dynamic to the Callisto episode, in that they eroticise the relationships both between Diana and her companions and amongst those companions. An educated reader of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* would plausibly have had these Greek texts in mind, and would thus have been more likely to read the relationship between Diana and Callisto as homoerotic. Finally, the fourth chapter approaches Statius' *Achilleid* from the perspective of female homoeroticism, a move without precedent in past scholarship. The relationship between Deidameia and the cross-dressed Achilles engages intertextually with the Callisto episode, presenting another exclusively female-homosocial environment in which homoerotic desires can flourish.

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The cover image is a cropped version of Federico Cervelli's Diana and Callisto, painted in the second half of the seventeenth century. Image source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cervelli\\_Diana\\_and\\_Callisto.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cervelli_Diana_and_Callisto.jpg) (accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2011).

## Chapter One: Methodology and Terminology, or What Do Two Huntresses Do in the Meadow, Anyway?

*Don't ask; You shouldn't know.* It didn't happen; it doesn't make any difference; it didn't mean anything; it doesn't have interpretive consequences. Stop asking just here; stop asking just now; we know in advance the kind of difference that could be made by the invocation of *this* difference; it makes no difference; it doesn't mean.<sup>1</sup>

Picture the scene: a lush grove in Arcadia, an unspecified point in mythical time, a ravishing young woman, Callisto, with flowing hair (rather tangled, one imagines, and perhaps interspersed with foliage) and a lithe, athletic figure. Panting and wiping her brow, exhausted from crashing through the woods after her prey, she flops down in the grass, placing her bow to the side, but perhaps keeping one hand on it, just in case: this place isn't safe, and she has heard about what can happen. Nonetheless, she closes her eyes and catches her breath, and when she opens them she is delighted to see her beloved goddess Diana, Mona Lisa smile playing on her lips, looming over her. She leaps up, falls into Diana's embrace, and yields to her kisses, firm and assured, unambiguously driven by lust. "What have you been up to, sweetness and light?" the goddess purrs (and I paraphrase); perhaps her hands begin to wander, perhaps they have already... How long does this go on, this cozy, sexy moment in the woods? And just how many times have such moments occurred in the past? Our young heroine seems so utterly unsurprised, after all, until she discovers the goddess' lust is in fact the lust of Jupiter. But what if we stop, or at least pause, the story before her discovery, and allow ourselves to dwell in the moment before, the spaces between the story's words?

### I Overview of argument

This thesis is a study of female homoeroticism in Greek and Latin literature, but not by the usual routes. Instead of focussing on the figure of the *tribas*, an aggressive, masculinised penetrating female, as have most accounts of female homoeroticism in the ancient Mediterranean, I will investigate more ambiguous, less genitally focussed incidences of female homoerotic desire in a group of

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<sup>1</sup> Sedgwick (1990), 53; original emphasis.

texts with close intertextual links. My starting point is the tale I have just adverted to: Ovid's account of the career of the huntress Callisto in book 2 of his *Metamorphoses*. Several features of plot characterise this account: male-to-female transvestism as erotic stratagem, scenes of naked bathing, intense homosocial relationships amongst groups of unmarried women on the fringes of civilised society, the goddess Diana as leader of such groups. At the textual level, the narrative exhibits ambiguously erotic language and a close engagement with literary precursors. This set of characteristics, both of plot and language, will serve to broadly tie together the texts under discussion, with their shared motifs, recurring settings and scenes, and similar textual strategies for the representation of female homoeroticism. Though one can perceive the influence of sexual and social norms on the texts in question, the kinds of desire represented exceed these norms. The close links between the texts hint at, as my title puts it, an alternate discourse on female homoeroticism, a rarely acknowledged space in Greco-Roman literature and culture for non-tribadic female homoerotic desire to find articulation.

Excavating such a space will require careful framing and detailed argumentation from a variety of perspectives. In this first chapter I will provide a brief and selective overview of scholarship on ancient sex and gender and on female homoeroticism in particular, and position my thesis in relation to this work. I will begin by exploring and problematising various terms that are at issue in this field, including 'homosexuality', 'tribadism' and 'romantic friendship'. I will also detail the difficulties with two rhetorics employed in modern scholarship in relation to the texts explored here, those which I label the 'rhetoric of innocence' and the 'rhetoric of chastity'. Having set out the pitfalls, I shall carve my own path through them, crafting a methodological approach that is as sensitive as possible to the nuances of sexuality, gender and textuality, and that combines philological methods with the insights of more theoretical approaches, in regard to both literature and sexuality.

The rest of the thesis consists of readings of specific texts. In Chapter 2 I analyse the Callisto episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, starting with the unvirginal kisses Jupiter, disguised as Diana, gives to Callisto. Callisto's unsurprised response hints at an erotic relationship between Diana and Callisto precedent to the intrusion of Jupiter, as do other details in the text; I examine

these loci closely to flesh out the nature of the relationship. An intratextual analysis of the episode against the background of other Metamorphic tales of hunting and eros follows: Ovid performs a subtle manipulation of narratological cues to further insinuate an erotic relationship between Diana and Callisto. My overall contention is that the Diana/Callisto relationship cannot be fitted into dominant sexual ideologies, and as such should be considered alongside the more sexually explicit discourse of tribadism when one is evaluating the role of female homoeroticism in Roman culture. The chapter also introduces a narrative pattern that recurs in a number of other texts in the thesis: an intimate relationship between women is described in ambiguously erotic terms, and such a description is followed by a scene that suggests opportunities for physical contact (hunting breaks and bathing are the two main manifestations of such a scene).

Chapter 3 turns to a series of Greek texts: Callimachus' *Hymns* to Athena and Artemis, and the story of Leucippus as presented by Parthenius and Pausanias. These texts fill in the mythical and literary background available to educated readers of the *Metamorphoses*, and as such represent significant intertexts for the Callisto episode. The *Hymn to Artemis* presents a series of warm homosocial relationships amongst Diana and her companions, elucidating an all-female milieu in which female homoeroticism is an ever-present possibility. The *Hymn to Athena* portrays an eroticised relationship between Athena and her companion Chariclo, with a hunting break/bathing scene paralleling the Ovidian account. The rich intertextuality of the hymn associates Athena with Aphrodite and Artemis, constructing a peculiarly unique warrior-lover out of the austere polis goddess. The story of Leucippus further elaborates on the close homosocial/erotic relationships within the band of Artemis, and Parthenius' bathing scene also parallels Ovid's. The Callisto story is thus shown to be even richer in suggestive associations both intra- and intertextually.

Chapter 4 explores another parallel to the Callisto episode, this time from the Flavian period: Statius' *Achilleid*. In this subtle and Ovidian work, the relationship between the cross-dressed Achilles and Deidameia is suffused with homoerotic connotations. I propose to read the cross-dressed Achilles as a separate character, 'Pyrrha', in accordance with the perceptions of characters within the text. Like Callimachus' Athena, she is a bulky warrior-lover with

epicene bodily morphology, associated with Spartans and Amazons. She is sexually aggressive towards Deidameia, who is herself far from a passive wallflower: my reading of the *Achilleid* seeks to draw out hints of Deidameia's view of the relationship, diverging from prior scholarly accounts which have argued that Deidameia knows Pyrrha is male at an early stage in the relationship. The text harks back to the Callisto episode, both in specific intertextual details and in the general sense of sexual ambiguity and proteanism; it is entirely possible for an attentive reader, especially one well-versed in Ovid, to detect a homoerotic frisson to the relationship between Pyrrha and Deidameia.

Though modern scholarship has focussed almost exclusively on the discourse of tribadism, early modern art and literature cast the net wider, perceiving homoerotic dimensions to the myths of Callisto, Leucippus/Daphne and Achilles/Deidameia as well as the general homosocial milieu of Diana's huntresses.<sup>2</sup> Via such early modern representations, these texts and myths have contributed to the formation of the identity category of 'lesbianism'.<sup>3</sup> We cannot afford to ignore them. I strongly contend that the texts analysed in this thesis deserve a place alongside the more canonical accounts of female homoeroticism in the ancient world, and that according them such a place would render richer and more complex evaluations of ancient sexuality.

With such an ultimate goal in mind, I turn now to an exposition of previous scholarship and the complications of methodology and terminology that come with perceiving the unsaid and picking up on barely perceptible traces. I start with one of the most contested terms: homosexuality.

## **II Homosexuality and normativity**

In any study that touches upon ancient (homo)sexuality, one must make it very clear what one is and is not discussing. It is by now a hackneyed gesture to distinguish between modern 'homosexuality' and the ancient sex/gender system

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Simons (1994), Diana's band in early modern art; Traub (2002), 229-275, the Callisto myth in the early modern period; Sheriff (1998), Callisto in early modern art; Heslin (2005), 1-56, appropriations of the Achilles on Scyros myth; Carver (1998b), a Renaissance reinterpretation of the Leucippus myth.

<sup>3</sup> Traub (2002), 229-275 and *passim*, demonstrates how the early modern notion of chaste female friendship, representation of which drew heavily on the Callisto myth, contributed to the formation of the sexological category of lesbianism.



in its own cultural specificity, but, as scholars have refined the nuances of this distinction, the gesture must be made with a great deal of finesse. It is no longer a case of simply rehashing the essentialist/constructionist controversy (often straw-manning the opposing camp in the process) or drawing a bright line between ancient ‘acts’ and modern ‘identities’.<sup>4</sup> Virtually every term and academic position has been problematised; virtually everything must be hedged and qualified and peppered with scare-quotes. As Nancy Rabinowitz remarks, ‘any word can detonate in your face’.<sup>5</sup> One must proceed with caution and sensitivity.

In 1990, David Halperin asserted that ‘[h]omosexuality and heterosexuality, as we currently understand them, are modern, Western, bourgeois productions. Nothing resembling them can be found in classical antiquity’.<sup>6</sup> The ancient world, claimed Halperin, may have had homosexual acts in the strict sense, but it had no concept of homosexual identity. In the interim, a number of scholars have challenged this asseveration of total discontinuity between ancient and modern, arguing that both modern sexual identities and ‘classical antiquity’ are more heterogeneous than Halperin’s formulation would allow. Even before Halperin’s *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, Eve Sedgwick made the vital objection that ‘homosexuality as we know it today’ is not a ‘coherent definitional field’ but ‘a space of overlapping, contradictory and conflictual definitional forces’,<sup>7</sup> pointing to the phrase’s role as a reified rhetorical topos, a foil to the alterity of the past. Scholars such as Halperin tend to define ‘modern homosexuality’ as an innate, fixed, lifelong orientation. This definition appears inadequate for describing women’s sexuality, often more fluid than that of men, as modern sociological studies have suggested;<sup>8</sup> furthermore, regardless of women’s actual experiences, a permissive discourse of female sexual fluidity is enshrined in modern culture, even as it acts covertly

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of the essentialist/constructionist controversy, see the contributions to Stein (1992). On ‘acts and identities’, see Halperin (2002), chapter one (an essay originally published in 1998), in which he argues that a distinction between ancient acts and modern identities is a misreading of Foucault. Sedgwick reformulates the acts/identities distinction in terms of universalising/minoritising discourses (see, for example, Sedgwick 1990, 86).

<sup>5</sup> Rabinowitz (2002a), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Halperin (1990), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Sedgwick (1990), 45.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the interviews with women in Wilton (2004), many of whose ‘orientations’ shift drastically over the course of their lifetimes.

to reassert heteronormativity.<sup>9</sup> Female sexuality, whether ancient or modern, as indeed Halperin acknowledges, requires a different lens.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of the ancient world, the hegemonic analytic model used in place of an unproblematised ‘modern homosexuality’, sexual activity/passivity corresponding to male/female gender, superordinate/subordinate social status, and dominance/submission, derived ultimately from Greek paederastic norms and associated particularly with Foucault, Dover and Halperin, has been subject to challenge.<sup>11</sup> Although most scholars recognise the centrality and geographical and temporal continuity of such a model in the ancient world, some argue for decentering acts of phallic penetration in favour of a greater focus on affectivity,<sup>12</sup> suggest that the ancient world did know of a concept of life-long erotic orientation,<sup>13</sup> or, perhaps most significantly for this thesis, discount the usefulness of the male paederastic model for female homoeroticism (a gesture that will be subject to further examination; see below). The active/passive model is, as many scholars who utilise it recognise,<sup>14</sup> a description of norms and ideals rather than actual behaviour; as such, it can only ever represent a *part* of ancient sexuality.

In response to these objections, such scholars as Halperin have had to refine their historical method. Halperin’s book *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* scrutinises the category of ‘modern homosexuality’ in explicit response to Sedgwick’s problematisation of the category.<sup>15</sup> One essay in the book breaks down ‘homosexuality’ into a combination of ‘a psychiatric notion

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<sup>9</sup> Wilton (2004), 86.

<sup>10</sup> Halperin (2002), 79.

<sup>11</sup> For a classic formulation of the penetration model, see Halperin (1990), chapter one (especially 30). Dover (1978) emphasises the necessary sharpness of the distinction between *erastes* and *eromenos* if one is to avoid accusations of prostitution (see especially 106-107). Foucault follows Dover in an emphasis upon paederastic courtship and isomorphism between sexual and social relations (1985, 215). The bibliography critiquing Foucault’s views on classical antiquity is vast; for a starting point see Larmour, Miller and Platter (1998) and Davidson (2001). Williams (1999) adjusts these Greek paederastic norms for the Roman world, but retains the general distinction between active and passive and the isomorphism with gender role and social status.

<sup>12</sup> This is one of the general theses of Davidson (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Broton (1996), 115-142, for example, argues that astrological texts document the existence of a concept of lifelong, innate sexual orientation, though not necessarily along gendered lines. Halperin (2002), 64-68 argues that the comparison of astrological categories with modern erotic orientations is invalid, since the astrological categories, in his view, do not constitute forms of ‘erotic subjectivity’.

<sup>14</sup> See Winkler (1990), 11: ‘men’s procedures for self-regulation were thus a kind of façade, concealing a laissez-faire attitude to actual practice’; Halperin (1990), 47.

<sup>15</sup> See Halperin (2002), 10-13.

of a perverted or pathological orientation’, ‘a psychoanalytic notion of same-sex sexual object-choice or desire’, and ‘a sociological notion of sexually deviant behaviour’.<sup>16</sup> Another essay in the same book traces the development of male homosexuality from four ‘pre-homosexual categories of male sex and gender deviance’,<sup>17</sup> effeminacy, paederasty, friendship and inversion. In Halperin’s words, ‘if “homosexuality” today is sometimes understood to *apply* to figures such as the *cinaedus* [and, one might add, the rather less theorized *tribas*], that tells us less about the particular characteristics of those figures than it does about the elasticity of the category of homosexuality itself’.<sup>18</sup> The lesson to draw from these debates is perhaps that if one is to apply ‘homosexuality’ and ‘heterosexuality’ to the ancient world, particularly when labelling individuals ‘homosexual’ or ‘heterosexual’, one needs to have a very clear idea of what that term implies. For the purposes of this thesis, I generally avoid ‘homosexuality’ and instead adopt the term ‘homoeroticism’; the reasons for this will be discussed in due course. For now I note that although the penetrative active/passive model has considerable analytic power, it is inadequate, even in refined forms, for a complete description of ancient sexuality. Halperin has recognised that modern homosexuality is a complex and multifaceted category with a convoluted genealogy; one must not assume that ancient sexuality is, by contrast, always a simple matter of activity and passivity. It is necessary to scrutinise both ancient and modern norms and categories.

### **III Evidential problems and the tribadic hypothesis**

The study of female homoeroticism comes with its own considerable difficulties, especially in the face of a perpetual double invisibility. First, discussions of women and female sexuality tend to focus almost exclusively on heteroerotic relations, even if strongly homosocial or homoerotic dimensions are at work in the texts in question.<sup>19</sup> In regard to such works, Emma Donoghue’s insight is apt: ‘Stories about women-only groups have not so much been ignored by scholars

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<sup>16</sup> Halperin (2002), 42-3.

<sup>17</sup> Halperin (2002), 109.

<sup>18</sup> Halperin (2002), 37; original emphasis.

<sup>19</sup> See Wall (1988), for example, a book-length study of the Callisto myth that discusses it exclusively in heterosexual terms.

as under-read. Feminist historians often celebrate them as examples of solidarity and sisterhood, ignoring the eroticism that pervades them'.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, as is perhaps evident from the foregoing survey, debates over 'homosexuality', ancient or modern, tend to focus on men; the biases of the ancient record make such a focus difficult to avoid.

The primary difficulty regarding the ancient world is a lack of evidence for female homoeroticism. The extant evidence is widely scattered, temporally, geographically and generically (for example, astrological texts; Egyptian erotic spells; medical texts; archaic Greek lyric; Roman epic, epigram and satire; Lucian).<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, much of the evidence consists of the 'fantasies, jokes, abuse, or moral judgments of hostile male authors'.<sup>22</sup> Though we have the precious evidence of Sappho's poetry and the scattered writings of other female authors,<sup>23</sup> the vast majority of texts are written by elite men.

The end result, more often than not, is an *aporia* of 'invisibility', 'insignificance', 'impossibility': scholars assert that erotic relations between women were simply not important to the elite men of ancient cultures,<sup>24</sup> or, more drastically, did not even signify within the system of erotic possibilities these cultures adopted, were not even *imaginable*, except in a limited set of circumstances dictated by the terms of the normative system.<sup>25</sup> Since normative discourses linked sex so strongly to social status and the maintenance of hierarchy, the argument goes, requiring one active-masculine and one passive-feminine partner (the gender division inextricably fused to the division in sexual roles), a female homosexual pairing imaginable within these boundaries would

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<sup>20</sup> Donoghue (1993), 222.

<sup>21</sup> For a useful overview of evidence (relating mainly to genital sexual activity between women), see the introduction to part 1 of Brooten's *Love Between Women* (Brooten 1996, 29-71).

<sup>22</sup> Halperin (2002), 77.

<sup>23</sup> For the Augustan period, Sulpicia's elegies are invaluable. See Keith (1998) for a reading of these poems in light of Augustan sexual ideology. Also of interest are several poems inscribed on the Column of Memnon in Egypt by Julia Balbilla, a member of Hadrian's entourage, which use the dialect and diction of Sapphic poetry. See Rosenmeyer (2008) for discussion; she notes that some scholars have read the poems as implying an erotic relationship between Julia and the empress Sabina, but denies that they have this valence, arguing that they merely use Sapphic language as a way of praising the empress and her erotic appeal to Memnon. Whatever the case, the poems present intriguing evidence of an educated Roman woman taking Sappho as a poetic model.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Cantarella (1992), 78: '[L]ove between women... was of no interest to the city'.

<sup>25</sup> See the arguments of Ormand (2005). His approach is aptly summed up by his final sentence (102): Iphis' desire for Ianthe 'is not the love that dare not speak its name; it is a love that has no Roman name to speak'.

have to consist of an active partner, by definition masculine, and therefore, by further definition, a phallic penetrator.<sup>26</sup>

The idea of an active woman who usurps male sexual and social prerogatives provokes a hostile reaction in societies intensely concerned with reserving masculine privileges for a relatively small number of men who perform normative masculinity ‘correctly’.<sup>27</sup> Such a hostile reaction is perceptible in a variety of texts connected to the so-called *tribas*, who is often visualised as a sexually active woman trying to imitate a man socially and sexually, running into the constraints of her own inferior anatomy.<sup>28</sup> This viewpoint, which I refer to as the ‘tribadic hypothesis’, is constructed on the basis of a limited set of texts: primarily Martial’s epigrams (1.90; 7.67; 7.70), Seneca the Elder’s *Controversiae* 1.2.23, Phaedrus’ *Fables* 4.16, Seneca the Younger’s *Epistula* 95.20-21, Juvenal’s *Satire* 6.290-314, and a series of relatively late astrological texts.<sup>29</sup> Scholars who examine these texts usually propose two broad paradigms: male indifference and male hostility. Either female homoerotic relations did not matter to men, or, within the limited terms under which they were conceivable, were a point of acute concern, at least when it came to the active partner. These paradigms are not (always) mutually exclusive: antipathy towards the active partner, some scholars argue, was combined with indifference towards the passive partner, who was, after all, acting as a ‘woman’—or more precisely, an anatomical female performing conventional femininity<sup>30</sup>—should.<sup>31</sup> The apparent male indifference to female

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<sup>26</sup> Many scholars adopt this logic in various forms; see Halperin (2002) chapter two; Ormand (2005); Brooten (1996).

<sup>27</sup> On the importance of correctly performed masculinity, Gleason (1995) is fundamental.

<sup>28</sup> For discussions of the *tribas* and her manifestations in ancient texts, see Hallett (1997) and Swancutt (2007).

<sup>29</sup> Ovid’s Iphis and Ianthe (*Met.* 9.666-797) is often also adduced as evidence, but says nothing about *tribades* specifically. It is manifestly unwise, as chapter 2 of this thesis will demonstrate, to claim the *Metamorphoses* as strictly normative.

<sup>30</sup> In the terms of this system, it was not biological sex that was isomorphic with sexual role, but social gender. Biological sex and social gender were, however, often welded together in the ancient conceptualisation. In strict terms, an active woman was viewed as a ‘man’ and a passive man as a ‘woman’, and this gender deviation was sometimes seen as extending to the physical body, resulting in physical hermaphroditism or sex change. See Swancutt (2007); Brisson (2002), 66.

<sup>31</sup> See the contributions of Halperin and Pellegrini to the *GLQ* Forum on Brooten’s book: Castelli (1998), 571 (Halperin: ‘[W]omen can have sexual contact with other women while respecting all the phallogocentric protocols: all they have to do is to be seduced by a *tribas*’); 582 (Pellegrini: ‘Either the passive partner did not represent a problem to the binary scheme of sex

same-sex relations, others argue, serves to mask a strong social taboo.<sup>32</sup> Given the ambiguity and playfulness of the texts in this thesis towards female homoerotic relationships, however, it seems that such a taboo, even if it indeed existed, was far from absolute.

A central problem is the term *tribas*. It appears to be etymologically derived from the Greek *τριβειν*, ‘to rub,’ or the related adjective *τριβακός*, ‘rubbed away’, that is, ‘experienced’.<sup>33</sup> More often than not *tribas* seems to designate the ‘active partner’, a sexually aggressive, man-imitating seducer (for example, in Martial’s epigrams 1.90, 7.67, 7.70, and Phaedrus *Fables* 4.16). Usage of the term is not, however, entirely consistent. The earliest attestation, in Seneca the Elder, refers to both partners of an adulterous female homoerotic pairing as *tribades* (*Controversiae* 1.2.23<sup>34</sup>), while a scholiast on an epigram of Asclepiades similarly labels two women *tribades* (though it is far from clear that they are in a relationship *with each other*).<sup>35</sup> Bernadette Brooten concludes that although ‘the ancient authors are rather vague about the sexual acts of a *tribas*, they vividly depict her as one who takes on a male role and male desires’.<sup>36</sup> In any case, it is clear that we cannot make a one-to-one equation between *tribas* and simply ‘woman who engages in homosexual behaviour’, since the term seems almost always to have negative connotations. The equation of *tribas* with ‘lesbian’, given that term’s ancient genealogy,<sup>37</sup> brings its own particular problems. Brooten feels justified in making the equation, relying ultimately on medieval scholia and a somewhat specialised sense of the word ‘lesbian’ going beyond just sexual behaviour (emphasising imitation of men or usurpation of

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and gender, because she remained in place, sexually receptive, or she was not fully thinkable as a possibility’).

<sup>32</sup> See Dover (1978), 172-173; Doherty (2001), 75 (who also speaks of Ovid’s Iphis and Ianthe as ‘the one surviving classical myth involving erotic love of one woman for another’).

<sup>33</sup> See Brooten (1996), 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Hybreas, inquit, cum diceret controversiam de illo qui tribadas deprehendit et occidit, describere coepit mariti adfectum... ἐγὼ δ' ἐσκόπησα πρότερον τὸν ἄνδρα, <εἰ> ἐγγεγένηται τις ἢ προσέρραπται.* (‘Hybreas, he said, when he was declaiming the *controversia* about the man who caught *tribades* and killed them, began to describe the reaction of the husband... I examined the man first, to see whether he was natural or sewn on’.)

<sup>35</sup> For discussion of this poem (*Anth. Gr.* 5.206) and the scholion, see Dover (2002) and Cameron (1998). Cameron’s discussion of a number of other scholia is an essential corrective to Brooten’s arguments on many points.

<sup>36</sup> Brooten (1996), 24.

<sup>37</sup> On the simultaneous old/new nature of the term “lesbian”, see Halperin (2002), 48-50.

male privilege).<sup>38</sup> I have chosen, especially in the case of the more ambiguous texts I discuss, to avoid the term ‘lesbian’.

Brooten, contesting the sharp division between attitudes to the active partner and the passive partner, argues that female homoeroticism by its very nature provoked a hostile male response.<sup>39</sup> She does not contest the cultural centrality of the active/passive model; on the contrary, she reinscribes its importance at the heart of Roman sexual ideology, suggesting that men invariably read relationships between two women in accordance with this model, resulting in an imperfect fit and a confused and inconsistent response.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Judith Hallett, in another important treatment of the topic, argues that ‘Latin literary sources, and the culture they came from, did not sort out, systematize, and rank their thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon of tribadism in the way that they did their reactions to male same-sex love, much less integrate tribadism into their cultural milieu. To them, female homoeroticism was an undifferentiated, unassimilated conglomeration of alien and unnatural Greek behaviours’.<sup>41</sup> In the work of both Brooten and Hallett, there is a certain terminological slippage between ‘tribadism’ and ‘female homoeroticism’. These scholars consider that tribadism was a way of conceptualising female homoeroticism as a whole; this thesis sets out to suggest that the ancient conception of intimacy between women was rather more nuanced, and not limited to tribadism.

Some scholars reject Brooten’s analysis for a lack of attention to the passive partner, the woman seduced by the tribade, insisting rather that ‘tribadism’ is a problem of gender deviance rather than of sexual deviance. Such an analysis sets up the *tribas* as the archetypal deviant woman, a kind of structural equivalent to the archetypal deviant man, the *cinaedus*.<sup>42</sup> Brooten responds that any woman who refuses to have sex with men or who obtains pleasure from a woman rather than a man is potentially a threat to male power:<sup>43</sup> a powerful response, and one that will remain at issue throughout this thesis.

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<sup>38</sup> Brooten (1996), 17. She sees no sharp developmental break between antiquity and the Byzantine period (i.e., that of the scholia) in regard to female homoeroticism (23).

<sup>39</sup> Brooten (1996), 24.

<sup>40</sup> Brooten (1996), 6-7.

<sup>41</sup> Hallett (1997), 269-270.

<sup>42</sup> Halperin (2002), chapter two; Pellegrini in Castelli (1998); Ormand (2005); Parker (1997).

<sup>43</sup> See Brooten in Castelli (1998), 619.

The position of female homoeroticism within masculine ideologies is discussed further below. The general thrust of my argument will be that male power is not, cannot be, inescapably monolithic, and incorporates certain selective blind spots.

All of the texts used to construct the tribadic hypothesis refer specifically to genital sexuality, and many of them are satirical or moralistic. As Suzanne Dixon details at some length, ‘the representation of a woman in any ancient source is strongly affected by genre, which determines what is included, how it is treated and what is left out’.<sup>44</sup> Traub’s account of the early modern period similarly recognises differing discursive domains and rhetorics of genre:<sup>45</sup>

The sensual pastoralism evident in Renaissance stageplays and paintings of mythological subjects... differs tonally, structurally, and thematically from the pseudo-scientific rhetoric of anatomy texts and treatises on hermaphrodites. The modes of personification in the lyric... contrast sharply to the reified stereotypes imposed by the language of satire and defamation.

The texts I deal with in this thesis—primarily those of Callimachus, Ovid and Statius—are genre-bending, gender-bending, protean mythological works that are not subject to the constraints of satire and astrological texts (the latter arguably a source of ‘pseudo-scientific rhetoric’). Attempting to fit the homoerotic moments in these texts into a rigidly normative active-passive/tribadic system results in a gross oversimplification of their literary qualities. Though I would certainly not like to dispose completely of the scholarly narrative of tribadism, I would like to underscore the fact it is only a partial description of the place of female homoeroticism in the Greco-Roman imaginary. By looking to other genres and adopting a more fluid approach, further dimensions come to light.

As far as it goes, the tribadic hypothesis incorporates an accurate description of the failure of the normative model to incorporate female homoeroticism and the cultural constructions that result. However, it remains shackled to the normative system, and pays inadequate attention to the gaps that such normative systems generate. An insight of Foucault hints at the inevitable failure and incompleteness of such totalising systems: ‘We must make

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<sup>44</sup> Dixon (2001), 19.

<sup>45</sup> Traub (2002), 12.



allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy'.<sup>46</sup> I proceed now to consider some alternative approaches that move away from explicit genital sexuality to homoerotic desire and its subterranean presence within the very masculine ideologies that supposedly fail to credit its existence.

#### **IV An alternative: dynamic spaces, female companionship**

In the face of Brooten's insistence upon the absolute structural unacceptability of female homoerotic behaviour, another approach allows for the possibility of greater male tolerance (or, at least, selective male blindness). Valerie Traub states of the early modern period: 'Only when women's erotic relations with one another threaten to become exclusive and thus endanger the fulfilment of their marital and reproductive duties, or when they symbolically usurp male sexual prerogatives, are cultural injunctions leveled against them'.<sup>47</sup> Appropriating the term 'insignificance' and altering it diacritically to '(in)significance', Traub recognises that a lack of male attention can allow women some freedom of action.<sup>48</sup> The concept of (in)significance posits the existence of certain 'shadow zones', which can be variously labeled 'white space for errant wandering'<sup>49</sup> or 'large tracts of social irrelevancy'.<sup>50</sup> In the time before a woman is married but is already dangerously erotically aware, for example, and spends a great deal of time amongst female companions, such extensive homosocial interaction can take on an erotic edge, as I shall detail throughout this thesis.<sup>51</sup> Male legitimacy is not necessarily endangered; men often regard such behaviour as a non-threatening transitory phase. Such a rationalisation is often implicit rather than explicit in ancient texts, but narrative structure and heterosexual-reproductive

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<sup>46</sup> Foucault (1978), 101.

<sup>47</sup> Traub (2002), 258.

<sup>48</sup> On the term see Traub (2002), 183: 'The parentheses function as diacritical markers of a problem, a tension – between signification and significance, between patterns of articulation and ascriptions of value – that historically has governed the predicament of conventionally "feminine", homoerotically desiring women'. Note also Simons' similarly functioning '(in)visibility' (1994).

<sup>49</sup> Traub (2002), 169.

<sup>50</sup> Traub (2002), 169.

<sup>51</sup> I use the word 'homosocial' to refer simply to same-sex social interaction, which may or may not include an erotic dimension.

teleology strongly suggest it is at work: mortal women such as Callisto and Deidameia move firmly from homoerotic behaviour to sex with men and childbearing, and this move must be effected by means of rape. The structure of the plots confines homoerotic behaviour to a circumscribed space and time. However, as Spentzou argues of the *Heroides*, '[t]he end is in some obvious and practical ways decisive, but it cannot erase the middle and the ideas and challenges it offers'.<sup>52</sup>

When one is dwelling in this challenging middle, male attitudes towards behaviours do not exhaust the meanings of those behaviours for the women involved. Halperin, following Gayle Rubin's classic structural analysis of kinship and male domination, argues that female homoeroticism 'necessarily exists in a constant and inescapable relation to the institutionalized structures of male domination' (in this, he concurs with Brooten).<sup>53</sup> Traub, however, considering that Halperin's model 'grant[s] masculinist discourses too much power',<sup>54</sup> would prefer to 'keep structural influences of women's existence (gender ideologies, marital arrangements, reproductive imperatives) in the frame of analysis without assuming that they *are* the frame'.<sup>55</sup> Instead, Traub suggests that it is beneficial to seek 'a more dynamic and heterogeneous understanding of the ways erotic pleasure was conceived, pursued and achieved outside the limits of social orthodoxy'.<sup>56</sup> Male indifference and male hostility can indeed become starting points for analysis rather than the conclusions many scholars have taken them to be. Foucault notes of the role of silence in discourses surrounding sexuality: 'Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse... than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies'.<sup>57</sup> Male indifference to female homoerotic behaviour need not render such behaviour an impossible object of analysis; apparent silence is not the end of the story. In the words of

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<sup>52</sup> Spentzou (2002), 10.

<sup>53</sup> Halperin (2002), 79; see also Brooten (1996), 23-24 and Rubin (1975).

<sup>54</sup> Traub (2002), 332.

<sup>55</sup> Traub (2002), 332. Traub also takes issue with Brooten's emphasis on patriarchal structures, commenting that 'she overlooks a possible interplay between [mainstream] censure and [countercurrents of] tolerance' (Traub 1999, 368).

<sup>56</sup> Traub (2002), 195.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault (1978), 27.

Simons, 'repressive silence can enable a kind of operative space for what is not specifically named'.<sup>58</sup> Thus, female homoerotic desire can be at once invisible and visible, insignificant and significant, depending upon who is looking and where they are looking from.

A further 'shadow zone' is at issue in this thesis: ambiguously erotic behaviour that neither explicitly includes nor excludes genital sexuality. Many of the ancient texts over which the debate about ancient female homoeroticism has been played out represent explicit sexual behaviour, particularly phallicised sexual penetration (i.e., not manual penetration, an act that seems surprisingly invisible to scholars who speak of 'penetration' *simpliciter* in a way that clearly excludes it), but also cunnilingus, both of which were indisputably 'sexual' activities in ancient cultures, the former the very centre of the sex/gender system, the latter often regarded as a ridiculous and/or disgusting anomaly.<sup>59</sup> For this reason, Lisa Auanger hypothesises a 'compartmentalized view of what we today regard as female homoeroticism' in Roman culture: a genital 'vulgar' type,<sup>60</sup> and a 'mode of sensuality' that 'may not have officially existed, being more like informal close, romantic friendship among equals',<sup>61</sup> adducing a range of literary and artistic evidence in support of her claims. She makes the important point that '[t]here is no significant condemnation of love or close friendship, kissing, touching, hugging, and similar activity among women, which indicates that the Romans did not disapprove of all demonstrations of affection between women'.<sup>62</sup> For Auanger, the term 'homoerotic' can be used of 'relationships expressing deep personal attachment between women, ranging from romantic friendships that include emotional, spiritual, intellectual and physical ties, to brief physical encounters without commitment to... everyday interaction that includes varying degrees of physicality and closeness'.<sup>63</sup>

Yet again, we have ventured into highly contested territory. Auanger's mention of 'romantic friendship' invokes, especially, Adrienne Rich's so-called 'lesbian continuum' and other lesbian-feminist work of the 1970s and 80s.<sup>64</sup> To

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<sup>58</sup> Simons (1994), 84.

<sup>59</sup> For ancient attitudes to cunnilingus, see Krenkel (1981), and Parker (1997), 51-53.

<sup>60</sup> Auanger (2002), 244.

<sup>61</sup> Auanger (2002), 214.

<sup>62</sup> Auanger (2002), 215.

<sup>63</sup> Auanger (2002), 212.

<sup>64</sup> See also the classic accounts of Faderman (1981) and Smith-Rosenberg (1975).

Rich, the 'lesbian continuum' included a range of 'woman-identified experience' not limited to genital sexuality, encompassing 'forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support'.<sup>65</sup> Rich did, however, make it clear that central to 'lesbian existence' were 'erotic sensuality' and 'the physical passion of woman for woman'.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, the notion of romantic friendship has been subject to heavy criticism. Terry Castle objects that 'it obscures the specificity, one might almost say melodrama, of lesbian desire—its incorrigibly lascivious surge toward the body of another woman'.<sup>67</sup> I have no desire to render female homoeroticism anodyne, reducing it to—to take another of Castle's splendidly sarcastic formulations—'a matter of a few cuddles and "darlings" and a lot of epistemic confusion'.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, I acknowledge, along with Traub, that 'although some... manifestations of affection and tenderness appear to be indifferent to the genitals... they are no less erotogenic, no less engaged with the pleasurable resources of the body, for that indifference'.<sup>69</sup> She goes on to point out that S/M often seeks to 'locate non-genital potentials of pleasure and pain on the body's surface'<sup>70</sup>—and S/M is not, in most circles at least, considered 'anodyne'.<sup>71</sup> In another respect, projecting into the ancient world the notion of romantic friendship, 'a particular mode of female affectivity [emerging] within specific arrangements of class, education, family structure, and national formation', especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is to 'flatten considerable historical differences'.<sup>72</sup> Although Auanger's emphasis on socially insignificant behaviour is highly useful, her use of the term 'romantic friendship' causes difficulty.

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<sup>65</sup> Rich (1993), 239.

<sup>66</sup> Rich (1993), 239.

<sup>67</sup> Castle (1995), 11.

<sup>68</sup> Castle (1995), 8.

<sup>69</sup> Traub (2002), 14.

<sup>70</sup> Traub (2002), 14.

<sup>71</sup> Halperin (1995, 97) makes a similar claim as to the potential of sadomasochism to detach sexual pleasure from the genitals: 'The shattering force of intense bodily pleasure, detached from its exclusive localization in the genitals and regionalized throughout various zones of the body, decenters the subject and disarticulates the psychic and bodily integrity of the self to which a sexual identity has become attached'.

<sup>72</sup> Traub (1999), 370.

Therefore, rather than utilising the notion of romantic friendship, I favour the term ‘homoerotic’, keeping in mind its etymological derivation from ‘desire’ (*eros*), whether or not that desire is physically consummated.<sup>73</sup> The texts with which I engage certainly speak in the language of desire as it is established elsewhere in ancient literature. I consider certain combinations of physical contact and emotional attachment to fall broadly within the ambit of the ‘erotic’, particularly since the majority of readers would probably consider such combinations unambiguously ‘erotic’ if the participants were a man and a woman (or even two men).<sup>74</sup> I do not wish to collude in the insidious establishment of a higher ‘standard of proof’ for female-female pairings. Again following Traub, I make use of a ‘lesbian-affirmative analytic, one that begins with the assumption of the worth and value of female emotional and physical ties, and then moves from there to explore the ways such ties were portrayed’.<sup>75</sup> As Rabinowitz comments, ‘[a]s a hermeneutic device, a homocentric perspective enables us to see new possibilities of women’s pleasures’.<sup>76</sup> Such a perspective is ‘engaged’—but no more engaged than an unreflective heterocentric bias. It is, quite simply, to refuse to *restrict* the notion of desire—as historicised in its ancient contexts—to opposite-sex pairings, not to assume that all close female friendships were sexual or were read as such. As Rictor Norton contends, in studies of female homoeroticism as opposed to male there is a ‘greater necessity for employing hypothetical models in the face of the censorship of male indifference’.<sup>77</sup>

So much for ‘homoeroticism’. We are not, however, out of the minefield yet. Several of the texts I discuss—particularly Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Callimachus’ *Hymn to Athena*—bring up the possibility of an erotic relationship between a goddess and a mortal woman. Few ancient hierarchies were so firmly established as that between mortal and divine, and erotic relationships, or even just erotic desire, crossing this boundary generate endless strife in mythology, as

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<sup>73</sup> Rabinowitz (2002a), 3. See also Verstraete’s (2010) contention that Roman erotic discourse as a whole speaks primarily in terms of ‘erotic desire and longing, not of accomplished or to-be-accomplished sexual acts’.

<sup>74</sup> As Jeffreys notes (2006, 214), ‘men and women who simply take walks together are assumed to be involved in some sort of heterosexual relationship’.

<sup>75</sup> Traub (2002), 13.

<sup>76</sup> Rabinowitz (2002b), 126.

<sup>77</sup> Norton (1997), 180.

numerous male-male and male-female examples attest (the jealousy of Hera, the fate of the men who desire Artemis, Tithonus snatched away and condemned to eternal life without eternal youth, the death of Hyacinthus...). Some of the scholarly literature holds up an idealised conception of female homoeroticism as essentially non-hierarchical: Brooten refers to ‘egalitarian character of a relationship between two adult women’,<sup>78</sup> suggesting that master/slave relationships might best be seen as ‘sexual abuse’<sup>79</sup> and worrying over the violent imagery of erotic spells,<sup>80</sup> while Eva Cantarella asserts that ‘[s]ex between women takes place on an equal basis, it does not involve submission’.<sup>81</sup> Such assertions have a strong ideological grounding, linked historically to the notion of romantic friendship and the ‘sex wars’ of the second wave of feminism.

I would prefer not to dictate in advance the character of female homoeroticism, especially in cultures as invested in sexual hierarchy as ancient Greece and Rome. If, as some have argued, it is the very fact of hierarchy that makes a relationship legible as erotic in the dominant ancient discourse,<sup>82</sup> surely a mortal/divine relationship holds a unique place, even if it does not engage in the discourse of tribadism or monstrosly active women (and who, really, would dare call the aggressively chaste Diana a *tribas*?). The anthropomorphism of the gods in Hellenistic and Roman accounts, however, allows authors to use divine figures to comment on human relationships, and in Ovid’s account in particular, the power of balance between Diana and Callisto is played upon such that the active is to passive as divine is to mortal equation only works up to a point. Although I avoid speaking exclusively in terms of the active/passive model, I recognise its presence in and influence upon the texts I examine rather than prescribing the essential egalitarianism of female homoeroticism.

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<sup>78</sup> Brooten (1996), 56.

<sup>79</sup> Brooten (1996), 13.

<sup>80</sup> Brooten (1996), 96-105.

<sup>81</sup> Cantarella (1992), 83.

<sup>82</sup> On the essential eroticism of hierarchy in Greco-Roman sexual discourse, see Halperin (2002), 118: ‘Within the horizons of the male world, as we have seen, hierarchy itself is hot: it is indissociably bound up with at least the potential for erotic signification... disparities of power between male intimates take on an immediate and inescapable aura of eroticism.’

## V Obfuscating rhetorics

Insisting upon strictly genital sexuality has other consequences. Such a coarse hermeneutic reduces the number of sources we can bring to bear when we consider ancient female homoeroticism, resulting, due to the lack of evidence, in a continuation of the scholarly impasse, the aporetic assertions of despair (or sheer indifference). As Rabinowitz sums up the matter, '[t]he standard of sexually explicit, genitally focused, behaviour is not maintained for heterosexual identity, however, and maintaining it leads to the continued invisibility of women's homoeroticism'.<sup>83</sup> Rabinowitz notes elsewhere, with frustration, '[o]bviously, one needs a lot more evidence to convince people of something they do not already believe exists'.<sup>84</sup> Andre Lardinois, discussing Claude Calame's arguments about female homoerotic aspects in Greek literature related to choirs of young women, flatly states that 'there is no reason to assume that these friendships were sexual',<sup>85</sup> in the process precisely making an *a priori* assumption that they were *not* 'sexual', whatever that term might mean when applied to female friendships in the ancient world. Due to the nature and limitations of the evidence, it is essential that one avoids foreclosing possibilities before exploring them fully.

Another manifestation of the *a priori* denial of homoerotic potential involves a number of tropes perhaps best gathered under the title 'the rhetoric of innocence'. Denial in this mode shares some formal features with the feminist notion of romantic friendship, but generally does not come from an explicitly homo-affirmative position. Modern scholars label characters 'too innocent to realise what is happening'<sup>86</sup> (Callisto, as the disguised Jove kisses her passionately), or potentially erotic behaviour between women 'an idyllic pre-sexual infatuation',<sup>87</sup> 'perfectly innocent',<sup>88</sup> or 'sisterly play/praise',<sup>89</sup> all used of the relationship between 'Achilles's sister' and Deidameia, to be opposed to the

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<sup>83</sup> Rabinowitz (2002b), 148.

<sup>84</sup> Rabinowitz (2002b), 133.

<sup>85</sup> Lardinois (1997).

<sup>86</sup> Anderson (1997), 282.

<sup>87</sup> Heslin (1998).

<sup>88</sup> Dilke (1954), 122.

<sup>89</sup> Heslin (2005), 275 ('sisterly play'); 194 ('sisterly praise').

‘more than girlfriend-like intensity and physicality’<sup>90</sup> that eventually comes to characterise Achilles’ actions. Sally Newman notes how such a rhetoric of innocence serves in another context (friendships between young women in all-female colleges) to ‘resolve/deflect the spectre of the lesbian’;<sup>91</sup> a somewhat patronising attitude assuming the sexual ignorance of women or female characters seeks to contain them within a comfortable world of hand-holding, cuddling and prancing in the woods together, similar to Castle’s biting caricature of feminist romantic friendship. Turning the focus away from genital sexuality need not result in total desexualisation; rather, the focus can be shifted to other forms of eroticism, as detailed above.

Closely related is the ‘rhetoric of chastity’: scholars conflate the opposition to sex with men or heterosexual marriage that female characters exhibit with an opposition to sexuality, or even love, as a whole.<sup>92</sup> Characters labelled ‘chaste’ are assumed, by definition, to avoid all forms of sexual contact or even erotic desire. As Traub argues, however, ‘[t]he cultural mandate that women remain virginal until married and chaste within marriage does not address, much less exhaust, the possibilities of female bodily contact if one is willing to consider erotic practices eccentric to phallic definitions of sexuality and the normative patriarchal life cycle’.<sup>93</sup> A woman can partake in homoerotic behaviour and still be considered ‘chaste’ in the eyes of the dominant culture, especially since homoerotic activity cannot result in illegitimate offspring. The Greek term *parthenos*, furthermore, evokes connotations of wildness and liminality rather than prim and immaculate propriety. Greek men saw the *parthenos* as an untamed, androgynous creature, her flesh supposedly hard and dense like that of a man: ‘an unformed being whose potential fecundity could take a variety of shapes until it was fixed in its final feminine form’.<sup>94</sup> *Parthenoi* in Greek myth can therefore often be found in the wilderness—the liminal place

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<sup>90</sup> Hinds (1998), 137.

<sup>91</sup> Newman (2003).

<sup>92</sup> Examples are numerous, especially in analyses of the follower-of-Diana character type. The tendency is particularly noticeable in Davis’ structuralist analysis of hunting in the *Metamorphoses*: Daphne, Arethusa, Syrinx and Callisto are all labeled ‘anti-sexual nymph-huntresses’ harbouring a pathological condition (see Davis 1983, 43). For Curran, such figures exhibit an ‘extraordinary hostility to sexuality’ (Curran 1978, 231).

<sup>93</sup> Traub (2002), 15. For another discussion of the presence of female homoeroticism within virginity in an early modern text (John Lyly’s *Gallathea*), see Jankowski (1996).

<sup>94</sup> Irwin (2007), 18.



outside the *polis* corresponding to their liminal life stage—participating in conventionally masculine activities even as they exert a powerfully ‘feminine’ sexual magnetism. Roman authors influenced by Greek texts, such as Ovid and Statius, inherited the idea of the ‘wild virgin’ and similarly present young unmarried women as untamed yet erotically alluring. Throughout this thesis, it will be shown how female homoerotic desire (and, potentially, sexual activity) is compatible with the state of ‘chastity’.

Declaring female homoeroticism impossible, insignificant, unthinkable, whether such declarations are made by ancient or modern authors, is a profoundly ideological act rather than a neutral statement of fact. Such a deceptively simple gesture cannot but reveal ideological faultlines, the imperfectly sealed edges left by a totalising operation, the ghostly—or not so ghostly—traces of what is excluded (cf. Castle’s notion of ‘the apparitional lesbian’<sup>95</sup>). David Robinson supposes that such ideological (im)possibilities are treated lightly because of their potential to threaten and dethrone the position of normative systems;<sup>96</sup> again one is reminded of Brooten’s insistence upon the destabilising nature of female homoerotic practices. By focusing on fleeting moments—the kiss between Diana-Jove and Callisto before she knows his true identity; the flirtatious play between the athletic ‘sister of Achilles’ and Deidameia; the bath of Athena and Chariclo before Teiresias intrudes; the ‘unshakable friendship’ between Daphne and the cross-dressed Leucippus—it becomes increasingly clear what has been excluded, and apparitional presences flicker into view, even if ever on the periphery. To insist on ‘innocence’ or ‘chastity’ is to ignore altogether these flickering presences and their ability to destabilise apparent ideological monoliths.

The best approach to female homoeroticism in the ancient world, it seems to me, is to recognise a ‘multiplicity of discourses’ rather than insisting upon ‘monocular vision’ through one particular lens,<sup>97</sup> whether that lens is the dominance/submission model, the unrelenting oppression of patriarchal structures, or the notion—often a prescriptive ideal—of egalitarian relationships between mutually supportive women. We can never grasp the whole story—but

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<sup>95</sup> Castle (1995).

<sup>96</sup> Robinson (2006), 195.

<sup>97</sup> Brooten in Castelli (1998), 617.

we can grasp more of it than we have previously. In accordance with this generous approach to erotic possibilities, I adopt a similarly generous approach to textual possibilities and the agency of readers. It is time to turn from gender and sexuality to the way readers realise the erotic possibilities I examine.

## VI Intertextuality and readership

This thesis is by and large a study of complex poetic texts. As such, it is necessary to pay close attention to the literary surface of the texts, their rhetoric, and their place in a literary tradition. One of my major interpretive tools is intertextuality. Textual allusion has long been recognised as one of the primary ways in which ancient authors invested their texts with layers of meaning. The major authors examined—Ovid, Callimachus and Statius—all worked in the ‘Alexandrian’ tradition, and they presupposed an educated audience, aware of a wide range of myth and poetry, and capable of detecting similarities with (and differences from) other texts. The notion of intertextuality, however, turns the focus (partially or completely) away from the role and presuppositions of authors, recognising the ultimate unknowability of authorial intention. Instead, scholars describe intertextuality as an inherent property of language, a process that implicates the reader’s agency, education and background.<sup>98</sup>

I consider, along with Alessandro Barchiesi, that ‘[i]ntertextuality is an *event*, not an *object*. It is not a thing, a fixed given to be analysed, but a relation in motion, even a dynamic destabilisation’.<sup>99</sup> Intertextual relations cannot be activated except in a reader’s mind, and different readers will perceive different intertextual links and imbue them with different meanings, just as the text as a whole will receive a myriad of interpretations. Spentzou’s definition of intertextuality is also especially germane: “‘Intertextuality’ is a web of relationships that link together a number of passages so that the significance of any one passage becomes an amalgam of suggestions and connotations residing in all the different inter-textual link-sites’.<sup>100</sup> As I have mentioned, the texts I examine partake of similar myths, narrative patterns and uses of language, to the

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<sup>98</sup> See Edmunds (2001) and Hinds (1998) for detailed accounts of intertextuality. Edmunds’ chapter six is particularly useful on the notion of each reader’s ‘intertextual encyclopedia’.

<sup>99</sup> Barchiesi (2001), 142 (original emphasis).

<sup>100</sup> Spentzou (2002), 17.

extent that considering them together reveals a coherent strand of discourse, an ‘amalgam of suggestions and connotations’ surrounding particular figures and features of plot. Separately, the texts are intriguing; together, they have the potential to be explosive, particularly in the hands of a canny or subversive reader.

It is plausible to suggest that the authors examined in this thesis found at least some female readers. At Rome, many upper class women received a grammatical education, which emphasised the reading and interpretation of poetry, often that of a wide range of poets.<sup>101</sup> Poets often wrote as if they expected a female audience, addressing poems to women individually or collectively, and representing female characters reading poetry.<sup>102</sup> The elegiac ideal of the *docta puella* must have had enough of a basis in reality to be plausible, while it is also possible that historical women were influenced by these literary constructions (certainly the poet Sulpicia thoroughly understood the generic norms of elegy), or that poetic praise of educated women affected the opinions of male readers towards such women.<sup>103</sup>

Though it is not the case that female readers automatically read a text subversively—in fact, texts are often very successful in enjoining women to adopt a male subject position—it is at least plausible that some could have looked beyond the heterosexual-reproductive teleology to moments of female intimacy and community independent of men, the traces of desires unspeakable in the terms of the dominant sexual ideology. Some individuals must surely have questioned the normative system, and experienced or even just imagined behaviour that fell outside its bounds. In the words of Paul Allen Miller, ‘negative counterforces within a society whose presence as a potential positive alternative to the status quo—as opposed to a mere inert resistance—[are] necessary if historical chance is to be accounted for as something other than an inexplicable catastrophe’.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Hemelrijk (1999), 49.

<sup>102</sup> See Hemelrijk (1999), 248 n 125 for a number of examples (from Tibullus, Ovid, Martial, Propertius and Catullus).

<sup>103</sup> See Hemelrijk (1999), 175-177.

<sup>104</sup> Miller (1998), 175.

## VII Conclusion

A reasonable amount of excellent scholarship has already been done on female homoeroticism in the Greco-Roman world, and more is continuing to appear (albeit slowly). The majority of this scholarship, however, scrupulous as it is, focuses on a canonical group of texts detailing the discourse of tribadism, and applies over-rigorously the active/passive model of sexual relations. I have attempted to craft an approach that allows for a broader range of erotic possibilities while still recognising the importance of the active/passive model within Greco-Roman culture as a whole. In arguments to come, I will seek readings of texts that open up spaces beyond the prescriptions of the dominant culture in which other desires could exist, even if only for a brief period of time. Delving into a selection of complex, densely intertextual and deviously playful ancient texts, I shall reveal instances of female homoerotic desire eminently open to readers' interpretation, appropriation—and fantasy.

## Chapter Two: *Oscula iungit, nec moderata satis nec sic a virgine danda*: erotic virginity in Ovid's Callisto episode

And also, don't forget, the story... was being made up by a man. Well, I say man, but Ovid's very fluid, as writers go, much more than most. He knows, more than most, that the imagination doesn't have a gender. He's really good. He honours all sorts of love. He honours all sorts of story.<sup>1</sup>

Dans cet éventail des possibles déployé par le poète apparaît donc un bref instant, comme une image subliminale, l'image fugitive, mais nette, de l'amour entre femmes.<sup>2</sup>

In the world of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, every feature of the natural landscape—whether plant, animal, rock, constellation—potentially conceals human consciousness, whether terrifyingly trapped or simply obliterated. Human bodies are in continual flux, continual danger of dissolution, penetration.<sup>3</sup> Beautiful places harbour danger; languid sensuality prefaces violence and destruction.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile the literary surface of the text shifts and changes along with human bodies: a proliferation of narrators, narrative levels, and points of view generates polyphony, while an intertextual density plays off the voices and stories of many other authors. In such a shifting environment, it is difficult to hear one voice for long, or to believe what any one voice purports to be true. We learn that surfaces and structures are not to be trusted, for there is no escaping change and confusion.

As such, it is not surprising that Ovid's epic has been particularly fertile ground for readings subversive of dominant ideologies of various kinds, including the Roman sex/gender system.<sup>5</sup> Within his epic of inherent fluidity, Ovid includes many stories of diverse sexual practices and desires: desire for the opposite sex, for the same sex, for animals, trees, siblings, parents, one's own reflection. The subjects of such desires are often given the opportunity to speak, to justify themselves—in short, to pose a challenge, in no matter how circumscribed a manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith (2007), 97.

<sup>2</sup> Boehringer (2007), 231.

<sup>3</sup> See Segal (1998) on 'metamorphic bodies'.

<sup>4</sup> See especially Parry (1964), Segal (1969) and Hinds (2002) on landscape and its symbolism in the *Metamorphoses*.

<sup>5</sup> Zajko (2009) provides an excellent overview of the destabilizing 'queerness' of the *Metamorphoses*.

A space is opened also for female voices, though the way in which the *Metamorphoses* treats female characters has been a subject of considerable controversy. Many critics focus on the brutality with which female characters are silenced, whether literally (Philomela) or through the quasi-death of metamorphosis (Io, Callisto, Daphne and many others), and the difficulties of taking aesthetic pleasure in a work that seems to delight in such brutality.<sup>6</sup> As Charles Segal sums up the matter, ‘the female body in the *Metamorphoses* is characterized by its status as a visual object, its passivity, its appropriation by the male libidinal imagination, and its role as a vessel to be “filled” by male seed to continue a heroic lineage’.<sup>7</sup> Callisto, gazed upon and raped by Jupiter, abandoned by Diana, deprived of her voice and body by Juno, before giving birth to the eponymous Arcadian Arcas and finally being translated to the sky as a mute constellation prevented even from setting, fits Segal’s characterisation perfectly. Yet, or so I argue, even her horrific and overdetermined suffering cannot seal up the gaps in her story, nor entirely occlude the glimmer of a ‘different desire’ just beyond the edges of the text.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘different desire’ I speak of is that between Callisto and Diana. This is not only desire between women, rare enough in Latin literature as is, but the homoerotic desire of women who are conventionally feminine in their gender presentation (if not their activities) and therefore, according to the strict logic of Roman sexual ideology, ‘passive partners’.<sup>9</sup> We seem to be seeing, albeit briefly, a subject-position hardly ever acknowledged, a form of desire and a form of relationship that should, again according to strict ideological logic, be literally impossible.<sup>10</sup>

There is an apparent initial difficulty with such a reading: Diana is not a mortal woman but a goddess, with all the license granted to immortals; she cannot but be the ‘active partner’, in one sense at least, in any relationship with a

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<sup>6</sup> See especially Richlin (1992).

<sup>7</sup> Segal (1998), 23.

<sup>8</sup> I refer to the words of Teresa de Lauretis (quoted in Richlin 1992, 160-161): ‘any radical critique [entails] a rereading of the sacred texts against the passionate urging of a different question, a different practice, and a different desire.’

<sup>9</sup> As Halperin formulates the issue in his OCD article on homosexuality (Halperin 2003, 722): ‘the cultural predominance of the penetration model of sex obscured non-penetrative eroticism among conventionally feminine women, for which in any case there seems to have been no established terminology’.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ormand (2005).

mortal. Any erotic relationship between Diana and Callisto could, therefore, be viewed against a number of more or less normative paradigms: male/male paederasty (along the lines of Jupiter and Ganymede or Apollo and Hyacinthus), female/male divine/mortal (Eos/Tithonus, Aurora/Cephalus, Venus/Adonis), or male/female divine/mortal (though such relationships are more often figured as rapes than long-term companionship). On the other hand, there is such a similitude between Diana and her companions that a different model seems to be called for. Although Diana is immortal and therefore surely the ‘active’ partner, in Greco-Roman myth she is an eroticised object of male desire, a dangerous yet alluring virgin; the divine analogue of the irresistible mortal *parthenos*. In short, the relationship between Diana and Callisto cannot be neatly slotted into the terms of the dominant discourse, and points to the live possibility of an erotic relationship between two feminine women. My general contention is that, even though Ovid’s account of female subjectivity is problematic, and even though Diana is a goddess, there is still a substantial space in the Callisto episode for a reader to identify what might be labelled ‘femme-femme’ desire.<sup>11</sup> Beyond the one occurrence of a homoerotic relationship between Diana and Callisto, furthermore, the social milieu of Diana’s band of huntresses as a whole constitutes a broader space of possibility for the expression of female desire independent of men, as this and the following chapters shall elucidate in detail.

Ovid’s rendering of the Callisto story has, rather curiously, attracted very little attention in accounts of female homoeroticism in the ancient world.<sup>12</sup> Sandra Boehringer does, however, offer a reasonably extended account of the Callisto episode’s homoerotic aspects.<sup>13</sup> Though largely in agreement with Boehringer’s general approach, my treatment of the episode examines the homoerotic valences of its language more extensively and places the episode in

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<sup>11</sup> Traub (2002), 230 explains the usefulness of ‘femme-femme desire’ as a strategic anachronism, intended to ‘call attention to the homoeroticism suffusing the relations of conventionally feminine friends. To label such women femmes is to mark the importance of their gender performance (conventional femininity) to their articulation of erotic desire’.

<sup>12</sup> Pintabone (2002), 271, asserts that Iphis/Ianthe is the ‘only narrative [in the *Met.*] that has a female desire a female’. Callisto is not mentioned at all in the extensive outline of evidence for female homoeroticism in Brooten (1996), nor in any of the essays in Rabinowitz/Auanger (2002). The recent general histories of sexuality in the ancient world of Skinner (2005) and Ormand (2009) also fail to mention Callisto.

<sup>13</sup> Boehringer (2007), 71-88 (the Callisto myth in general); 223-232 (Ovid’s version of the myth).

a broader context, both intra- and intertextually, than is possible within the constraints of Boehringer's study.

As several scholars have noted, the *Metamorphoses* has a 'resonant intratextual dimension'.<sup>14</sup> The poem's elaborate 'narrative grammar'<sup>15</sup> means that reading episodes in light of one another is an invaluable interpretive aid. Ovid emphasises from the beginning that he is creating his own epic universe with its own rules. Although we cannot expect these rules to be consistent, the best reading of the *Metamorphoses* is one that examines the relationship of the separate episodes to each other, and how Ovid's narration of episodes serves to draw the reader into the Metamorphic world and to expect certain continuities. In the apt summarisation of Denis Feeney:<sup>16</sup>

[Ovid] wishes to concentrate on what he is progressively constructing as a new universal set of criteria for human behaviour, one which—so he will have it—has always been immanent in Greek myth but never 'properly' explicated before or brought into a system. In his treatment of sexuality, in particular, a bewildering range of Greek myths comes to form a newly comprehensive anthropology, which provides a flexible structure within which to examine the ways humans define and experience themselves and others.

My treatment of the Callisto episode, therefore, will consider it in light of other episodes, examining particularly the way in which Ovid manipulates narrative structure to eroticise the relationship between Diana and Callisto. There is, that is to say, certainly a place for female homoerotic desire in Ovid's 'newly comprehensive anthropology', and such desire is treated, in some ways, as similar to other varieties of desire. The very fact that Jupiter disguises himself as Diana in one sense represents an equivalence between male desire for a female and female desire for a female. Readings of the *Metamorphoses* that consider the Iphis/Ianthe episode to be the only occurrence of female-female desire in the poem end up producing an incomplete picture. There is no condemnation of female homoerotic desire in the Callisto episode, no asseverations of

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<sup>14</sup> Wheeler (2001), 6. As Sharrock (2000), 37 states: 'The *Metamorphoses*, with the loops and bumps of its fluid narration, its outrageous transitions, the daring ill-proportion of its parts, and its refusal to tell the reader whether it constitutes a Whole, is an easy target for intratextual analysis'.

<sup>15</sup> Davis (1983) utilises this term.

<sup>16</sup> Feeney (1998), 71.



‘unnaturalness’. Rather, the episode presents two huntresses going about their daily business, which just so happens to include passionate kisses.

I begin this chapter with these kisses, and proceed through the episode to explore the way in which Ovid conveys a longstanding erotic bond between Diana and Callisto precedent to the intrusion of Jupiter. I then examine the possible significance of this bond, and potential readerly responses, setting out, in accordance with my broader project, what is ‘alternate’ about this relationship and why it does not cohere with sexual norms. In the second part of the chapter I broaden my focus to examine the Callisto episode’s place in the poem’s narrative texture: it fits, I will argue, into a general pattern linking sex, hunting and *loca amoena*, and a reader familiar with this pattern can detect a further erotic tinge to the Diana/Callisto relationship woven into its very narrative structure. The kisses are the starting point; from them, a progressive zooming-out will reveal the fact that they are not singular or anomalous, but in fact integrated in a rich weave of associations and precedents. It will be necessary to begin, however, as close to Ovid’s text as possible.

## I Kisses more than virginal

The Callisto episode begins around the middle of book 2. Phaethon’s disastrous chariot ride has ended, and Jupiter is surveying Arcadia for damage. As he goes about his tasks, he notices a gorgeous Arcadian girl, and immediately determines he must have her. As she takes a break from her hunting, he swiftly metamorphoses into Diana and comes to her. The crucial moment for my purposes is the kiss between Callisto and this metamorphosed figure, whom she believes to be Diana (*Met.* 2.425-433):

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| protinus induitur faciem cultumque Dianae       | 425 |
| atque ait: 'o comitum, virgo, pars una mearum,  |     |
| in quibus es venata iugis?' de caespite virgo   |     |
| se levat et 'salve numen, me iudice' dixit,     |     |
| 'audiat ipse licet, maius Iove.' ridet et audit |     |
| et sibi praeferri se gaudet et oscula iungit    | 430 |
| nec moderata satis nec sic a virgine danda.     |     |
| qua venata foret silva narrare parantem         |     |
| impedit amplexu, nec se sine crimine prodit.    |     |

Forthwith he puts on the appearance and dress of Diana and says: “O maiden, foremost amongst my companions, in which ridges have you hunted?” The maiden lifts herself from the ground and said, “Greetings divinity, greater than Jove in my judgment—and I don’t care if he himself hears me!” He laughs as he hears, and rejoices that he is preferred to himself, and gives her kisses, not sufficiently moderate nor those given by a *virgo*. As she was preparing to tell him in which woods she had hunted, he broke in upon her with an embrace, and revealed himself not without criminal intent.

Ovid dwells upon the nature of the kisses that Jupiter gives: they are immoderate and ‘unvirginal’, clearly sexualised, driven by lust. A number of scholars take this characterisation of the kisses as evidence that Jupiter’s identity is transparent, immediately revealed in his kiss. Bömer’s lemma, telling gloss added, reads: ‘nec sic a virgine (i.q. ‘a Diana’) danda’.<sup>17</sup> Diana, the logic runs, would never kiss like this, therefore this cannot be Diana. The situation is rendered safely heterosexual; the gap is closed. Yet Callisto has not seen Bömer’s commentary, and acts with ‘unsurprised responsiveness’<sup>18</sup> to these supposedly un-Dianic kisses. The world of the *Metamorphoses* is not a safe place for unguarded young women. As John Heath notes, an ‘overwhelming fear of sexual attack creates an atmosphere in which the only possible response to unexpected events is one of terror, hostility and suspicion’.<sup>19</sup> In order to maintain that Jove’s kisses could not possibly resemble those of Diana, one must explain away Callisto’s relaxed response. Anderson falls back upon the rhetoric of innocence (see chapter 1) and supposes that ‘Callisto is probably too innocent to realise what is happening’.<sup>20</sup> The alternate conclusion is that Callisto might in fact know what she wants,<sup>21</sup> and that a virgin goddess might in fact give ‘unvirginal’ kisses: a conclusion with far-reaching disruptive consequences. It is this conclusion and these consequences on which I will focus. Boehringer’s analysis of the moment is precisely on point: ‘Et là, seulement là [when Jupiter reveals himself], elle se débat (*pugnat*), ce qui fait apparaître nettement que le

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<sup>17</sup> Bömer (1969), 349. Anderson (1997), 282 makes the same equation between *a virgine* and *Diana*. Given the lack of articles in Latin, the phrase could mean either ‘by a virgin’ (generalising) or ‘by the virgin’ (i.e., Diana).

<sup>18</sup> The phrase is that of Downing (1989), 211.

<sup>19</sup> Heath (1991), 237.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson (1997), 282.

<sup>21</sup> Sheriff (1998), 93 argues that a painting of the episode by Angelika Kauffman hints that ‘female sexuality does not depend on any man’s desire, that women, in fact, do know what they want’.

refus de Callisto n'est pas ici un refus de l'étreinte amoureuse, mais un refus de l'homme.'<sup>22</sup> It is sexual contact with a man, not sexual contact *simpliciter*, that Callisto rejects and fights against.

There is a hiatus between the kisses and Callisto beginning the story of her day's hunting, and here the reader's imagination and powers of visualisation are engaged. A number of scholars have discussed the visual quality of Ovid's work, and his success at employing *enargeia*: a certain vividness, immediacy, the ability to conjure up events before his readers' eyes.<sup>23</sup> In the summation of Victoria Rimell, 'Ovid's eye is precociously cinematic... The pleasure in reading this poetry lies not just in the thrill of intellectual recognition... but also in the flash of image and pattern, the still spaces between words and lines where we stop to relish a movement, a play of light, rush of emotion, or something that is left unsaid'.<sup>24</sup> Ovid's narration of the kisses hints at things unsaid: what do these unvirginal kisses look like? What is Callisto doing as she receives them? Does she return them? Are there unwritten embraces, caresses? Just how long do these kisses last, anyway? If, as Philip Hardie supposes, every erotic tale in the *Metamorphoses* functions as a projection of the reader's desire,<sup>25</sup> a variety of readers could have generated a variety of visualisations of and responses to Ovid's narrative. In myth, the realm of collective fantasy, imagination rules; culturally censored desires and activities can come to the forefront.

If a reader is able to overcome the text's seeming injunction to identify with the male point of view (not unproblematic in an episode which is heavily focalised through Jupiter's internal perspective,<sup>26</sup> but always possible in the shifting landscape of the *Metamorphoses*), she or he can read the Diana/Callisto kiss as pointing to a realm of intimacy not explicitly represented in the text. Though the bond between Diana and Callisto is only introduced at the point of its dissolution, it is possible to read between the lines a history of their interaction. As Boehringer comments, there is implied in the story 'un lien préexistant—sur lequel se fonde tout le récit—celui plus qu'amical entre Diane

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<sup>22</sup> Boehringer (2007), 229.

<sup>23</sup> See Hardie (2002), 5-6. Salzmann-Mitchell (2005) is useful on issues of gaze and gender in the *Metamorphoses* in general.

<sup>24</sup> Rimell (2006), 206.

<sup>25</sup> Hardie (2002), 68.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson (1996), 12.

et Callisto'.<sup>27</sup> To Diana, as Ovid tells us, 'no woman who set foot on Maenalus was dearer than [Callisto]; but no *potentia* lasts long' (*nec Maenalon attigit ulla / gratior hac Triviae; sed nulla longa potentia est, Met. 2.415-416*). Translators of this passage often render *potentia* 'favour', but elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* it is used of the bewitching powers of magical charms (7.330, 14.318) and female beauty (Atalanta's, 10.573), the power of heaven (8.618) and Venus (5.365, 13.758), and even the political power of Rome (2.259, 15.877); on two occasions Juno laments her lack of *potentia* as her rivals flourish (2.520, 4.427). Callisto, we might conclude, has remarkable sway over Diana, something more than mere 'favour'. *Gratus*, furthermore, can have an erotic valence. In the *Metamorphoses*, Cephalus greets the breeze as *gratissima* (7.814), and Procris, overhearing these 'blandishments' (*blanditias*, 7.817), thinks he is talking to a lover. The spurned lover Iphis wishes he were *gratus* to his beloved Anaxarete (14.723), while Cyparissus' stag, a kind of lover-substitute, is *gratus* to him (10.121). In the *Amores* Ovid claims that Io was *gratior* to Jove when she was turned into a cow (2.19.30); we might even translate, in that instance, 'more desirable'.<sup>28</sup> Readers have already observed Callisto's defiant greeting of the goddess (more on which below); now they hear of the goddess' affection for Callisto. The relationship between the two is shaded with reciprocity rather than one-sided domination.

Later, Ovid describes Callisto's behaviour after the rape: *vix oculos attollit humo nec, ut ante solebat, / iuncta deae lateri nec toto est agmine prima* (*Met. 2.448-449*: 'She scarcely raises her eyes from the ground, nor, as she was accustomed before, is she joined to the side of her goddess nor first in the whole company'). These lines point to a special physical and emotional intimacy between Callisto and Diana, while *iuncta deae lateri* ups the erotic ante: 'joined to the side' is sometimes used in Latin as a euphemism for sexual activity, and Ovid himself employs this usage in his *Heroides* at 2.58 (Phyllis laments to Demophon, 'I regret having shamefully completed hospitality on a nuptial bed, and having joined side with side', *turpiter hospitium lecto cumulasse iugali /*

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<sup>27</sup> Boehringer (2007), 229.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. also Propertius, who uses *gratus* of his beloved Cynthia (1.2.31; 1.19.16, Cynthia's bones; 1.12.7, Cynthia's regard for him).

*paenitet, et lateri conseruisse latus*).<sup>29</sup> These hints of a prior intimacy, combined with Ovid's dramatisation of what is, until Jupiter reveals himself, a 'day in the life' scenario involving clearly sexualised kisses between Diana and Callisto, infuse the scene with considerable homoerotic overtones. In the masculine teleology of rape, conception and birth, the relationship between Diana and Callisto is of marginal interest; unsurprisingly, it appears in this metamorphic epic only just before metamorphosis occurs. Partially constrained by his chosen subject matter, Ovid nonetheless makes available to the reader a potent *conspectus* of the history of the relationship through a few pointed phrases.

Between Ovid's hints of a pre-existing erotic relationship between Callisto and Diana and his representation of the apparently everyday sexy kisses, readers' fantasies can flourish. Patricia Simons, examining a range of early modern images of Diana and her nymphs, including depictions of the Callisto episode, proposes that '[i]mages and texts ostensibly catering to heterosexual standards can be subversively re-read by certain consumers to provide alternative pleasures'.<sup>30</sup> If this is true of early modern representations of Diana and Callisto, it is equally true of Ovid's narrative. A female reader could have identified with Diana, Callisto or even Jupiter: the giver of passionate kisses to another woman, the receiver of such kisses, the voyeur who becomes more than a voyeur, experiencing such kisses himself. The proliferation of possibilities of identification is similar to that which, Eva Stehle argues, is generated by myths of goddesses and their young male lovers:<sup>31</sup>

The ideological meaning conferred on these myths by narrative closure cannot always completely contain them. Before closure, the myths may already have suggested images of eroticism whose hold on the imagination the resolution cannot necessarily cancel... Desire and initiation of the affair may belong to the goddess, but the youth may be imagined as a responsive participant. The meeting of these two figures is not pre-scripted: it must be played out according to the dictates of individual fantasy... The collapse of cultural logic and the prohibition against condemnation of a divinity emerge as the enabling conditions for imagining men and women in other than their culturally prescribed sexual roles.

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<sup>29</sup> Adams (1990), 180.

<sup>30</sup> Simons (1994), 84.

<sup>31</sup> Stehle (1996), 210-211.

Along with these potential identifications for a female reader, it is fruitful also to consider the possible dimensions of a male reading. To W.R. Johnson, the moment of the kiss is exploitative and pornographic, a titillation for the male viewer: '[T]hose excessive and forbidden kisses design an exciting lesbian moment for the masculine gaze: his sexy impersonation, his innocent prey, two ladies in their lust, waiting (as in a porn flick) for a real male to still the frenzies their foreplay with each other has provoked, waiting for him'.<sup>32</sup> Yet within the context of Greco-Roman myth, the male viewer is seeing something he should not see. Examples of men punished for their illicit knowledge of the feminine are manifold: Actaeon (*Met.* 3.155ff); Teiresias in Callimachus' *Hymn to Athena*; Leucippus in Parthenius' *Erotika Pathemata* (15); Pentheus (Eur. *Bacchae*); Polymestor (Eur. *Hecuba*). Jupiter, as a divinity, is immune from such punishment, but the male reader/viewer of the Ovidian episode is mortal and vulnerable. Titillation, perhaps—but titillation with an admixture of real danger. The menace of the *Metamorphoses* does not cut only one way: it is often as dangerous for men to look as for women to be looked upon.<sup>33</sup> Male pleasure in the spectacle of female sexuality is repeatedly punished in mythical stories, and Johnson's reading, apparently making an analogy between the ancient story and modern girl-on-girl soft porn, fails to take into account the dangers of voyeurism in ancient myth that are not present to the same degree in modern pornography. As David Fredrick argues, 'the notion that Western representation has a fundamentally male-dominated or pornographic structure must consider the vulnerability of many men, of all social levels, in Rome'.<sup>34</sup> To Romans, who feared the evil eye, 'they and their social world could be animated or shattered with a look'.<sup>35</sup>

There are other dimensions, however, to male voyeurism. Desiring to see something or experience something requires a pre-existing knowledge of that thing. Jupiter *knows* that disguising himself as a woman will allow him sexual access to Callisto; that is, he has some knowledge of the existence of female homoeroticism. His swift decision to adopt the shape of Diana (*protinus induitur*

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<sup>32</sup> Johnson (1996), 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> Also relevant is the threatening gaze of Medusa, which Rimell argues has far-reaching consequences for Ovid's *oeuvre* as a whole (see Rimell 2006, 13-40).

<sup>34</sup> Fredrick (2002), 24.

<sup>35</sup> Barton (2002), 227.

*faciem cultumque Dianae*, 2.425) suggests that he already knows of the close bond between Diana and Callisto, that this is not his first moment of voyeurism. Later in the *Metamorphoses*, Jupiter reveals his curiosity about the difference between male and female sexual pleasure, asking the transsexual Teiresias to arbitrate (3.316-338); are we seeing, in the Callisto episode, Jupiter's attempt to experience eroticism as a woman, temporarily to forfeit phallic mastery and indulge in sensual pleasures? Through the Callisto episode, female homoerotic activity is given visibility and manifest presence, figuring as a possibility in the mind of Jupiter, supreme arbiter of the masculine order. A male reader of the Callisto episode is challenged, like Jupiter, temporarily to 'play the other' and imagine life in a female homosocial environment. Unable to decorously lower their eyes as they might have done in reality (or might have wished to be perceived as doing), readers are brought face-to-face with female pleasure in a mix of danger and desire. Though, as Johnson recognises, we are certainly seeing 'two ladies in their lust', the kiss scene is built on the presumption that passionate kisses between women, in Diana's realm, are *not* 'excessive and forbidden', but licit and customary. The scene hints at an awareness of and interest in female homoeroticism on the part of men, and this interest is not coupled with condemnation.

Further, neither Callisto nor Diana can be said to be a *tribas*, insofar as we take that term to mean a penetrating female with a masculinised bodily morphology. It is mainly in *behaviour* rather than bodily morphology that Callisto is gender-deviant: she refrains from spinning wool and elaborately arranging her hair, preferring to take arms and immerse herself in the essentially masculine pursuit of hunting (*Met.* 2.411-414). In other respects, though Ovid does not specifically say, her gender presentation is seemingly conventionally feminine; she is highly desirable to Jupiter, desirable enough for him to put up with (what he sees as) Juno's carping (*Met.* 2.422-423). One startling moment, however, gives pause: Ovid refers to Callisto as 'Phoebe's soldier' (*miles erat Phoebes*, *Met.* 2.415). This masculine noun is vanishingly rarely applied to women,<sup>36</sup> and Ovid's use here attracted the attention of ancient grammarians

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<sup>36</sup> TLL, 8.944.33 and 46-50, lists the two passages discussed here (Canace and Callisto), as well as occurrences in Ambrose (*Virg.* 1.10.60) and Tertullian (*Resurr.* 9.38.2), and Seneca's *Dialogues* (3.9.2, although *miles* is there used of *ira*, not of a person).

(e.g., the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE Priscian 2.156.15; 2.316.16).<sup>37</sup> Anderson notes several possibilities for interpreting Ovid's provocative touch: criticism of militarism, interplay with the 'lover as soldier' motif of elegy, or a means of setting up an 'ironic reversal' when the 'militaristic' Callisto fails to overcome Jupiter.<sup>38</sup>

It seems inadvisable, however, to merely gloss over the mismatch in gender. Female warriors or warlike women elsewhere in Latin poetry were usually labelled *bellatrices* (Penthesilea, *Aen.* 1.493; Camilla, *Aen.* 7.805; Minerva, *Met.* 7.264, 8.264 and *Tristia* 1.5.76) or *viragines* (Minerva, *Met.* 2.765, 6.130; Juturna, *Aen.* 12.468). Thus, there were at least two feminine nouns available to Ovid for describing a female soldier. Ovid could also have called Callisto *venatrix*, as he does later (2.492); instead he applies a masculine noun to her, aligning her temporarily with the masculine/active side of the normative erotic dichotomy. Ovid also uses *miles* of females twice in his *Heroides*: at 11.48, Canace, giving birth to her brother Macareus' child, describes herself as *nova miles*, and at 6.54 Hypsipyle refers to the 'strong soldiery' (*milite... forti*) of the Lemnian women. Thus, Ovid uses *miles* of a sexually excessive woman who transgresses social boundaries and a group of women who slaughter men. Callisto's situation is not quite analogous to either of these. As *virgo*, she could not be described as sexually excessive, and although she rejects men sexually, she does not kill them. She is simultaneously *virgo* and *miles*, as well as something else altogether, something for which Latin has no established terminology: a conventionally feminine woman who, rejecting men, exchanges decidedly unchaste kisses with another woman.

Since Callisto is labelled with a masculine noun and attributed masculine pursuits, Boehringer suggests that she resembles a boy to the extent that Jupiter's desire for her is paederastic, in the manner of his desire for Ganymede or Apollo's for Hyacinthus. Though sexually penetrating a Roman *miles* would be a truly scandalous and shaming act, Callisto resembles, according to Boehringer, 'un jeune et beau *puer*',<sup>39</sup> a legitimate object of desire in Roman culture. There is no indication in the text, however, that Callisto has an epicene appearance, unlike many other Metamorphic figures whom Ovid specifically

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<sup>37</sup> Bömer (1969), 345.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson (1997), 280. Anderson prefers the third explanation, citing unnamed 'others' as sources for the other two; it is regrettable he is not more specific.

<sup>39</sup> Boehringer (2007), 227.



labels sexually ambiguous.<sup>40</sup> Jupiter, it seems, desires this girl as a girl, and as such a passive recipient of his sexual will.

Though forced to be passive by Jupiter, Callisto's erotic role vis-à-vis Diana is far less clear. The other indubitably homoerotically attracted woman in the *Metamorphoses*, Iphis, behaves 'as a female should' in that she is passive: she does not seek to seduce Ianthe in male disguise, nor sexually pursue her in any other way.<sup>41</sup> Callisto, however, exhibits a certain vigour and boldness in her preferences. When she sees the disguised Jove, whom she believes to be Diana, she gets up and cheekily greets him, 'greetings, divinity, in my judgment greater than Jove, and I don't care if he himself hears it' (*Met.* 2.428-429, *salve numen, me iudice... audiat ipse licet, maius Iove*). Segal notes how in the *Metamorphoses* the body, in general, provides little pleasure or joy, except for the gods who rape mortal women and swiftly depart.<sup>42</sup> Callisto's enjoyment of Diana's company and embraces hints for a moment at another world, another economy of desire in which it is shared rather than imposed, even if there is still the status differential between divinity and mortal. Ovid's other rape victims flee rather than fight, and are not given the opportunity to voice active preferences; nor, indeed, though some of them are huntresses, are they labelled *milites*. Though Callisto is to suffer pain and humiliation at the hands of three divinities consecutively (Jupiter, Diana, then Juno), in the precarious moment before, she is an active, unapologetic, challenging figure, calling into question Jove's sovereignty as *rex Olympi*, and resisting the sexual advances he feels he is entitled to impose. This is not to say that Callisto is an 'active penetrator' of Diana; rather, the strong emphasis on passionate kisses points to sensuality and non-phallic bodily contact, and by no means necessitates that we imagine phallic bodily contact. Here, again, readers' fantasies and desires can flourish, and Callisto constitutes a compelling figure for female identification.

Callisto's claim that Diana is dearer to her than Jove could be perceived as a homoerotic twist on mortal lovers' claims to prefer one another to the gods, a motif that Davis calls a 'well-worn amatory topos'.<sup>43</sup> Cephalus, reflecting on

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<sup>40</sup> Compare, for example, Sithon (4.279-80), Salmacis/Hermaphroditus (4.378-9), Atalanta (8.322-3), Iphis (9.712-13), and Bacchus (4.18-20).

<sup>41</sup> Pintabone (2002), 269.

<sup>42</sup> Segal (1998), 37.

<sup>43</sup> Davis (1983), 141.

the depth of the mutual love he and Procris share, asserts that ‘she would not have preferred Jupiter’s bed to my love, nor was there any other woman who could attract me—not even if Venus herself should come’ (*nec Iovis illa meo thalamos praeferret amori, / nec me quae caperet, non si Venus ipsa veniret, Met. 7.801-2*). The platitudinous nature of such claims is evident in Catullus 70.1-2 (‘my woman says that she would prefer to marry no-one more than me, not if Jupiter himself sought her out’, *nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle / quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat*) and 72.1-2 (‘you would say... you didn’t want to hold Jove more than me’, *dicebas... nec prae me velle tenere Iovem*).<sup>44</sup> These Catullan passages rely on the implication of insincerity through the triteness of Lesbia’s words.<sup>45</sup> Callisto mouths something very like a lover’s blandishment, unaware that Jupiter himself is present. In speaking to ‘Diana’ as though she were her mortal lover, Callisto further reveals the informality of her relationship with the goddess. At this moment, a reader could ignore the fact that Diana is a goddess, and imagine the two as young mortal woman, sharing soft words and soft kisses nearly indistinguishable from those of heterosexual lovers.

To add a further layer, Diana’s companions, in the *Metamorphoses* and elsewhere, are often imaged as sorts of mortal versions of the goddess herself. Daphne, a similar figure to Callisto, exhibits this tendency most strongly: she is specifically described as ‘a match for unmarried Phoebe’ (*innuptaeque aemula Phoebes, Met. 1.476*), and she begs her father for perpetual virginity in a strongly-signalled allusion to Callimachus’ *Hymn to Artemis* (*da mihi perpetua, genitor carissime... virginitate frui; dedit hoc pater ante Dianae, 1.486-7*).<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Syrinx is said to often be mistaken for Diana (*Met. 1.694-698*). Callisto is a rather bolder, more pugnacious version of such figures: the goddess’ favourite, the first amongst her companions (*comitum... pars una mearum, Met. 2.426*)—the most similar to Diana herself? As Boehringer notes, Diana and Callisto are similar in both their accustomed activities (roaming the mountains, hunting) and their attributes (bow, quiver, spear).<sup>47</sup> Desire for one so like oneself (as in the case of Iphis and Ianthe, whose similarity Ovid

<sup>44</sup> Moore-Blunt (1977), 95, lists Cephalus’ assertion and the Catullus passages as points of comparison to Callisto’s statement, along with other examples of the motif of a lover preferred to Jupiter: Plautus *Casina* 323 and Petronius 126.

<sup>45</sup> Pedrick (1986), 202.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Artemis’ words to Zeus in Call. *H. Art.* (6): δός μοι παρθενίην αἰώνιον, ἄππα, φυλάσσειν.

<sup>47</sup> Boehringer (2007), 226.

emphatically states, 9.718-721) is necessarily unusual if one views Roman sexuality as predicated on asymmetry.<sup>48</sup> Though there is, of course, still the gulf between divinity and mortal, in other respects this is a truly *homoerotic* desire in all the senses of sameness.

The rhetorics of chastity and innocence (see chapter one) only serve to obfuscate the challenging homoerotic frisson of the Callisto episode. Gregson Davis argues, of Jupiter's transformation into Diana, that '[t]he god of exemplary lustfulness impersonates the goddess of exemplary chastity'.<sup>49</sup> Sale makes the same point, though appends the 'rhetoric of innocence': 'lust... takes the guise of chastity in order to seduce innocence'.<sup>50</sup> Such readings exhibit an allegorical impulse, making bold and clearly delineated archetypes out of Ovid's perennially shifting characters. Callisto's response reveals at a stroke the inadequacy of such interpretations. The Callisto episode, in fact, represents a challenging redefinition of what it means to be a *virgo*. The story of Iphis' frustrated desire for Ianthe hints at the broad range of the term in Ovid's epic universe: *Iphis amat, qua posse frui desperat, et auget | hoc ipsum flammam ardetque in virgine virgo* (*Met.* 9.724-725: 'Iphis loves, where she despairs of being able to have fulfilment, and this very thing increases the flames; a maiden burns for a maiden'). In the world of the *Metamorphoses*, one *virgo* can ardently desire another while still remaining a *virgo*. Though the structure of the Iphis/Ianthe episode denies the sexual fulfilment of this desire as Iphis is transformed into a man, the Callisto episode reveals a kind of physically-expressed eroticism between women that Iphis has never heard of. Confused and isolated, thirteen-year-old Iphis delivers a monologue lamenting her unnatural passion (9.726-763), yet neither Callisto nor Diana exhibits such anxiety. Quite the opposite: Callisto openly proclaims her preference for Diana.

Attempting to fit the relationship between Diana and Callisto into the mould of the active/passive paradigm is a difficult task. In the end, the limitless power Diana's divinity grants allows her to establish dominance over Callisto, but it is far from clear that their relationship always followed such a pattern. Callisto is highly responsive to the goddess and exhibits an independent force of

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<sup>48</sup> Ormand (2005) argues that this similarity makes Iphis' desire impossible in Roman terms.

<sup>49</sup> Davis (1983), 57.

<sup>50</sup> Sale (1965), 12.

preference; further, Ovid's use of the word *potentia* suggests she has concrete influence over Diana. Their relationship exhibits an unusual degree of erotic egalitarianism: Callisto treats Diana not as an unapproachable figure of worship, but as a comfortably familiar companion in the perilous wilderness. What exactly these two huntresses might have done in the woods, aside from kiss immoderately, is never made explicit; it is left to the reader to imagine unnamed erotic pleasures between these two women, neither of whom can comfortably be labelled a *tribas*. The reductive question of 'who penetrates whom' fails to accommodate kisses between two *virgines*, both physically attractive to men, both devoted to a lifestyle that involves the firm rejection of marriage to men.

## II Erotic repose in the woods

In addition to the language of the Callisto episode, which, as we have seen, invites readerly fantasies of female homoeroticism, Ovid engages in a manipulation of narratological cues in order to further insinuate an erotic relationship between Diana and Callisto. Throughout this chapter I have adopted a comparative intratextual approach within the *Metamorphoses* itself, and the following discussion focuses in on a particular aspect of the episode's intratextuality: its relationship with other stories involving hunting and beautiful yet menacing landscapes.

Ovid's use of landscape in the *Metamorphoses* has attracted a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Hugh Parry's 1964 article noted a connection between *loca amoena*, eroticism, and hunting: 'One particular kind of landscape is like a leitmotif: that of the inviting pool at noon set in wooded and umbriferous surroundings... Such landscapes more often than not form the essential backdrop for what may be described as variations upon the erotic connotations of the hunt'.<sup>51</sup> Parry also pointed to a connection between unspoiled, virginal landscapes and violation, often sexual: 'Raw sexual passion is most appositely indulged against a background of virginal wilderness, the harsh untrodden terrain where elemental human appetency and crude nature are

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<sup>51</sup> Parry (1964), 269.

in close conjunction'.<sup>52</sup> Charles Segal built on Parry's work in a 1969 monograph, focussing on the symbolism of Metamorphic landscapes: 'The external landscape corresponds to an inner landscape, a realm where normally repressed impulses are made visible and possible... [Ovid transforms] some of the eroticism into symbolic scenery and [makes] that scenery the symbolic vehicle for some of the sexual overtones'.<sup>53</sup> Such beautiful settings, Segal further notes, create a 'pervasive sensuous atmosphere, a mood of luxurious lassitude... the primacy of the senses over the mind'.<sup>54</sup> The landscapes are freighted with ambivalence and tension, playing host to 'a vicious cycle of venatic and sexual energy',<sup>55</sup> simultaneously virginal and erotic, but always sensual, lulling, encouraging surrender.

Beautiful and wild landscapes, as Parry and Segal demonstrate, are indeed often the locations of sexual or sexualised violence linked to the hunt. However, they also play host to a gentler variety of eroticism, harking back to the use of landscape in lyric and pastoral poetry. Pastoral and elegiac lovers in Augustan poetry often connect wild landscapes, hunting and the companionship of the beloved: compare, for example, Vergil's second *Eclogue*, where Corydon fantasises about a rural existence with Alexis, including hunting with him (29-30), Propertius 1.1, in which Milanion wins Atalanta through becoming a hunter, Tibullus 1.4, in which Priapus advises acceding to one's beloved boy's desire to hunt (50), or [Tibullus] 3.9, in which 'Sulpicia' expresses her willingness to assist Cerinthus in his hunting.<sup>56</sup> Ovid's Phaedra considers the hunt lacking without interludes, of which she offers three specifically erotic examples: Cephalus and Aurora, Venus and Adonis, Meleager and Atalanta (*Her.* 4.85-105). She proceeds to declare herself willing to fearlessly follow Hippolytus on the hunt.<sup>57</sup> In general, as Marcel Detienne argues in his examination of hunting myths, the hunt becomes the 'privileged place in myth for marginal sexual behaviour, whether it be... denial of marriage or... experimentation with

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<sup>52</sup> Parry (1964), 278.

<sup>53</sup> Segal (1969), 12.

<sup>54</sup> Segal (1969), 8.

<sup>55</sup> Parry (1964), 282.

<sup>56</sup> Note especially 15-16: 'then the woods would please me, my light, if I could be accused of lying with you before the nets themselves', *tunc mihi, tunc placeant silvae, si, lux mea, tecum / arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas*.

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of *Heroides* 4 and its relationship to Sulpicia's poem, see Fabre-Serris (2009), who argues that the latter specifically alludes to the former.

censured sexual behaviour. As a liminal place where socially dominant sexual relations are as if suspended, the land of the hunt is open to the subversion of amorous pursuits'.<sup>58</sup>

The link between sex and hunting becomes especially pronounced when the hunter takes a break in one of those ambivalent Ovidian *loca amoena*, a situation that acts in the *Metamorphoses* as a 'narratological cue' for an erotic event,<sup>59</sup> whether the attack of a rapist (Arethusa), a consensual erotic encounter between two people who have shared the hunt, or something else altogether (Narcissus, Actaeon). The Venus/Adonis episode most clearly exemplifies the second type. Venus pursues Adonis by becoming an incongruous (and rather unconvincing) huntress, 'clothing fastened at the knee in the manner of Diana' (*vestem ritu succincta Dianae*, 10.536). Adonis is willing (if not openly enthusiastic<sup>60</sup>), and when, worn out by these unfamiliar pursuits, Venus rests with him in a grassy, shady spot, she 'mingles kisses with her words' (10.559) as she tells him the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes. There are close verbal parallels between Callisto's hunting break and Venus': Venus 'leans on the grass and him, and with her neck placed in the lap of the reclining youth [speaks]' (*pressitque et gramen et ipsum, / inque sinu iuvenis posita cervice reclinis*, 10.558-9), while Callisto '[lies] on the ground, which the grass covered, and [leans on] her painted quiver with her neck placed upon it' (*inque solo quod texerat herba iacebat / et pictam posita pharetram cervice premebat*, 2.421-2).<sup>61</sup> There is no essential difference between the nature of the hunting break preceding a rape and that preceding a consensual encounter: all depends on the willingness of the resting hunter. Callisto, greeting her goddess in enthusiastic terms and yielding to 'her' immoderate kisses, shows more willingness than Adonis ever does. The erotic event that the hunting break triggers is in this instance both consensual homoeroticism and coercive heteroeroticism, one after the other.

The intratextual parallel with Venus and Adonis supplies the reader with another model against which to read the relationship between Diana and Callisto.

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<sup>58</sup> Detienne (1979), 26.

<sup>59</sup> Hinds (2002), 131; see also Davis (1983), 57, who phrases the same point differently ('The hunting intermission in a *locus amoenus* is standard motif preparation for an erotic event').

<sup>60</sup> Davis characterises Adonis as 'a neutral recipient of Venus' affections' (Davis [1983], 105).

<sup>61</sup> Moore-Blunt (1977), 93, notes the similarity between these two phrases, but offers no interpretation.

Adonis, as a passive, tender and beautiful lover of a goddess, contrasts with the bold Callisto in her self-assertiveness and force of preference. In her inset tale of Atalanta, however, Venus compares Atalanta's beauty both to her own and to Adonis', were he a woman (*ut faciem et posito corpus velamine vidit / quale meum, vel quale tuum, si femina fias, Met. 10.578-580*), while Atalanta marvels at Hippomenes' girlish visage (*at quam virgineus puerili vultus in ore est, Met. 10.631*). Sexual ambiguity, in short, reigns supreme over the Venus/Adonis episode: Venus' active role, Adonis' passivity, and the epicene appearance of Adonis and Hippomenes. Atalanta and Hippomenes, paralleled to Venus and Adonis, in fact form a closer parallel for Diana and Callisto: each desires the other, and both of them take an active role in consummating this desire. Although Venus/Adonis provides a parallel for Diana/Callisto in that it is one of the few mutually consensual mortal/divine erotic encounters in the poem, and in that it places a strong emphasis on sexual ambiguity and role-reversal, it is not an exact parallel. The paradigm of sexually aggressive goddess and young mortal man, distinctly non-normative but nonetheless recurrent,<sup>62</sup> cannot therefore accommodate fully the Diana/Callisto relationship.

The Callisto episode, to complicate matters further, exhibits a doubling of the hunting break motif. When Callisto has been raped, the true Diana, this time accompanied by her band of nymphs, worn out by the hunt and the hot sun (*dea venatu fraternis languida flammis, 2.455*), decides on a place to bathe—unsurprisingly, a cool grove (*nemus gelidum, 2.456*). 'Any witness is far off—let us bathe our naked bodies with water poured over', she exhorts her companions (*'procul est' ait 'arbiter omnis; / nuda superfusis tingamus corpora lymphis', 2.459-60*). Given the narratological expectation programmed by the 'midday rest in beautiful place' motif, this is just the kind of occasion on which we would expect an(other) erotic event. The character of that event—whether rape, consensual eroticism, or generalised violence of a hunter preyed upon—cannot be fixed in advance.

The bath, ultimately, is the location for the revelation of Callisto's pregnancy and her expulsion from Diana's company. Ovid has focussed us on Callisto's shame (2.447-451), so we can predict what is actually going to

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<sup>62</sup> See especially Stehle (1996).

happen—but there is something else going on as well. The juxtaposition of the rape and the revelation in similar settings leads us to connect the two events. If Diana's kisses were not unusual, we can imagine, given the highly suggestive qualities of a band of women bathing together naked,<sup>63</sup> that the bath would, under normal circumstances, have also been an erotic setting. Diana's words linger on this possibility—she does not say merely 'let's bathe', but calls attention specifically to nude bodies, water poured over (a titillating hint, perhaps, of the nymphs washing each other's bodies). It is Callisto's 'nude body' that will reveal her *crimen* (2.463). As with the first hunting break/rape, the second progresses from a hint of homoeroticism to a traumatic event. The sensual pleasures of kisses and nude bodies, existing only in a barely-glimpsed, ever-antecedent realm, become polluted by rape and violation. In an attempt to avert such violation, Diana aggressively polices her territory, ordering Callisto away (2.464); in a similar, but far more brutal way, she punishes Actaeon's forbidden sight (3.155-255).

The Callisto episode as a whole presents a kaleidoscopic range of transgressive, forbidden desires and pleasures alongside more licit ones: the adult male desire to dominate another sexually, but also to change into a woman and experience the erotic in a woman's body; a goddess' desire for immoderate kisses with a mortal woman and nude bathing in the woods; a mortal woman's desire for unspecified pleasures with a goddess; the desires of both women for female company rather than marriage. The strong theme of sexual secrecy and forbidden sight runs through the episode; the reader is both granted and denied access to Diana's realm, allowed to see the rape, the bath, the transformations, but blocked from seeing or knowing the customary *telos* of those immoderate kisses between women in the woods. Men might want to know, but to know could well mean destruction. Within the shifting world of the *Metamorphoses*, however, a female perspective is always available—even to male readers.<sup>64</sup> As Boehringer's epigraph to this chapter eloquently states, in the Callisto episode desire between women is both a fugitive, ephemeral image, and a clearly stated possibility, available to the reader who would embrace it.

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<sup>63</sup> Potentially female-homoerotic scenes are often related to the bath in the visual arts (see Rabinowitz 2002b for the evidence from Greek pottery, and Simons 1994 for later (Renaissance) homoerotic visual representations of Diana and her nymphs bathing).

<sup>64</sup> On female perspective in the *Met.*, see Lively (1999), 199-200.



Vis-à-vis Diana's realm, the reader is forced into the position of voyeur, peeking around the edges of the ever-oblique narrative, visualising and filling in its gaps. Some early modern readers, as I have mentioned, chose to visualise Diana's realm as a pastoral utopia involving sensuous interaction among women. Similarly, in Augustan Rome, it is conceivable that some readers could have seen in the Callisto episode a challenge to entrenched sexual hierarchies and an articulation of an apparently 'invisible' eroticism between feminine women. Whether the ending of Callisto's story—ejection from Diana's band, metamorphosis into an ugly beast, muting, humiliation by Juno and the ambiguously-figured fate of catasterism—allows much positive meaning to be extracted from her past is highly debateable. Perhaps, as Alison Sharrock suggests, 'all representation has tainted elements in its formulation and/or the responses to it, *but* it can still be beautiful and worthwhile... Simultaneous multiple levels of reading—taking it more than one way at once—might be the answer'.<sup>65</sup> More lyrically, Rimell contends that 'we can see Ovid imitating, lusting after, riling the Bacchic dance of feminine discourse... just as much as he restrains and smothers it'.<sup>66</sup> For all the restraining, muting, and voyeuristic aspects of the Callisto episode, its embrace of the possibility of female homoeroticism both distinguishes it from the Iphis/Ianthe episode (in which Iphis simply cannot conceive of non-penetrative female homoeroticism), and makes it an invaluable piece of evidence for ancient conceptions of sexuality.

The Callisto episode did not, however, emerge in a vacuum. Though singular in the *Metamorphoses* for its representation of a female homoerotic relationship that instils no anxiety in the participants, it is not singular in Greek and Latin literature as a whole. Its configuration of particular themes and motifs (bands of Dianic huntresses, dangerous yet erotic bathing scenes, intense homosociality in liminal settings) reveals its engagement with previous literature, particularly the set of Greek texts which will be discussed in the next chapter. Callisto was not the only companion of Diana to engage in homoerotic flirtation: the pervasiveness of homoerotic themes in earlier Greek texts and later Latin texts dealing with similar stories reveals that the space of possibility her

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<sup>65</sup> Sharrock (2002), 274 (original emphasis).

<sup>66</sup> Rimell (2006), 155.

relationship with Diana opens is not confined to a single clever Ovidian experiment.

### Chapter Three: Hellenic Excursus

She'll tell  
her story  
rather than be held inside its web. There are holes—  
have you noticed—  
Where the seams don't quite close? Daphne peers through  
those gaps.  
She scans the sky and plans to stare—you can almost hear her  
glance—  
down the air, the blank, the optical until  
a face stares back.  
(excerpt from Alice Fulton, *Daphne and Apollo*<sup>1</sup>)

Time has come to take a step back to the quintessential Alexandrian poet Callimachus and the poet-mythographer Parthenius, a Romanised Greek working in the Alexandrian tradition. In the Appendix of Sources to his book *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, Brooks Otis lists among the 'sources' for the Callisto episode Callimachus' *Hymn to Athena* and Parthenius *Erotika Pathemata* 15.<sup>2</sup> The Ovidian bathing scene, claims Otis, combines aspects of similar bathing scenes in both Callimachus and Parthenius: in Callimachus, the young Teiresias inadvertently runs into Athena bathing with his mother Chariclo, Athena's favourite companion, and is blinded by Athena; in Parthenius, the young Leucippus, who has cross-dressed in order to seduce Daphne, is stripped by her band of hunting companions, revealed to be a man, and attacked with spears. Otis claims that Ovid drew upon these texts in moulding his own version of the Callisto myth and constructing his unique bathing scene.<sup>3</sup> Though agreeing with Otis that echoes of these texts are perceptible in the Callisto episode, I formulate their influence differently, and perceive that influence more widely throughout the episode. Rather than simply providing Ovid's narrative structure, the Callimachean and Parthenian texts prefigure the themes of the Callisto episode as a whole: male-to-female transvestism as erotic strategy; sexual ambiguity and transgression; voyeurism and fantasy; and, perhaps most importantly, exclusively homosocial milieux at the edges of civilised society. Whether or not Ovid himself consciously drew on the texts, educated readers of the

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<sup>1</sup> Fulton (1995), 55.

<sup>2</sup> Otis (1970), 387.

<sup>3</sup> Otis (1970), 387: 'Ovid combines the Callimachean bathing scene with the *pathos* of Leucippos'.

*Metamorphoses* would likely have had them in mind, and reminiscences of them could have coloured their reading of the entire episode, enriching its homoerotic frisson. Via Ovid, the Greek texts are gathered together into what might almost be described as a coherent counter-discourse to that of tribadism, one with its own eccentricities, distortions and limitations that cannot be equated with some reified ‘modern egalitarian lesbianism’, but that nonetheless pushes at the boundaries of normative sexuality.

I shall begin with Callimachus’ *Hymn to Athena*, which prefigures the Callisto episode in its representation of an intimate relationship between a mortal woman and a goddess and a bathing scene simultaneously ominous and sensual. Integrated into that discussion is an examination of Callimachus’ *Hymn to Artemis* and the homosocial relationships amongst young women it strongly emphasises; here, as in my examination of Ovid, intertextual detail is juxtaposed with a potential intratextual reading by a reader who took the book of *Hymns* as a whole. I move on to discuss Parthenius’ and Pausanias’ accounts of the story of Leucippus and Daphne. Both accounts parallel the Callisto episode in that they present a man cross-dressing in order to get close to a young Artemisian huntress to whom he is sexually attracted, and both end in yet another bathing scene. Pausanias’ account, though later in date than Ovid, is valuable as a reception of the Daphne story which brings out its homoerotic content. Some ancient readers, therefore, were clearly sensitive to the dimensions of the stories I explore.

## **I Callimachus’ *sexy parthenoi***

Ovid’s (homo)erotic representation of a virgin goddess by means of an extended examination of her relationship with a mortal woman has a significant precedent in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Athena*. The hymn purports to represent an Argive festival in which a statue of Athena is bathed in the river Inachus. As the celebrants wait for the goddess to arrive, the narrator tells the myth of Athena’s friendship with the nymph Chariclo, mother of Teiresias; Teiresias’ accidental stumbling upon the goddess and his mother bathing; his subsequent blinding; and Athena’s speech of consolation to Chariclo, in which she cites the parallel of Artemis and Actaeon.

As scholars have noted, the Athena of Callimachus' *Hymn* is an ambiguous figure, blurring boundaries both between genders and between divinities.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally Athena was seen as forbiddingly asexual, according to Loraux a goddess, even, without a body, to the extent of being cosubstantial with her protective wrappings (breastplate, *aegis*, *peplos*).<sup>5</sup> Artemis, on the other hand, flaunts her nudity, 'willingly [revealing it] to the gaze of the nymphs'.<sup>6</sup> Her body—and body she certainly has—is continually on display, continually tempting to mythical voyeurs and male poets (one need only look to the multiple permutations of the Actaeon myth). The myth of Athena's accidental killing of her friend Pallas parallels in structure Apollo's accidental killing of his boyfriend Hyacinthus. Thus, it perhaps hints at an intimate relationship with a mortal woman, uncharacteristic for this motherless patron of male heroes. There are not, however, many extant treatments of the Athena/Pallas myth.<sup>7</sup> Callimachus' hymn, as I shall further discuss, is startling in that it substantially imbues Athena with characteristics of both Aphrodite and Artemis: this quasi-Spartan athlete-warrior-maiden exhibits Aphroditic behaviour in an Artemisian setting. Like Diana and Callisto, Callimachus' Athena is a *parthenos* with a frisson of eroticism, and this eroticism is directed towards a close female companion.

One of Callimachus' numerous innovations in this Hymn is his strong emphasis on the relationship between Athena and Chariclo.<sup>8</sup> He devotes thirteen lines solely to describing the closeness of this relationship (*Hymn to Athena* 57-69):

παῖδες, Ἀθαναία νύμφαν μίαν ἔν ποκα Θήβαις  
 πολὺ τι καὶ πέρι δὴ φίλατο τᾶν ἑταρᾶν,  
 ματέρα Τειρεσίαο, καὶ οὐποκα χωρὶς ἔγεντο·  
 ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχαίων εἶδ' ἐπὶ Θεσπιέων  
 — — — ἧ εἰς Ἀλίαρτον ἐλαύνοι

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<sup>4</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 27. See also Morrison (2005) for Athena's sexual ambiguity, and MacInnes (2005) for her masculinisation.

<sup>5</sup> Loraux (1995), 211-227.

<sup>6</sup> Loraux (1995), 215.

<sup>7</sup> See Apollodorus *Bib.* 3.144; no special intimacy, however, between Athena and Pallas is suggested in that account.

<sup>8</sup> As McKay (1962), 37 notes (original emphasis): 'The coverage that [Callimachus] gives to the subject [Athena's love for Chariclo] *formally* makes such love deep and warm; we are supposed to share in it, and be moved to pity and revulsion at the thought of what the favourite is to suffer at the goddess' hands'.

ἵππων, Βοιωτῶν ἔργα διερχομένα,  
 ἧ' πὶ Κορωνείας, ἵνα οἱ τεθνωμένον ἄλσος  
 καὶ βωμοὶ ποταμῷ κείντ' ἐπὶ Κουραλίῳ,  
 πολλάκις ἂ δαίμων νιν ἐὼ ἐπεβάσατο δίφρῳ, 65  
 οὐδ' ὄαροι νυμφῶν οὐδὲ χοροστασίαι  
 ἀδείαι τελέθεσκον, ὅκ' οὐχ ἀγείτο Χαρικλώ·  
 ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ τήναν δάκρυα πόλλ' ἔμενε,  
 καίπερ Ἀθαναία καταθύμιον ἔσσαν ἑταίραν.

Girls, Athena once loved one nymph in Thebes out of her companions quite exceedingly well, the mother of Teiresias; never were they apart. For even when to Thespieae of old... or to Haliartus she drove her horses, passing through the Boeotian fields, or toward Koroneia, where her bescented grove and altars lay by the river Kouralios, often the goddess set her upon her chariot, nor did the nymphs' dalliances or dance joyously take place but with leader Chariclo; yet even for her still many tears remained although she was a companion after Athena's own heart.<sup>9</sup>

Chariclo, like Callisto, is the favourite female companion of a virgin goddess, a point Callimachus especially stresses: a string of grammatically unnecessary intensifiers (*πολύ τι καὶ περί δή*) precedes the essential point of lines 57-8 (*μίαν... φίλατο τᾶν ἑταρᾶν*).<sup>10</sup> Bulloch's translation 'quite exceedingly well' captures the almost hyperbolic tone of this line. Like Callisto and Diana, Chariclo and Athena are inseparable, and like Callisto, Chariclo is ever the leader of the goddess' companions (cf. *Met.* 2.449). As in Ovid, furthermore, a description of the closeness of the goddess and her favourite mortal companion is juxtaposed with an ominous comment on future misfortunes (*ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ τήναν δάκρυα πόλλ' ἔμενε | καίπερ Ἀθαναία καταθύμιον ἔσσαν ἑταίραν*, 68 ~ *sed nulla potentia longa est*, *Met.* 2.416). Unlike Ovid, however, who compresses the description of Callisto and Diana's relationship into one line (*Met.* 2.449, [*nec*] *iuncta deae lateri nec toto est agmine prima*), Callimachus expands his description to fill these thirteen lines. His emphasis is on the emotional intimacy Athena and Chariclo share. Their constant physical proximity is implied by the fact that Athena allows Chariclo to ride beside her on her chariot (*πολλάκις ἂ δαίμων νιν ἐὼ ἐπεβάσατο δίφρῳ*, 65). Bulloch, noting that the transitive use of the middle voice (*ἐπεβάσατο*) is a unique Callimachean variation, suggests that the voice of the verb may emphasise the closeness of Athena and Chariclo:<sup>11</sup> it

<sup>9</sup> Translation of Bulloch (1985), 97-99.

<sup>10</sup> See Bulloch (1985), 58, for the argument that *περί* is acting as an adverb expressing superiority rather than a preposition governing *τᾶν ἑταρᾶν*.

<sup>11</sup> Bulloch (1985), 173.

is in Athena's own interest, as a pleasure to herself, that she places Chariclo beside her. The rare word *καταθύμιος* (69) literally means something like 'according to one's heart/spirit/mind': a clear indication of emotional intimacy. The word is used elsewhere of 'congenial' boys and women, therefore can refer to erotic relationships.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the entire hymn, Chariclo and Athena are constantly together, perhaps even more than Callisto and Diana: there is no opportunity for Chariclo to fall victim to rape, since Athena and her companions share their journeys through idyllic landscapes and their 'dalliances (*ῥαροι*, 66)'. Words with the stem *ῥαρ-* were used as early as Homer to refer to erotic dalliances (*Il.* 14.216: on the girdle Aphrodite presents to Hera to seduce Zeus there are *φιλότης*, *ἕμερος*, and *ῥαριστύς*; *Il.* 22.127-8: Hector laments that he is unable to speak to Achilles softly [*ῥαριζέμεναι*] as a young man and a young girl do), and were often utilised in an erotic sense in the Palatine Anthology (e.g., 9.358, 9.362, 9.381, 10.68, 16.272; cf. also *Ap. Rho.* 3.1102, Jason attempts to beguile Medea with *μειλιχίοισι ῥαροισω*). Again, the reader is not told exactly what women do in the wilderness, but is given hints that whatever it is is 'less than virginal'. As in Ovid, however, these scenes are coloured by a note of ominousness: even having privileged access to a goddess cannot prevent misfortune.

Through examining the rest of the text more closely, further dimensions of eroticisation are revealed through Callimachus' creation of a network of intertextual references associating Athena with Aphrodite and Artemis. As Fotini Hadjittofi has argued, 'the Callimachean Athena, far from being asexual, incorporates qualities (and narratives) that belong to the world of Aphrodite'.<sup>13</sup> A passage near the beginning of the *Hymn* utilises the myth of the Judgment of Paris to place Athena relative to Aphrodite, Hera and Helen, tempering the goddess' usual forbidding and cold chastity with a note of distinctly 'feminine' sensuality: a warmer, more alluring Artemisian-style 'chastity'. Evocations of Homer and Theocritus colour the passage's meaning (*Hymn to Athena* 15-32):

<sup>12</sup> See Bulloch (1985), 144 with n 2. *γυνή καταθύμιος*: *Hdt.* 5.39, *Musonius* 14 p. 74 H; *πᾶσι καταθύμιος* *Democr. fr.* 277 K (references from *LSJ* s.v. *καταθύμιος*). See also *Parthenius Erotika Pathemata* 15, discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 9.

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| μὴ μύρα λωτροχόοι τῆ Παλλάδι μηδ' ἀλαβάστρωσ<br>(οὐ γὰρ Ἀθαναία χρίματα μεικτὰ φιλεῖ)<br>οἴσετε μηδὲ κάτοπτρον· ἀεὶ καλὸν ὄμμα τὸ τήνας.<br>οὐδ' ὄκα τὰν Ἴδα Φρυγὲς ἐδίκαζεν ἔριν,<br>οὔτ' ἐς ὀρείχαλκον μεγάλα θεὸς οὔτε Σιμοῦντος<br>ἔβλεψεν δίναν ἐς διαφαινομένην·   | 15<br><br><br><br>20         |
| οὐδ' Ἥρα· Κύπρις δὲ διανγέα χαλκὸν ἐλοῖσα<br>πολλάκι τὰν αὐτὰν δις μετέθηκε κόμαν.<br>ἀ δὲ δις ἐξήκοντα διαθρέξασα διαύλωσ,<br>οἶα παρ' Εὐρώτῃ τοῖ Λακεδαιμόνιοι<br>ἀστέρες, ἔμπεράμωσ ἐτρίψατο λιτὰ βαλοῖσα<br>χρίματα, τὰς ἰδίας ἔκγονα φυταλιᾶσ,<br>ὦ κῶραι, τὸ δ' ἔρευθος ἀνέδραμε, πρῶϊον οἶαν<br>ἢ ῥόδον ἢ σίβδασ κόκκος ἔχει χροῖάν.<br>τῶ καὶ νῦν ἄρσεν τι κομίσσατε μῶνον ἔλαιον,<br>ὧ Κάστωρ, ὧ καὶ χρίεται Ἡρακλῆσ· | 25<br><br><br><br><br><br>30 |
| οἴσετε καὶ κτένα οἱ παγχρύσειον, ὡσ ἀπὸ χαίταν<br>πέξεται, λιπαρὸν σμιασμένα πλόκαμον.   |                              |

Neither perfumes for Pallas, bathpourers, nor jars—oils with scent are not what Athena likes—are you to bring, nor a mirror—her aspect is always fair. Even on Ida when a Phrygian judged the contest the mighty goddess looked neither into *oreichalc* nor the transparent eddy of the Simoeis; nor did Hera, but Cypris took the translucent bronze and frequently twice rearranged the same lock of hair. Athena ran twice sixty double course lengths, like the Lacedaemonians by the Eurotas, the famous stars, and with skill she took and rubbed in the plain oil, the product of her own growing. Girls, the fresh flush sprang up, with what, early in the year, the rose, or the pomegranate seed, has for a bloom. So now too bring something manly, just olive oil, the anointing oil of Castor, of Heracles; bring her also a comb all of gold, that she may untangle her hair, after cleansing her shining locks.<sup>14</sup>

On the surface, Callimachus' text opposes Athena to Aphrodite. Athena is presented as a bellicose, masculine goddess, emphatically rejecting perfume and mirrors (13-16). She has no need for mirrors—because she is always beautiful (*ἀεὶ καλὸν ὄμμα τὸ τήνας*, 17). The mention of her beauty here strikes a dissonant note; the last image we had of the goddess was of her scrubbing dust and grime from her horses with her 'mighty arms' (*μεγάλωσ... πάχεισ*, 5), hardly a glamorous picture. Aphrodite's fastidious rearranging of the same lock of hair (22) seems, on the surface, a dramatic contrast; and the dissonance between Athena's beauty and her vigorous activity continues as we are told of her

<sup>14</sup> Bulloch (1985) translation.



prodigious feats of running by the Eurotas (23-4), and her self-anointing with ‘manly olive oil’ (ἄρσεν... ἔλαιον, 29).

It is prudent to take the surface dissonance between Athena’s beauty and athleticism and probe it further. Hadjittofi points out three elements in the passage we have been discussing that suggest a blurring between Aphrodite and Athena: first, ὀρείχαλκον (19, used of Aphrodite looking at her reflection) is unique as metonymy for a mirror, and Hadjittofi argues that it in fact refers to a shield, engaging with the contemporary image of Aphrodite looking at her reflection in a shield<sup>15</sup> (perhaps recalling, for Roman readers, the armed Venus Victrix). Here, warlike Athena paradoxically refuses to take the shield, whilst Aphrodite appropriates it for herself. Secondly, Athena’s Spartan athletics—especially combined with references to the Dioscuri—recall Theocritus’ *Epithalamium for Helen* (*Id.* 18), wherein ‘four times sixty’ (τετράκισ ἑξήκοντα, *Id.* 18.24; cf *Hymn to Athena* δις ἑξήκοντα [courses], 23) Spartan girls anoint themselves ‘in manly fashion’ (ἀνδριστι, *Id.* 18.23) and run; Helen, ‘golden’ (χρυσέα, *Id.* 18.28; cf. Callimachus’ association of Athena with gold,<sup>16</sup> *Hymn to Athena* 31, 43, 49) and ‘rosy-skinned’ (ρόδοχρως, *Id.* 18.31), is the object of their intent, almost erotic gaze.<sup>17</sup> Callimachus’ Athena also has a rosy glow (τὸ δ’ ἔρευθος ἀνέδραμε, πρῶϊον οἶαν | ἢ ῥόδον ἢ σίβδας κόκκος ἔχει χροϊάν, 27-8); both the rose and pomegranate were sacred to Aphrodite. Athena is intertextually linked with Helen, virtually the embodiment of Aphroditic desire (‘all desires are in [Helen’s] eyes’, Theocritus remarks; πάντες ἐπ’ ὀμμασιν ἔμεροι ἐντί, *Id.* 18.37). Thirdly, Athena’s combing of her hair (31-2) evokes the Iliadic Hera’s seduction of Zeus (*Il.* 14.175 ff; verbal parallels in χαίταν and the rare verb πείκειν, meaning ‘comb’ only in Homer<sup>18</sup>)—a particularly Aphroditic incarnation of Hera, in which she borrows the girdle of Aphrodite.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 28-29.

<sup>16</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 28.

<sup>17</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 29-30; Bulloch (1985), 131-132. MacInnes (2005, 24-5) agrees with Bulloch that there is a connection to the *Epithalamium*, but argues that Helen and Athena are ultimately contrasted to one another rather than identified: Helen harmoniously blends male and female traits, while Athena is an entirely masculinised warrior goddess. As I will explore, Athena’s eroticism runs rather deeper than MacInnes’ argument suggests, particularly with respect to her relationship with Chariclo.

<sup>18</sup> Bulloch (1985), 142.

<sup>19</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 30; Bulloch (1985), 142.

Strengthening the connection to the *Hymn to Athena*, Hera in this Iliadic passage also wears a robe made by Athena to seduce Zeus (14.178-179).

What appears, *prima facie*, a straightforward opposition between the warlike, masculine, asexual Athena and the feminine, sensual goddess of sexual desire involves at a more allusive level the interlinking of the two goddesses. Full understanding of Callimachus' poetry, as often, demands that a reader juxtapose it with other texts and other traditions.<sup>20</sup> Textual echoes link Athena to Aphrodite in three guises: the goddess herself gazing into a shield, her favourite Helen, and Hera wielding Aphrodite's girdle and sexual guile. Callimachus' finely-tuned string of allusions presents an Athena with an erotic aspect, rather than an austere and asexual virgin goddess—much in the manner of Ovid's Diana, at least as she appears in the Callisto episode. This rather unvirginal virgin goddess, as we have seen, takes on one special female companion: readers who recognise the Aphroditic intertext at lines 15-32 are cued to view the goddess' friendship, described at lines 57-69 (quoted above), as potentially homoerotic.

Even within the description of Athena's friendship with Chariclo, Callimachus further emphasises the connection between Athena and Aphrodite/Aphroditic Hera. Line 63 contains the perfect participle *τεθυωμένον*, 'sweet-smelling', derived from the verb *θυόω* ('to fill with sweet smells'). The participle *τεθυωμένον* appears in the singular only twice elsewhere in extant literature—to describe the oil with which Hera anoints herself to seduce Zeus at *Il.* 14.172, and that with which the Charites anoint Aphrodite at *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 63 (where it appears in the same metrical *sedes* and at the same line number; line 63 of the *Hymn to Athena* is one of the poem's hexameter lines, thus the metre is the same).<sup>21</sup> The earlier connections to the Aphroditic seductive Hera and Aphrodite herself are brought back into the frame, just at the moment when Athena's intimate relationship with Chariclo is detailed.

The scene where Teiresias stumbles upon Chariclo and Athena bathing together naked is another that resonates with the Callisto episode. It begins (70-74):

<sup>20</sup> See Bulloch (1985), 45-47, on Callimachus' use of allusion to create meaning.

<sup>21</sup> Hadjittofi (2008), 32.

δῆ ποκα γὰρ πέπλων λυσομένα περόνας  
 ἵππω ἐπὶ κράναι Ἑλικωνίδι καλὰ ῥεοίσαι  
 λώντο: μεσαμβρινὰ δ' εἶχ' ὄρος ἄσυχία.  
 ἀμφοτέραι λώνοντο, μεσαμβριναὶ δ' ἔσαν ὄραι,  
 πολλὰ δ' ἄσυχία τῆνο κατείχεν ὄρος.

Once on a time they undid the pins from their robes by the fair-flowing fountain of the horse on Helicon and were bathing; midday quiet took the hill. Both of them were bathing, and the hour was midday, and deep was the quiet that held that hill.<sup>22</sup>

Callimachus points specifically to the act of undressing, observing that Athena and Chariclo ‘loosed the pins of their *peploi*’ (πέπλων λυσομένα περόνας, 70). He is certain, also, to inform us that Athena and Chariclo are bathing *together*, using the dual form λυσομένα and the phrase ἀμφοτέραι λώνοντο. There is no explicit mention of physical contact, but if we already regard the relationship as eroticised at this point (as the text allows us to do, combining as it does an erotic Athena and an ambiguously figured intimate friendship) we see an opportunity for sensual, erotic, even sexual contact between Athena and Chariclo. As several scholars have discussed, perceptibly female-homoerotic scenes in the visual arts, especially on Greek pottery, often occur in the context of bathing.<sup>23</sup> As with the Ovidian bathing scene (*Met.* 2.455ff), the traumatic event that will occur to interrupt this particular bath is Callimachus’ focus, hence the ominously atmospheric emphasis upon midday and silence. But again, as with the Ovidian scene, this interrupted bath invites a reader to imagine earlier uninterrupted baths and speculate about their character.

Having established specifically Aphroditic associations for Athena, as we have seen, Callimachus goes on to insert her into an Artemisian setting. Again, dissonance clues the reader in that further interpretation is necessary. Callimachus’ *mythos*, beginning at line 56, presents Athena as a goddess who roams around the wilderness with a band of nymphs, visiting groves, dancing and playing, and bathing; and Teresias as a young hunter, the son of a nymph: ‘roles custom-made for Artemis and Actaeon, and creakingly uncomfortable for Athena and Teiresias’.<sup>24</sup> The mythical genealogy is complex,<sup>25</sup> though it seems

<sup>22</sup> Translation of Bulloch (1985), 97.

<sup>23</sup> See, for discussion with further references, Rabinowitz (2002b), 135-140.

<sup>24</sup> Haslam (1993), cited in Depew (1994), 412.

<sup>25</sup> See Depew (1994) and Lacy (1990).

that the story of Athena's blinding of Teiresias was available to Callimachus via the fifth-century BCE Athenian author Pherecydes (whose account is partially preserved in Apollodorus *Bib.* 3.6.7).<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to discern the character of Pherecydes' account from Apollodorus' summary, and there is a lacuna in the text part of the way through, but the summary makes no mention of Chariclo being a nymph, nor Teiresias being a hunter, nor even of a bath (though a scholiast on *Odyssey* 10.493 states that Athena was bathing in Pherecydes' account<sup>27</sup>). Apollodorus just records that Chariclo was dear to Athena, and that Teiresias saw Athena naked and she subsequently blinded him.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of the extent to which Pherecydes assimilated Athena with Artemis, Callimachus certainly does so, and emphatically. He aligns the myth of Athena and Teiresias with that of Artemis and Actaeon, quoted by Athena in her consolation speech to Chariclo, *Hymn to Athena* 107-118, by following the tradition whereby Actaeon was blinded because he saw Artemis bathing.<sup>29</sup> Other accounts had him attempting to marry Semele or even Artemis herself, or boasting that he was a better hunter than Artemis.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that the 12-century CE bishop Eustathius, when summarising Callimachus' *Hymn*, writes that Teiresias saw Artemis bathing rather than Athena: Callimachus' assimilation of the two goddesses is so extensive as to cause such an error.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of Callimachus' assimilation of Athena and Artemis, the eroticism that is detectable in the relationship between Athena and Chariclo takes place within a particular framework, that provided by Artemis. Callimachus further explores the character of the homosocial relationships amongst Artemisian huntresses in his *Hymn to Artemis*, to which I shall now connect my reading of the *Hymn to Athena* in order to further elucidate the nature of the *Hymn to Athena's* Artemisian framework. It is highly likely that Callimachus' hymns would have been gathered in a single book, easily read in

<sup>26</sup> See Bulloch (1985), 14-25.

<sup>27</sup> See Bulloch (1985), 18 for a text of the scholion; the relevant part reads *πηρωθῆναι δ' αὐτόν <φῆσι> Φερεκύδης ἰδόντα τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν λουομένην* ('Pherecydes says that he [Teiresias] was blinded after seeing Athena bathing').

<sup>28</sup> *Φερεκύδης δὲ ὑπὸ Ἀθηνᾶς αὐτὸν τυφλωθῆναι: οὖσαν γὰρ τὴν Χαρικλῶ προσφιλῆ τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ <lacuna> γυμνὴν ἐπὶ πάντα ἰδεῖν, τὴν δὲ ταῖς χερσὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ καταλαβομένην πηρὸν ποιῆσαι.*

<sup>29</sup> Some scholars argue that Actaeon's intrusion upon the bath was Callimachus' invention; Lacy (1990), *passim*, presents convincing arguments that it was not.

<sup>30</sup> See Lacy (1990), 27-28.

<sup>31</sup> O'Hara (1996), 175-176.

light of one another.<sup>32</sup> Like the *Metamorphoses*, they are thus amenable to intratextual reading. Someone who read the Hymns in order, furthermore, would encounter the *Hymn to Artemis* (third in the collection) before the *Hymn to Athena* (fifth in the collection), and would, thus, already have an idea, within the text being read, of the nature of Artemisian hunting bands, in whose image Callimachus paints Athena, Chariclo and their other nymph companions. A reader of Ovid who knew the entire collection of Callimachean *Hymns* may have brought to their reading of the *Metamorphoses* a conception of Artemisian hunting bands, such as that of Diana and Callisto, which incorporated intense homosociality and close female bonds. Turning to the *Hymn to Artemis*, I will examine passages that describe the nature of the relationships between Artemis and her female companions. The poem strongly emphasises Artemis' affection for her companions, and creates a space outside of conventional femininity and the company of men for close bonds to form.

The *Hymn to Artemis* has a more conventional form than the *Hymn to Athena*, consisting of an account of Artemis' childhood, her characteristic activities, cult places, favoured companions and shrines, enlivened, as is Callimachus' wont, by wit and erudition. After outlining the goddess' childhood and hunting pursuits, the narrator asks of Artemis, 'Which of the nymphs did you love above the others, what kind of heroines did you have as your companions?' (τίνα δ' ἔξοχα νυμφέων | φίλαο καὶ ποίας ἠρωίδας ἔσχεσ ἑταίρας; 184-5). Callimachus then goes on to describe individual women who are Artemis' special favourites, the targets of lavish attentions (*Hymn to Artemis*, 189-190):

ἔξοχα δ' ἀλλάων Γορτυνίδα φίλαο νύμφην,  
ἔλλοφόνον Βριτόμαρτιν ἔύσκοπον·

Above the other nymphs you loved Gortynian Britomartis, the slayer of fawns, able to hit the target. [Callimachus proceeds to narrate the myth of Britomartis and how she was pursued by Minos]

καὶ μὴν Κυρήνην ἑταρίσσαο, τῇ ποτ' ἔδωκας

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<sup>32</sup> Though the hymns were probably composed at different times, Callimachus most likely collected them together in a book; see Depew (2004), 117, who also considers the *Hymns* to Athena and Artemis together. Morrison (2005, 28) states that the hymns are 'clearly a carefully designed poetry-book... there are careful patterns of continuation, opposition, resemblance and difference developed.'

αὐτὴ θηρητῆρε δὴ κύνε, τοῖς ἐνὶ κούρῃ  
 Ὑψηῖς παρὰ τύμβον Ἰώλκιον ἔμιμ' ἀέθλου.  
 καὶ Κεφάλου ξανθὴν ἄλοχον Δηιονίδαο,  
 πότνια, σὴν ὁμόθηρον ἐθήκαο· καὶ δέ σέ φασι 210  
 καλὴν Ἀντίκλειαν ἴσον φαέεσσι φιλῆσαι.  
 αἱ πρῶται θοὰ τόξα καὶ ἄμφ' ὤμοισι φαρέτρας  
 ἰοδόκους ἐφόρησαν· †ἀσύλλωτοι δέ φιν ὦμοι  
 δεξιτεροὶ καὶ γυμνὸς αἰεὶ παρεφαίνετο μαζός.  
 ἤνησας δ' ἔτι πάγχυ ποδορρώρην Ἀταλάντην 215  
 κούρην Ἰασίοιο συοκτόνον Ἀρκασίδαο,  
 καὶ ἐκυνηλασίην τε καὶ εὐστοχίην ἐδίδαξας. (*Hymn to Artemis*, 206-217)

And you chose Cyrene for your companion, to whom you once gave a pair of hunting dogs. With them, she, the daughter of Hypseus, took the prize near the tomb of Iolkos. And you made the blonde wife of Cephalos son of Deioneus your hunting partner, Mistress; and they say you loved the beautiful Anticleia as much as your own eyes. These women were the first to carry quick bows and arrow-bearing quivers over their shoulders, wearing the strap over the right shoulder, and the naked breast always showed. And besides these, you praised entirely swift-footed Atalanta, the boar-slaying daughter of Arcadian Iasios, and you taught her how to hunt with dogs and sharp-shoot.

The specific mythical figures Callimachus names all fit into the mould of ‘wild huntress’, a number of them rejecting men and/or marriage. Britomartis, whose story Callimachus relates in some detail, is described as a ‘sharp-eyed slayer of fawns’; her nine-month flight from Minos amply testifies to the importance she places upon virginity (later sources suggest that she rejected all men, not just Minos; cf. Ant. Lib. 40, ‘avoiding sex with men, she yearned to be a virgin forever’, αὐτὴ φυγοῦσα τὴν ὀμιλίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἠγάπησεν αἰεὶ παρθένος εἶναι). Cyrene is immortalised in Pindar’s ninth *Pythian* as a ‘wild maiden’ (παρθένον ἀγροτέραν, *Pyth.* 9.6) who avoids domestic tasks (*Pyth.* 9.17-19) and inspires Apollo’s desire as she wrestles a lion with her bare hands. Whether she sleeps with Apollo willingly is not quite clear, but her initial rejection of feminine activities is unequivocal. Procris gives up domesticity and her treacherous husband to become a companion of Artemis—Callimachus’ naming of her as ‘wife of Cephalus’ emphasises the fact. Atalanta is Meleager’s lover (though not wife) in many accounts, but Theognis has her fleeing to the mountains to avoid marriage (ὤλιχετο δ' ὑψηλὰς εἰς κορυφὰς ὄρέων | φεύγουσ' ἡμερόεντα γάμον, χρυσοῆς Ἀφροδίτης | δῶρα, Theogn. 1292-1294); in any case her boar-slaying exploits match those of men. Whether or not they reject men as sexual partners, the kinds of women who follow Artemis certainly reject marriage and

domesticity. The hunt with Artemis in the wilderness constitutes a space outside marriage and normative sexual behaviour (as we have already seen with regard to Ovid<sup>33</sup>), and it is within this space that readers can interpret freely and allow their fantasies free rein.

In the *Hymn to Artemis*, Artemis is presented as the powerful leader of a group of women who picks out favourites for education and affection. Callimachus uses the verbs *φιλεῖν*, *ἐταιρίζειν*, *διδόναι*, and *αἰνεῖν*, and the noun *δμόθηρος* (a *hapax*). The image of a superior giving gifts to, instructing and praising beautiful young people brings strongly to mind the didactic paederastic ideal, and indeed the general ancient ideal of essentially asymmetrical relationships.<sup>34</sup> Though the terminology used in the Hymn is not sexually explicit, it points to an intensity of affection that does not specifically exclude sexual expression. Male-male paederasty, a highly stylised institution at the centre of traditional aristocratic culture, is often discussed in Greek sources in similarly delicate and euphemistic terms. Therefore, it might be argued that the *Hymn* represents an attempt to read relationships between women as analogous to normative male paederasty, and if so, there is no serious challenge to normative sexual hierarchies.

Simply transferring the male paederastic model to female-female relationships, however, is a manoeuvre not without its problems, since male-male and female-female friendship were viewed rather differently. David Konstan speculates about women's friendships: '[P]erhaps the contrast between relations of domination and subordination, typical of male eroticism, and ties of friendship characterised by equality and symmetry of roles was not so marked among women as it was among men, and the vocabulary of comradeship was, accordingly, more compatible with that of amorous passion in women's poetry'.<sup>35</sup> There may have been a larger space within the discursive representation of female *philia* for sexual desire than in the case of male *philia*. Perhaps Artemis and her companions would be read as friends and equals, *philai* or *hetairai*, rather than one *erastes* and several *eromenai*. Though male-male

<sup>33</sup> See above, pages 44-45.

<sup>34</sup> See Calame (1997), 253, who briefly discusses the *Hymn to Artemis* as an example of female homoeroticism. He seems to view the relationships described as asymmetrical and quasi-paederastic. Hadjittofi (2008), 31 with n. 2, follows Calame in viewing the relationships as asymmetrical.

<sup>35</sup> Konstan (1997), 47.

erotic relationships between equals were problematic due to the stigma of penetration, female-female erotic relationships may have been perceived through a lens other than that of paederasty or scandalous penetration. The kind of relationship represented in the *Hymn to Artemis* paves the way for the unusually egalitarian relationship between Diana and Callisto, to which, as we have seen, the active/passive model cannot be easily applied. Though the relationship between Artemis and her companions may appear quasi-paederastic on the surface, the fact that they are female rather than male may have resulted in a different readerly response. Some readers may indeed have seen the relationships as paederastic; others may have focussed more on female independence, community and intimacy, envisioning a less rigidly-structured hierarchy.

The *Hymn to Artemis* hints at erotic connections between Artemis and her followers within an exclusively homosocial environment, in which many of the women involved reject either men as a whole, or domesticity and marriage. It is the warmth of affection and strength of the bonds represented that makes the *Hymn* significant: readers can envision for themselves how this affection is expressed. The *Hymn* presents a warmly homosocial milieu, memories of which could have coloured a reader's reception of both the *Hymn to Athena* and Ovid's Callisto episode.

Returning to the *Hymn to Athena*, a reader familiar with Callimachus' Artemis and her intimate relationships may have read the relationship of Athena and Chariclo in the same light, since Athena is strongly assimilated to Artemis. Reading the hymns together reveals a perceptible connection between the (homo)erotic relationships of Artemis, out in the wilds, and a (homo)erotic relationship of Athena in a similar environment. The virginal Athena turns out, therefore, to be suffused with a powerful eroticism, a blend of Artemisian and Aphroditic erotic traits. This Athena is a far cry from the austere polis goddess of classical Athenian lore. An informed reader of Callimachus' book of *Hymns* would be able to access a complex, subtle and challenging presentation of the virgins Artemis and Athena. The *Hymns* to Artemis and Athena intertwine with each other and their poetic antecedents to generate a social milieu for young huntresses outside of many usual social constraints. Even if readers did not pick up on every allusion and connection, they are nonetheless presented with



ambiguous scenes that call for imaginative visualisation: Athena's journeys with her companions; her bath with Chariclo; Artemis' love for her nymphs.

The erotic connections thus examined—Callisto/Diana, Chariclo/Athena, Artemis and her companions—have all been mortal/divine relationships. On this basis it might perhaps be argued that these relationships take on an erotic quality because of the ancient norm of asymmetrical relationships; hierarchy itself is viewed as somehow essentially erotic.<sup>36</sup> Replacing tribadism, sexual relations between a conventionally feminine woman and a monstrous, masculinised phallic woman, with an equally hierarchical mortal/divine pairing, though fascinating in itself, would not represent a significant challenge to normative conceptions of sexuality. Other texts, however, represent relationships within the Artemisian/huntress milieu that are not between the goddess and her female companions, but the female companions themselves. The tale of Leucippus and Daphne as presented by Parthenius and Pausanias features—albeit by means of male-female transvestism—an erotic connection between two young followers of Artemis. The myth fits naturally alongside the Callimachean and Ovidian texts, suggesting that the mortal/divine relationship is not the only form which female homoerotic relationships could be perceived to take within homosocial communities. The rest of this chapter will focus on fleshing out the homoerotic dimensions of the myth of Leucippus.

## II Leucippus: huntress, maiden, lover

The *Erotika Pathemata* of Parthenius of Nicaea, the Greek poet and mythographer active in Augustan Rome, whose particular thoroughly Alexandrian mode of presenting erotic myth seems to have tantalised Ovid,<sup>37</sup> is a prose summary of myths culled from other sources and reshaped, according to Parthenius' own interests (including, notoriously, transgressive and disastrous erotic passion<sup>38</sup>), intended as a sourcebook for the poetry of Gallus. Parthenius

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<sup>36</sup> See Halperin (2002), 148 for a version of this argument (applied, albeit, to male friendship rather than female).

<sup>37</sup> The extent of Parthenius' influence on the Augustan poets is a debated question. See Francese (2001), 119-189 for an argument that broadly 'Parthenian' characteristics are discernible in the way a number of Latin texts, including the *Metamorphoses*, treat Greek myth. Lightfoot (1999), *passim*, extensively discusses the use of Parthenius in Latin literature.

<sup>38</sup> See Francese (2001), 120.

tells the story of Daphne as Ovid canonises it in his *Metamorphoses* as his programmatic ‘first love’ (*primus amor Phoebi*, *Met.* 1.452): her pursuit by Apollo and transformation into the laurel tree (δάφνη). Parthenius, however, precedes this part of the story with a variant that has left few other traces in the literary record. In Pausanias 8.20.2 (to be discussed below), it is referred to as the ‘Laconian’ version of the myth, preceding ‘the version that the poets added’. The manchette to the Parthenius manuscript attributes the story to Phylarchus who may also be Pausanias’ source. In any case, Lightfoot suggests that there may have originally been two distinct Daphnes, ‘one a hunting maiden whose inviolate band was invaded by a man; and another, a nymph whose attempted rape by the god Apollo was averted by a metamorphosis’.<sup>39</sup> The entire story runs as follows (*Erotika Pathemata* 15):

[1] Περὶ δὲ τῆς Ἀμύκλα θυγατρὸς τάδε λέγεται Δάφνης. αὕτη τὸ μὲν ἅπαν εἰς πόλιν οὐ κατήει οὐδ’ ἀνείμιγετο ταῖς λοιπαῖς παρθένους· παρασκευασαμένη δὲ πολλοὺς κύνας ἐθήρευεν καὶ ἐν τῇ Λακωνικῇ καὶ ἔστιν ὅτε ἐπιφοιτῶσα εἰς τὰ λοιπὰ τῆς Πελοποννήσου ὄρη. δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν μάλα καταθύμιος ἦν Ἀρτέμιδι, καὶ αὐτὴν εὖστοχα βάλλειν ἐποίει. [2] ταύτης περὶ τὴν Ἡλιδίαν ἀλωμένης Λεύκιππος, Οἰνομάου παῖς, εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν ἦλθε καὶ τὸ μὲν ἄλλως πως αὐτῆς πειρᾶσθαι ἀπέγνω, ἀμφιεσάμενος δὲ γυναικείαις ἀμπεχόναυς καὶ ὁμοιωθεὶς κόρη συνεθήρα αὐτῇ. ἔτυχε δὲ πως αὐτῇ κατὰ νοῦν γενόμενος οὐ μεθίει τε αὐτὸν ἀμφιπεσοῦσά τε καὶ ἐξηρητημένη πᾶσαν ὄραν. [3] Ἀπόλλων δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς παιδὸς πόθῳ καιόμενος ὀργῇ τε καὶ φθόνῳ εἶχετο τοῦ Λευκίππου συνόντος καὶ ἐπὶ νοῦν αὐτῇ βάλλει σὺν ταῖς λοιπαῖς παρθένους ἐπὶ κρήνην ἐλθούσας λούεσθαι. ἔνθα δὴ ὡς ἀφικόμεναι ἀπεδιδύσκοντο καὶ ἐώρων τὸν Λεύκιππον μὴ βουλόμενον, περιέρρηξαν αὐτόν. μαθοῦσαι δὲ τὴν ἀπάτην καὶ ὡς ἐπεβούλευεν αὐταῖς, πᾶσαι μεθίεσαν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰς αἰχμᾶς. [4] καὶ ὁ μὲν δὴ κατὰ θεῶν βούλησιν ἀφανῆς γίνεται, Ἀπόλλωνα δὲ Δάφνη ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ἴοντα προἰδομένη μάλα ἐρρωμένως ἔφηνεν. ὡς δὲ συνεδιώκετο, παρὰ Διὸς αἰτεῖται ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαλλαγῆναι. καὶ αὐτὴν φασὶ γενέσθαι τὸ δένδρον τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἀπ’ ἐκείνης δάφνην.

[1] This is what is said about Amyclas’ daughter Daphne. She would not go down to the city at all, nor would she mix with the other girls, but gathering together a pack of dogs, she would go hunting in the Laconian countryside, sometimes straying further into the other mountains of the Peloponnese. For this reason she was very dear to Artemis, who taught her to shoot straight. [2] Now while she was wandering through the Elian landscape she attracted the love of Leucippus, son of Oenomaus. He despaired of making any other sort of attempt on her, but donned women’s garments and went hunting with her in the guise of a girl. Somehow or other he came to please her, and she would never let go of him, embracing and clinging to him at all times. [3] But Apollo himself was in love with the girl, and was possessed with rage and jealousy when he saw Leucippus

<sup>39</sup> Lightfoot (1999), 471.

associating with her; so he put it into her mind to go bathing in a stream along with the other maidens. When they got there they all stripped off, and tore the clothes from Leucippus' back when they saw his reluctance. And, his treachery and duplicity laid bare, they all cast their javelins at him. [4] The gods willed it that he disappeared. Daphne, meanwhile, saw Apollo coming after her, and turned and fled with great alacrity. When she was almost on the point of being overtaken, she asked Zeus to be translated from the mortal world. And they say she became the tree named after her, the laurel.<sup>40</sup>

Parthenius' story shares several common features with other accounts of the hunting companions of Artemis, but also differs in significant ways. Artemis is Daphne's patron, Daphne is 'dear' to her (*καταθύμιος*; cf discussion above, page 54, of the *Hymn to Athena*), and she teaches her archery. A relationship apparently similar, then, to that between Artemis and the various heroines in the *Hymn to Artemis*. There is a degree of inconsistency in the story: although Daphne is initially said not to associate with the other maidens, she later bathes with 'other maidens' (the same ones she previously avoided?). Perhaps there are two models of hunting companionship conflated here: an isolated young woman who hunts with Artemis alone as her special favourite (as in the *Hymn to Artemis*), and the bands of huntresses/nymphs who follow Artemis (as in Ovid's Callisto episode). In this version of the myth Daphne is the daughter of Amyclas, rather than, as is usual, of the rivers Ladon or Peneus, a 'freak version' confined, as Lightfoot notes, to versions of the myth derived from Phylarchus.<sup>41</sup> The general story pattern is similar to that of Jupiter disguising himself as Diana to seduce Callisto, yet it differs in that Leucippus is mortal, and as such Daphne is able to overcome him before he so much as makes an attempt to rape her. He is, therefore, 'cast in the role of other mortal intruders upon sacred, inviolate companies along with Actaeon, Teiresias, and Sipriotes, all of whom suffer metamorphosis or another form of profound physical change as a result'.<sup>42</sup>

Leucippus is a curiously passive figure. Although he is fired with passion (*ἐπιθυμία*) for Daphne and adopts the transvestite ruse as a final attempt to win her, it is Daphne who 'would never let go of him, embracing and clinging to him at all times' (*οὐ μεθίει τε αὐτὸν ἀμφιπεσοῦσά τε καὶ ἐξηρτημένῃ πᾶσαν*

<sup>40</sup> Translation of Lightfoot (1999), 339.

<sup>41</sup> Lightfoot (1999), 471; cf. Plutarch *Agis* 9, who also cites Phylarchus for Amyclas as the father of Daphne.

<sup>42</sup> Lightfoot (1999), 473.

ῶραν). Leucippus, one presumes, enjoys having her hanging off him, but he never attempts to reveal himself or rape her in the course of their hunting, an unspecified period of time before Apollo makes his move.<sup>43</sup> Parthenius is vague about how he won her affection, stating merely ‘somehow or other he came to please her’ (ἔτυχε δέ πως αὐτῇ κατὰ νοῦν γενόμενος). The expression κατὰ νοῦν γενόμενος, broadly similar in meaning to the καταθύμιος used of Artemis’ affection towards Daphne, forges an intratextual link between the two huntress-huntress relationships. Perhaps we are talking about a general character of relationship rather than an unusual and specific instance; the persistent clustering of homoerotic, or at least ambiguously intimate, female-female relationships around the hunt and the companions of Artemis certainly points in that direction.

Daphne’s active embrace of the disguised Leucippus is overdetermined, expressed via three verbs, and this in mythography that is ‘spare enough for no detail to be quite gratuitous’.<sup>44</sup> The word ἀμφιπεσοῦσα, literally ‘falling around’, implies a particularly vehement embrace, used, for example, in the *Odyssey* in a simile of a woman embracing her dying husband (*Od.* 8.523), whilst ἐξηρτημένη means ‘hang upon’ or ‘be attached to’, often used of inanimate objects such as clothing.<sup>45</sup> Daphne becomes almost like an appendage of Leucippus’ body. Apollo, furthermore, is fired with jealousy at the sight of ‘Leucippus being together with’ Daphne (τοῦ Λευκίππου συνόντος). There may be a play upon the sexual sense of σύνεμι; in any case, there must be a good reason for Apollo’s intense jealousy, a kind of intimacy surpassing ‘innocent’ hunting companionship. And it is only as long as Daphne believes Leucippus to be a woman that she has any interest whatsoever in this kind of intimacy with him—when she discovers him to be a man, her first impulse is to stab him, not hug him. Again, as in the story of Actaeon, the regulation of exclusively homosocial communities is decisive and aggressive. Carver’s summation of the story is apt:<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Lightfoot (1999), 275: ‘[O]nly critical events are narrated and... the remaining time is allowed to drift past without diverting detail and often without specification of its length.’

<sup>44</sup> Lightfoot (1999), 273-274.

<sup>45</sup> LSJ s.v. ἐξαρτάω, II.5.

<sup>46</sup> Carver (1998a), 335.

The narratological interest of the Leucippus story derives from the force with which the different perspectives collapse one into the other: the suffused Sapphism in the central female's relations with her new companion; the anticipation of forbidden sights by the riverside; the sexually-charged mixture of good-natured frolicking and potential danger in the bathers' divesture of the non-participant; and the sudden eruption of fatal violence.

Leucippus' mortality is a vital part of the story. Ovid's Callisto episode and Callimachus' *Hymns* present perceptibly homoerotic relationships between mortal women (or women as good as mortal—though Chariclo is a nymph, she is helpless next to Athena) and goddesses. Although Artemis is a femininely attractive *parthenos* and object of male desire, her divinity renders the relationships inherently asymmetrical, as much as authors such as Ovid may manipulate the power dynamics of the relationship. Leucippus and Daphne, however, are on a relatively equal par: both young mortal 'huntresses' (at least as far as Daphne is aware). Parthenius' story suggests that we not be in too much of a hurry to assimilate the relationships between Diana and Callisto, Athena and Chariclo and Artemis and her favourites too closely to the asymmetrical paederastic paradigm: it is with ease that a female homoerotic relationship is transferred from a goddess and a mortal to two similar-aged mortals. Both Leucippus and Daphne, however, are gender-deviant: Leucippus is a young man capable of passing for a girl, characterised by a certain passivity in his relations with Daphne; Daphne is an athletic huntress who avoids marriage and rather aggressively hangs off Leucippus. It remains difficult to find a representation of female homoeroticism that does not partake of some form of gender deviance, but there is far less here than in the satiric accounts of the *tribades*.

Pausanias' version of the story, though it places less emphasis on physical contact, still bears examination as a reception of the myth (8.20.3-4):

[3] ἔτρεφεν ὁ Λεύκιππος κόμην τῷ Ἀλφειῷ: ταύτην οἶα δὴ παρθένος πλεξάμενος τὴν κόμην καὶ ἐσθήτα ἐνδὺς γυναικείαν ἀφίκετο ὡς τὴν Δάφνην, ἔλθων δὲ Οἰνομάου τε ἔλεγεν εἶναι θυγάτηρ καὶ ὡς συνθηρᾶν ἐθέλοι τῇ Δάφνῃ. ἄτε δὲ εἶναι παρθένος νομιζόμενος, καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ὑπερβεβλημένος παρθένους γένους τε ἀξιώματι καὶ σοφίᾳ τῇ ἐς τὰ κυνηγέσια, πρὸς δὲ καὶ τῇ θεραπείᾳ περισσῇ χρώμενος, ἐς φιλίαν ἰσχυρὰν ἐπάγεται τὴν Δάφνην. [4] οἱ δὲ τὸν Ἀπόλλωνος ἔρωτα ἐς αὐτὴν ἄδοντες καὶ τάδε ἐπιλέγουσιν, Ἀπόλλωνα Λευκίππῳ νεμεσῆσαι τῆς ἐς τὸν ἔρωτα εὐδαιμονίας. αὐτίκα δὲ ἐπεθύμησεν ἐν

τῷ Λάδωνι ἢ Δάφνῃ καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ παρθένοι νήχεσθαι, καὶ τὸν Λεύκιππον ἀποδύουσιν ἄκοντα: ἰδοῦσαι δὲ οὐ παρθένον τοῖς τε ἄκοντίοις αὐτὸν καὶ ἐγχειριδίους τύπτουσαι διέφθειραν.

[3] Leucippus [the son of Oenomaus; 8.20.2] was growing his hair for the river Alpheus. Braiding his hair as though he were a *parthenos*, and putting on woman's clothes, he came to Daphne, and when he came he said that he was a daughter of Oenomaus, and wanted to be her hunting companion. As he was thought to be a *parthenos*, surpassed the other *parthenoi* in nobility of birth and skill in hunting, and besides practiced the most assiduous attentions, he drew Daphne into a deep friendship. [4] Those who sing of Apollo's love for Daphne say these things also: that Apollo became jealous of Leucippus because of his success in love. Forthwith Daphne and the other *parthenoi* conceived a longing to swim in the Ladon, and stripped the unwilling Leucippus. Then, seeing that he was not a *parthenos*, they killed him with their javelins and daggers.

Pausanias' account fills out the reasons as to how Leucippus 'comes to please' Daphne (about which Parthenius is silent): his noble birth, skill in hunting, and assiduous attention surpass the other maidens and cause him to become her favoured companion. The ruse of posing as one's own sister is also used in Statius' *Achilleid* (to be discussed in the next chapter), along with the notion of the one favourite companion who pays particularly close attention to the beloved woman. The transvestite seduction narrative continuously plays out in similar ways, whether or not the texts are specifically dependent on one another (Statius could not have known Pausanias, at any rate). Leucippus' 'unshakeable friendship' (*φιλιαν ἰσχυράν*) with Daphne is characterised (in Apollo's mind) as 'success in love' (*τῆς ἐς τὸν ἔρωτα εὐδαιμονίας*), a phrase that deserves some consideration: Leucippus has presumably not had sexual intercourse with Daphne, or she would have discovered he was a man and reacted violently—so how, exactly, does the intimate friendship constitute 'success in love', unless some kind of erotic quality short of genital sexuality is involved? The story violates the normative conception of the aggressively penetrative active male by implying that Leucippus is lucky in love despite not having penetrative sex with Daphne, as well as gesturing towards the possibility of an intimate, erotic relationship between women, given Daphne's enthusiasm for the venture (clearer in Parthenius than Pausanias).

Though Pausanias was writing in the second century CE, and his text was therefore not available to Ovid and Statius, that the same myth inspires two different authors (two elite male authors, at that) to visualise a homoerotic

scenario points to a perceptible quality within it, one that other readers could have picked up. Clearly Artemis and her huntresses were a source of intense curiosity, as the multiple stories of men punished for intruding upon them further indicates. Again, Daphne is condemned by neither Parthenius nor Pausanias for her close friendship with the disguised Leucippus; neither the deities who are intimately involved with young women nor the young women who are intimately involved with each other receive moral reproach for such relationships. Though none of these relationships could be said to be entirely egalitarian, their power dynamics cannot be reduced to a simple active/passive split. The emphasis, furthermore, is on emotional closeness and inseparability—shaded with desire—rather than sexual activity. The bands of Artemis, throughout all these texts, provide a powerful example of female intimacy and solidarity, neither of which are often visible in Greek and Latin texts, at least non-satirically presented.

I now draw together some of the connections between these Greek texts and Ovid's Callisto. In Ovid's version of the Callisto story, the role of Leucippus—transvestite seducer and helpless mortal stripped by the other maidens and punished—is split between Jupiter and Callisto (the nymphs strip Callisto, or so it is implied, at *Met.* 2.461, *dubitanti vestis adempta est*). Otis claims Parthenius' narrative as one of the sources of Ovid's Callisto story, noting that the introduction of the bath scene and the exposure of Callisto's pregnancy into the story appear to be Ovidian innovations.<sup>47</sup> Certainly there are close parallels between Parthenius and Ovid: cross-dressing, bathing, exposure at the bath, stripping of the reluctant 'maiden'. An educated reader of Ovid's episode may well have in mind both Callimachus' *Hymn to Athena* (for the ominous bathing scene) and Parthenius' narrative as antecedents of the bathing scene alone.

The Callisto episode as a whole, however, has a wider frame of reference. A reader familiar with Callimachus' book of hymns and its unique presentation and assimilation of the virgin goddesses Athena and Artemis would well have occasion to connect the Ovidian huntress bands to the Callimachean ones, and the mortal/divine relationship of Diana and Callisto to that of Athena and

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<sup>47</sup> Otis (1970), 387.

Chariclo. Oddly enough, the Athena/Chariclo relationship is a kind of manifestation of the intimacy present within the *Artemisian* bands; in a way, the *Hymn* says as much about Artemis as it does about Athena. The transvestism and hunting setting of the Leucippus myth serve to connect it further to the Callisto episode, and the fact that Daphne is its protagonist suggests that Callisto is not singular within the Artemisian bands in her preference for female intimacy. Reading all the texts together, in fact, points to the conclusion that there is something about the homosocial realm of Artemis/Diana that inspires homoerotic readings, and that this something transcends both normative sexual protocols and the divine/mortal hierarchy, encompassing rather companionship, closeness, desire. It is true that this closeness is often thwarted in one way or another, but it recurs, persistently pressing at the limitations of normative formulations.

Nor do representations of such female intimacy end with Callimachus, Parthenius and Ovid. Progressing to the Flavian period, my next and final chapter will examine Statius' *Achilleid*, a text both similar to and different from those already examined. We are to move into a domestic setting, but one much coloured by wildness and liminality. The challenging homoerotic frisson of the texts analysed thus far is not confined to Artemis' bands of huntresses (as much as it remains closely linked to them); it endures within the highly civilised palace of a king. The thesis has demonstrated how one moment, the kiss between Diana and Callisto, allows access to a progressively broader range of representations, and, in the next chapter, they will continue to converge into a powerful yet subtle discourse of female intimacy.



## Chapter Four: Achilles' sister and her seductive wiles

'I have a question to ask you. Êtes-vous Achilles?' I laughed & said she made me blush... Brought Miss Mack into my room. Joked with her about her question. Said it was exceedingly well put. She said I was the only one in the house to whom she could have written it, because the only one who would have so soon understood it, that is, who would have understood the allusion to take it that way.<sup>1</sup>

(Excerpt from the diary of Anne Lister)

Ovid's Callisto episode, as we have now seen, was not the first ancient narrative to explore the homoerotic possibilities of transvestism and exclusively homosocial settings, and it certainly was not the last. Statius' *Achilleid* replays yet again the motif of male-to-female transvestism as erotic strategy in such a way that an educated reader would likely have recalled the Callisto episode. Through the character of Achilles' 'sister', an epicene huntress-Amazon-Spartan who has a lot in common with such figures as Callisto and Diana, Statius presents another scene of ambiguously homoerotic seduction, leaving to the reader's determination the question of what exactly the seduced woman, Deidameia, thinks is going on. The superficially straightforward *Achilleid* is a subtle, allusive and elusive work like the *Metamorphoses* and the poetry of Callimachus, and it presents serious challenges to the reader who would seek confidently to rule out the possibility of female homoeroticism.

Before proceeding to examine the *Achilleid* in depth, I will briefly analyse a highly relevant piece of Hellenistic verse in order to canvass the potential of the Achilles on Scyros myth for homoerotic reading. A similar dynamic can be seen to operate here as with Ovid and earlier Greek poetry: earlier Greek poetry presents potentially homoerotic scenarios; later Roman poetry exploits at greater length and with greater explicitness similar scenarios.

### I Hellenistic prelude

An anticipation of Statius' treatment of the Achilles on Scyros myth can be found in the 'Epithalamium for Achilles and Deidameia' (the title is a misnomer

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<sup>1</sup> Norton (1997), 197.

and may not be original<sup>2</sup>), a textually scrappy piece of Greek verse transmitted under the name of Bion, though probably not by him. Surviving extended literary accounts of the Scyros myth are scanty, limited to Statius' *Achilleid*, brief notices in mythographers,<sup>3</sup> an account in Ovid's *Ars* (1.681-704), and the Greek fragment in question,<sup>4</sup> though the Achilles on Scyros myth was alluded to on occasion in Latin poetry, and featured heavily in Roman art (see below, and especially Cameron 2009). Fortuitously, the piece of the 'Epithalamium' that survives narrates mainly Achilles' attempted seduction of Deidameia in female disguise, the crucial scene for implications of homoeroticism (as in Ovid). First, or so the pastoral singer/narrator Lycidas claims, the disguise was convincing: Achilles 'deceived with his form' (ἐφεύσατο μορφάν, 7). Lycidas goes on to detail Achilles' bodily androgyny, to be contrasted with his 'manly' desires and pursuit of Deidameia:

λάνθανε δ' ἐν κόραις Λυκομηδίσι μῦνος Ἀχιλλεύς,  
 εἶρια δ' ἀνθ' ὄπλων ἐδιδάσκετο, καὶ χερὶ λευκῇ  
 παρθενικὸν κόρον εἶχεν, ἐφαίνετο δ' ἥύτε κόρα·  
 καὶ γὰρ ἴσον τήναις θηλύνετο, καὶ τόσον ἄνθος  
 χιονέαις πόρφυρε παρήσι, καὶ τὸ βάδισμα 20  
 παρθενικῆς ἐβάδιζε, κόμας δ' ἐπύκαζε καλύπτρη.  
 θυμὸν δ' ἀνέρος εἶχε καὶ ἀνέρος εἶχεν ἔρωτα·  
 ἐξ ἁοῦς δ' ἐπὶ νύκτα παρίζετο Δηιδამεΐα,  
 καὶ ποτὲ μὲν τήνας ἐφίλει χέρα, πολλάκι δ' αὐτᾶς  
 στάμονα καλὸν ἄειρε τὰ δαίδαλα δ' ἄτρι' ἐπήνει· 25  
 ἦσθιε δ' οὐκ ἄλλα σὺν ὁμάλικι, πάντα δ' ἐποίει  
 σπύδων κοινὸν ἐς ὕπνον. ἔλεξέ νυ καὶ λόγον αὐτᾶ·  
 'ἄλλαι μὲν κνώσσουσι σὺν ἀλλήλαισιν ἀδελφαί,  
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ μούνα, μούνα δὲ σύ, νύμφα, καθεύδεις.  
 αἱ δύο παρθενικαὶ συνομάλικες, αἱ δύο καλαί, 30  
 ἀλλὰ μόναι κατὰ λέκτρα καθεύδομες, ἃ δὲ πονηρά  
 †νύσσα† δολία με κακῶς ἀπὸ σεῖο μερίσδει.

Achilles alone [of the Greeks] escaped notice amongst Lycomedes' girls. He was trained in wool, not arms; with his white hand, he was sufficiently maidenly, and seemed just like a girl. He became as womanly as they, and he reddened his snowy cheeks as much as a flower, and he stepped the step of a maiden, and covered his hair with a veil. But he had the heart of a man and the desire of a man - from morning until night he sat next to Deidameia, and sometimes he would kiss her hand; often he would hold up

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot (1999), 41 n 115.

<sup>3</sup> Apollodorus *Bib.* 3.174, Hyginus *Fab.* 96.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the sources of the Scyros myth, see Heslin (2005), 193-205. He concludes that it was 'probably a local Scyrian version, which entered the mythical tradition at a later point of time [than the Epic Cycle], motivated by the particular historical circumstances of Cimon's expedition' (205).

her beautiful weaving and praise the finely-worked cloth. He would eat with no other companion, and he did everything striving to sleep with her. He would say this to her: “The other sisters sleep with each other, but I sleep alone, and you sleep alone, girl, both maidenly comrades, both beautiful - but we sleep alone in our beds, because wicked, tricky †nyssa† cruelly separates me from you.”

Here we see hints of the ephebic androgyny that Statius is to develop fully—Achilles’ complexion is naturally pale, suggesting a certain epicene quality that aids in creating a convincing disguise. His *eros* for Deidameia, however, and his singleminded focus on its consummation (σπεύδων κοινὸν ἐς ὕπνον) the singer genders inexorably male (ἀνέρος... ἔρωτα). That women would lust after one another in the way Achilles lusts after Deidameia seems to lie outside the narrator’s ideological purview. Achilles might look like a woman, but his desires betray his true sex, his unavoidable masculinity. We have seen the same sort of argument deployed in relation to the unvirginal kisses of Ovid’s Jupiter/Diana. It is interesting to note, however, that the narrator does not refer specifically to sexual consummation, only ‘sleeping together’ (κοινὸν ὕπνον), precisely what Achilles claims other young women do. One would like to know why the two are separated, but the poem breaks off.

Despite the narrator’s comment on the inherent masculinity of Achilles’ desires, Achilles’ attempts to win Deidameia reveal the range of behaviour that is permissible between unmarried girls: if his behaviour were to deviate into what was unthinkable for a young girl, he would betray his disguise. Since the poem is fragmentary, it is impossible to know when Deidameia would have discovered Achilles’ sex, and how she would have reacted—suspiciously, indifferently or even enthusiastically—to the speech he makes in the fragment. Indeed, Deidameia’s feelings towards Achilles are nowhere evident in the poem’s extant portion. The telling use of the imperfect tense (παρίζετο, ἐφίλει, ἐπήνει, ἦσθιε) reveals, however, that Achilles was able to repeat his flirtatious gestures for some time apparently without arousing suspicion. In the terms of this poem, unmarried girls are permitted to become inseparable friends, and some degree of physical contact—at least to the extent of kissing hands—is unremarkable.

Achilles’ speech goes further—παρθενικαὶ συνομάλικες, unmarried women of the same age, could be expected to share beds, such that the fact he

and Deidameia do not is worthy of note. Presumably the other girls he mentions who sleep together (*ἄλλαι μὲν κνώσσουσι σὺν ἀλλήλαισιν ἀδελφαί*) are the daughters of Lycomedes, so their behaviour is quite literally simply sisterly—however, Achilles’ words seem to indicate that sleeping together is equally natural for women who are not related by blood. Achilles attempts to render his suggestion innocent, in the process laying bare the lack of limits upon propriety. He sets up an almost inevitable relationship between being beautiful, unmarried female coevals and sleeping together which, in the case of him and Deidameia, has been thwarted (*αἱ δύο παρθενικαὶ συνομάλικες, αἱ δύο καλαί, | ἄλλὰ μόναι κατὰ λέκτρα καθεύδομες*). His mention of physical beauty (*καλαί*) in proximity to sharing beds imparts a (homo)erotic charge to the suggestion, hinting at the way in which eroticism creeps into the rhetorically and ideologically ‘chaste’.

This scrap of verse suggests several useful reading strategies for the story of Achilles on Scyros (and narratives of transvestite seduction in general): his behaviour while disguised as a girl reveals what kind of behaviour is considered appropriate between young women. When heterosexual male desire, the representation of which is often far more explicit than female desire of any variety, is introduced into exclusively homosocial settings, we can see that even intense erotic pursuit does not immediately give away one’s female disguise. With these considerations in mind, it is time to move on to Statius, who elaborates on the homoerotic seduction at much greater length.

## II Statian prelude

Statius’ *Achilleid* has recently been the focus of intensified scholarly attention, much of which emphasises its Ovidian—or more specifically, Metamorphic—character. Hinds argues, compellingly to my mind, that ‘Statius’ literary historiography in the unfinished *Achilleid* constructs an epic tradition in which Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* features front and centre’,<sup>5</sup> an epic tradition the core subject matter of which includes ‘young love in an unwarlike land secluded from the outside world; an uneasy mixture of courtship and rape; disguise,

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<sup>5</sup> Hinds (1998), 142.

deception, cross-dressing, ambiguities of sex, gender and identity'.<sup>6</sup> Statius attempts to integrate the Ovidian 'anomaly' firmly into the epic tradition, to place it front and centre. Therefore, many of my remarks about the protean nature of the *Metamorphoses* and its subversion of fixed categories apply also to the *Achilleid*, a work that presents Lycomedes' Scyros as 'a kind of theme park of gender- and genre-bending imagery'.<sup>7</sup> As Alan Cameron has demonstrated, by Statius' time the 'most popular part of the Achilles saga was his childhood, his education by Chiron the centaur, and his concealment as a girl on Scyros... And the most popular single theme by far was his exposure (usually by Odysseus) in female dress'.<sup>8</sup> Despite its scanty literary attestation, the Scyros myth played a large role in mythical discourse of the time. Statius' use of this particular myth, and his application to it of ludic and shifty Ovidian strategies, results in a work that speaks eloquently and at length on gender and sexuality, often in ways that diverge from dominant understandings.

The *Achilleid*'s apparently superficial veneer conceals an extraordinary thematic density, as Vessey notes:<sup>9</sup>

... Statius has imbued the text with an air of naïveté: but it is all faux-naïf and the demand on the reader is in no way reduced. By positing simplicity, save in the most guarded and circumscribed terms, we ourselves become agents and victims of ingenuous falsification—or falsifying ingenuity. The 'Achilleid', once admired for its subtlety, then fades into a pale simulacrum of itself.

My analysis of the text, therefore, will pay close attention to small details: fine-grained interpretive issues, the connotations of particular words, short and densely packed phrases, apparently throwaway remarks. In this way a significant homoerotic subtext can be drawn out, and if one dwells on the logical conclusions of such a subtext, far-reaching implications for the perception of female homoeroticism emerge from the text.

This kind of close analysis is coupled with a broader emphasis on the Ovidian nature of the text and its intertextual dynamics, especially given the likely educational background of a post-Augustan reader reading a post-Ovidian

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<sup>6</sup> Hinds (1998), 137.

<sup>7</sup> Hinds (2000), 236.

<sup>8</sup> Cameron (2009), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Vessey (1986), 3014.

epic. Though not specifically dealing with Diana and her companions like the other texts thus far examined, the *Achilleid* nonetheless works heavily in the idiom of Diana-and-companions. Against a larger-scale, almost programmatic, Ovidian backdrop, there are specific resonances between the *Achilleid* and Ovid's Callisto episode. Thetis draws an allusive analogy between the proposed transvestism of Achilles and Jupiter disguising himself as Diana to rape Callisto (*Ach.* 1.259-265):

... paulumque animos submitte viriles  
atque habitus dignare meos. si Lydia dura                         260  
pensa manu mollesque tulit Tirynthius hastas,  
si decet aurata Bacchum vestigia palla  
verrere, **virgineos si Iuppiter induit artus**,  
nec magnum ambigui fregerunt Caenea sexus:  
sic sine, quaeso, minas nubemque exire malignam.                 265

Lower your manly spirit for a little while and permit yourself to wear my garments. If the Tirynthian carried Lydian wool in his hard hand and women's shafts, if it becomes Bacchus to sweep his footsteps with a golden cloak, **if Jupiter put on a maiden's limbs**, and doubtful sexes did not break great Caeneus, I ask that you allow the threats and malignant cloud to pass away.

Thetis' allusion places in the mind of the reader the story of Callisto early on in the first book of the epic, and its phrasing in terms of bodily metamorphosis rather than transvestism recalls the Ovidian treatment specifically. Jupiter is said to have changed limbs, not clothes, but Statius uses a verb, *induere*, primarily connoting the changing of clothes. The line between transvestism and metamorphosis is dangerously thin: does Achilles *dress* as a girl, or temporarily *become* one? The overall structure of the Achilles on Scyros myth, furthermore, mirrors that of the Callisto myth. Achilles' first sight of Deidameia is phrased in a similar way to Jove's first sight of Callisto (*deriguit totisque novum bibit ossibus ignem*, *Ach.* 1.303<sup>10</sup> ~ *in virgine Nonacrina / haesit et accepti caluere sub ossibus ignes*, *Met.* 2.409-410, the same words in the same metrical position, though of course for Jupiter this is no novel sensation!),<sup>11</sup> and these first attractions lead both characters to disguise themselves as women and enter a female homosocial environment in order to achieve their erotic objective, Jupiter

<sup>10</sup> For the *Achilleid*, I adopt the text of Marastoni (1974). I have also consulted Hall et al. (2008).

<sup>11</sup> As noted by Méheust (1971), 19, along with three Vergilian parallels (*Aen.* 1.660, 1.749 and 5.172).

immediately and Achilles after some half-hearted resistance. The eventual rape results in a pregnancy in both cases, which both Callisto and Deidameia manage to conceal from their female companions for a period of time (see below for verbal similarities), and the male children, Arcas and Neoptolemus, both become heroes, while their mothers suffer harsh fates. Achilles' status as almost-son of Jove is continually at issue in the *Achilleid*,<sup>12</sup> and he is compared to him in a simile (see below). Just as Ovid's Callisto episode replays the homoerotic narratives of Callimachus and Parthenius, Statius' *Achilleid* replays Ovid's Callisto, retaining the homoerotic frisson but manipulating it somewhat differently. The best way of beginning to get at some of these differences is to examine exactly what sort of a girl Achilles is, and how Deidameia reacts to 'her'.

### III The dynamic androgyny of Pyrrha and Deidameia

Achilles' transvestism is treated in some sense as a divinely-enacted metamorphosis, and his disguise is so convincing he is capable of living on Scyros as a girl for a considerable period of time, discovered only by the woman he rapes. He is an unusual girl, to be sure: large, burly, uncultured, fond of weapons, wrestling, wandering; a blend of Amazon, Spartan and huntress. Yet for all that he is not an unconvincing girl to the Scyrians, merely one unenculturated into the norms of conventional femininity.<sup>13</sup> One of my main reading strategies with respect to the *Achilleid* is to treat 'Achilles' sister', that is, Achilles cross-dressed, as a character in her own right, as indeed she is viewed by Deidameia and others at Lycomedes' court. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to this character as 'Pyrrha', the name she is given in Hyginus.<sup>14</sup> The name 'Pyrrha' refers to an artefact, something that does not actually exist—the absent presence that is Achilles' sister. But she is perceived as real, and 'Pyrrha' acts as my label for the girl she is thought to be. Her role is analogous to that of the artefact that Jove creates when he metamorphoses temporarily into Diana: not the real Diana, but perceived as such. The difference is that there is a 'real

<sup>12</sup> See Heslin (2005), 158-160.

<sup>13</sup> For some discussion of Pyrrha's lack of feminine *cultus*, see Heslin (2005), 145-152.

<sup>14</sup> Hyginus *Fab.* 96. The cheeky Ptolemy Chennos lists as alternate names Cercysera, Issa, Aspetos and (heaven forbid) Prometheus (see Cameron 2004, 141).

Diana', whereas there is no real Pyrrha, only the ambiguous transvestite, whose gender and appearance shift depending on who is looking.

Pyrrha is a *facta puella*, the Galatea<sup>15</sup> to Thetis' Pygmalion, 'womanaufactured'<sup>16</sup> in a transformation that is simultaneously metamorphosis, rape, and artistry (*Ach.* 1.325-337):

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| aspicit ambiguum genetrix cogique volentem    | 325 |
| iniecitque sinus; tum colla rigentia mollit   |     |
| submittitque graves umeros et fortia laxat    |     |
| bracchia et inpexos certo domat ordine crines |     |
| ac sua dilecta cervice monilia transfert;     |     |
| et picturato cohibens vestigia limbo          | 330 |
| incessum motumque docet fandique pudorem.     |     |
| qualiter artificii victurae pollice cerae     |     |
| accipiunt formas ignemque manumque sequuntur, |     |
| talis erat divae natum mutantis imago.        |     |
| nec luctata diu; superest nam plurimus illi   | 335 |
| invita virtute decor, fallitque tuentes       |     |
| ambiguus tenuique latens discrimine sexus.    |     |

His mother sees that he is wavering and wishes to be forced, and throws the folds over him. Then she softens his stiff neck, lowers his heavy shoulders, loosens his strong arms; she tames his uncombed hair into neat order, and transfers her necklace to the neck she loves. Constraining his steps within an embroidered hem, she teaches him how to walk and move and how to speak with modesty. As wax that an artist's thumb will bring to life receives shape and follows fire and hand, such was the image of the goddess as she transformed her son. Nor did she struggle long, for much beauty remains for him though his manhood is unwilling, and doubtful sex, hiding in the narrow divide, deceives those who see him.

The transformation is easy: there was always something of Pyrrha in Achilles, and this is precisely because Pyrrha is a masculine woman, despite Thetis' attempts to make 'her' meek and modest in every respect. The comparison of Achilles to wax that *will have life* (*victurae*), emphasises in striking fashion that a new character is being created here: Pyrrha is not Achilles, and Achilles is not Pyrrha. Although Thetis is described as a supremely competent divine *artifex*, she will ultimately have no control over her creation. Pyrrha will not stay modest, take dainty steps, nor remove the tension from her powerful body. She was never going to be a conventional girl. I refer to her with feminine pronouns because she seems to be read as a girl by the Scyrians, and it is their—and in

<sup>15</sup> Sharrock (1991), 42, n 35, notes that the name 'Galatea' is not ancient, but a later invention. I use it merely for convenience.

<sup>16</sup> See Sharrock (1991).



particular Deidameia's—reading of her that imparts a 'homoerotic' dimension to the text, even though that term, predicated as it is upon a binary of sex, cannot fully encompass Pyrrha. The metaphors of metamorphosis and manufacture remind us that we are dwelling in an Ovidian land of myth and fantasy in which transvestism is made to signify far more than a mere changing of clothes.

Pyrrha's nature is made clear almost as soon as Thetis transforms Achilles: 'she' is compared to Diana returning from the hunt, attended by her mother Latona (1.344-348):

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| sic ubi virgineis Hecate lassata Therapnis<br>ad patrem fratremque redit, comes haeret eunti  | 345 |
| mater et ipsa umeros exsertaque braccia velat;<br>ipsa arcum pharetrasque locat vestemque latentem<br>deducit sparsosque tumet componere crines.<br>Protinus adgreditur regem atque ibi testibus aris |     |
| 'Hanc tibi' ait 'nostri germanam, rector, Achilles—<br>nonne vides ut torva genas aequandaque fratri?—<br>tradimus. arma umeris arcumque animosa petebat<br>ferre et Amazonio conubia pellere ritu.   | 350 |
| sed mihi curarum satis est pro stirpe virili;<br>haec calathos et sacra ferat, tu frange regendo  | 355 |
| indocilem sexuque tene, dum nubilis aetas<br>solvendusque pudor; neve exercere protervas<br>gymnadas aut lustris nemorum concede vagari.<br>intus ale et similes inter seclude puellas;               |     |

It was just as when Hecate returns weary from maidenly Therapnae to her father and brother: her mother, as companion, sticks close to her as she goes, herself covering shoulders and bared arms, herself positions bow and quiver, drawing down the girt-up gown and proudly ordering the dishevelled locks. Immediately she approaches the king and there with the altars as witnesses says: 'This girl, king, the sister of my Achilles (do you not see how fierce she looks in her eyes, equalling her brother?) I am entrusting to you. High-spirited, she asked for weapons on her shoulders and a bow, and to reject marriage Amazon-fashion. But I have enough to worry about on my male child's account. Let this girl carry the baskets and the sacred objects, tame the unruly girl by your rule and keep her in her sex, until it is time for marriage and for modesty to be relaxed. Don't let her practice wanton wrestlings or wander in woodland wilds. Bring her up indoors, shut her up amongst girls like herself.'

Achilles, as Hinds notes, 'is compared to the female deity of the male province of the hunt at a moment in which that tomboy deity herself receives an uncharacteristically feminine makeover'.<sup>17</sup> The image of Diana the huntress

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<sup>17</sup> Hinds (2000), 238.

with bare shoulders, bow, girt-up gown and dishevelled hair recalls the Ovidian huntresses, themselves likened to Diana and strongly defined in opposition to feminine *cultus*. See, for example, Daphne, *innuptaeque aemula Phoebes / vitta coercebat positos sine lege capillos* ('A rival of unmarried Phoebe, a fillet held back her hair positioned without order'), *Met.* 1.476-477, and Callisto, *vitta coercuerat neglectos alba capillos* ('A white fillet held back her neglected locks'), *Met.* 2.413. The tale of Pyrrha/Achilles at the court of Lycomedes is set up, therefore, as the domestication of a wild Ovidian huntress as much as that of a wild centaur-raised ephebe: we are to see what happens when such an Ovidian huntress enters 'polite society'. A further echo sharpens the Pyrrha/Diana connection: At the beginning of Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis*, Artemis makes the following request of Zeus: *δός μοι παρθενίην αἰώνιον, ἄππα, φυλάσσειν | καὶ πολυωνυμίην, ἵνα μή μοι Φοῖβος ἐρίζη | δὸς δ' ἰοῦς καὶ τόξα* ('Daddy, give me virginity to guard forever, and many names, so that Phoibos won't rival me, and give me arrows and a bow', 6-7). Thetis, when presenting Pyrrha to Lycomedes, avers that she demanded weapons, a bow and the avoidance of marriage, and her relation to her 'brother' is mentioned. The Ovidian Daphne made a similar request of her father, in a passage marked as an allusion to the Callimachean Artemis: *da mihi perpetua, genitor carissime... virginitate frui! dedit hoc pater ante Dianae* ('Allow me, father dearest, to enjoy perpetual virginity! Her father gave this to Diana before'), *Met.* 1.486-487.

Pyrrha, through these connections, is portrayed as a type of woman already established in the literary tradition, the virginal huntress. But her rejection of marriage is said to be in specifically Amazonian fashion, and the use to which she wants to put her weapons is unclear: hunting or warfare? It is further implied that Pyrrha enjoys 'wanton wrestlings' (*protervas gymnadas*), an activity for which Spartan women were notorious. The term *gymnas*, which Statius uses exclusively of Greek-style athletics,<sup>18</sup> strengthens the Spartan connection. As Amazon and Spartan, Pyrrha exhibits an aggressive forwardness and physicality uncharacteristic of the Ovidian huntresses, who are often seen in flight (though Callisto, as we have seen, is an unusually forward exception). Whether she exhibits the 'sexy' virginity irresistible to men, like Diana and her

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<sup>18</sup> Newlands (2004), 155 n 69.

companions, is unclear. Indeed, the stage is set for a sexually active woman who pursues rather than yields. To press the Callisto analogy again, the desirous Achilles, like the desirous Jove, has successfully completed a metamorphosis into a Dianic figure, and is now ready to achieve his erotic object. But, as with the Ovidian Jove, it is the perception of the metamorphosed, sexually aggressive man as a plausible woman that points to a space for non-normative sexual possibilities to flourish.

What of Deidameia, seemingly the ‘passive partner’ in this scenario? Sturt contends that ‘we are surely meant to imagine a tall Deidamia of imposing features, fit to be equated with Diana and Pallas... Deidamia and Achilles, and by association their faceless companions, do not possess the frail or feminine loveliness that is—to generalise—a Western Romantic ideal’.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Rosati sees Deidameia’s beauty as ‘non una grazia morbida e delicata, ma piuttosto tendente a una certa mascolina energia’.<sup>20</sup> Statius’ Ulysses apparently agrees, remarking on the ‘charm and beauty mixed with manly shape’ of Lycomedes’ girls (*is decor et formae species permixta virili*, *Ach.* 1.811), though his remark takes on obvious irony due to his quest for the disguised Achilles amongst the maidens. An examination of Deidameia’s introduction may help to clarify the issue (*Ach.* 1.293-300):

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| sed quantum virides pelagi Venus addita Nymphas<br>obruit, aut umeris quantum Diana relinquit<br>Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori   | 295 |
| Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat.<br>illius et roseo flammatur purpura vultu<br>et gemmis lux maior inest et blandius aurum:<br>atque ipsi par forma deae est, si pectoris angues<br>ponat et exempta pacetur casside vultus. | 300 |

But by as much as Venus overwhelms the green Sea Nymphs when she joins them, or by as much Diana leaves behind the Naiads in her stature, by that much does Deidameia, queen of the graceful choir, shine out and overshadow her beautiful sisters. A radiant colour is set alight from her rosy face, and in it there is a light brighter than gems and more alluring than gold. The goddess herself [Pallas] would have a similar beauty, if she were to lay aside the serpents on her breast and pacify her countenance by removing her helmet.

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<sup>19</sup> Sturt (1982), 838.

<sup>20</sup> Rosati (1992), 240.

And later, as Lycomedes' girls dance for Ulysses and Diomedes (*Ach.* 1.823-826):

... nitet ante alias regina comesque  
 Pelides: qualis Siculae sub rupibus Aetnae  
 Naidas Hennaes inter Diana feroxque  
 Pallas et Elysii lucebat sponsa tyranni.

The queen and her companion the son of Peleus shine out before the others: just as under the cliffs of Sicilian Aetna Diana and fierce Pallas and the spouse of the Elysian king shone out among the nymphs of Enna.

Deidameia is compared to Venus, Diana, Athena and Persephone in a rich array of associations. The dense allusive texture of the 'young girl shining out above the others like a goddess' simile recalls Homer's Nausicaa, compared to Artemis amongst her nymphs (*Od.* 6.102-109); Vergil's Dido (*Aen.* 1.498-504) and Venus, who disguises herself as a huntress when she appears to Aeneas (*Aen.* 1.314-320); and, in turn, Ovid's Venus, who, as we have seen, dresses as Diana to accompany Adonis (*Met.* 10.536). The chain of allusions leads to a blurring of the realms of Venus and Diana such that Statius can compare Deidameia to both in quick succession—the latent eroticism of the unpossessed body becomes blatant. Deidameia does, in a way, possess the kind of 'masculine energy' to which Sturt and Rosati allude, but it is best seen, or so I argue, as the 'dynamic androgyny' of the alluring *parthenos*: seductive like Venus, dangerously sexy like Diana and a pacified Athena, ripe for plucking like Persephone. Though Lycomedes' girls are ripe for marriage and attractive to men, their life stage nonetheless incorporates a frisson of danger, such as can be perceived when they are compared to Amazons feasting after a military victory (*Ach.* 1.758-760). The fact that Achilles/Pyrrrha and Deidameia are described in similar terms (at 1.823-826) emphasises the fact that Pyrrha, too, is seen as plausibly inhabiting this life stage despite her sexual forwardness. Though the *Achilleid* is not set amongst bands of huntresses, the dynamic Dianic *parthenos* is nonetheless present in Lycomedes' girls, Deidameia and Pyrrha included. Deidameia is similar to her sexual pursuer, perhaps too similar for comfort, and the self-possession and unusual erotic egalitarianism we have seen in the wilderness (chapter 2) is to linger even in the court of Scyros.

The very structure of the Achilles on Scyros myth as it was iconographically established by Statius' time demanded a certain measure of gender essentialism. Ulysses' trick of bringing weapons and trinkets and offering them to the girls of Scyros as a way of rooting out Achilles is predicated upon a certain conception of gender: girls like shiny things; boys (and Achilles especially) like weapons. If the girls chose the weapons, the trick would fail. The moment is symbolically forceful and carries a strong normative charge. Yet the very fact that the 'girl' Pyrrha, *a girl who likes weapons*, is able to remain undetected on Scyros for so long points to a different conception of femininity, as do the poem's three references to Amazons (as Davis notes, three is a significant number in a poem of the *Achilleid*'s length<sup>21</sup>).

The figure of the Amazon-huntress, as we have seen throughout, was available to authors of all periods as a representative of an alternative paradigm of femininity. Although the teleological structure of myth as handed down often results in the destruction or taming of such women, the texts examined in this thesis present, even if only on the margins, attempts to inhabit their world. By superimposing the Amazon-huntress figure on the gender-essentialised Scyros myth, the *Achilleid* enacts a destabilisation, on one level at least, of these gendered assumptions. The Amazon-huntress was often seen, furthermore, as gender deviant in her activities but conventionally feminine in her bodily morphology and thus attractive to men (e.g., Diana, Callisto, Daphne). Pyrrha, however, is epicene in both respects: she hunts, wrestles, rejects marriage, but also weaves and dances (albeit ineptly); while physically she is apparently read by the Scyrians as a woman with a masculine body who is nonetheless convincingly female. One is reminded of the Callimachean Athena's combination of physical bulk and blushing, Aphroditic sexiness: the muscular strength of the warrior and the allure of the unattainable virgin huntress. These mythical predecessors render an epicene woman a thinkable possibility, contra the ideological assumptions of Ulysses' trick. Indeed, as Ulysses himself remarks (1.811), all of Lycomedes' girls share in this epicene quality. Deidameia, the most outstanding of the girls, exhibits a mix of Dianic and

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<sup>21</sup> Davis (2006), 139.

Aphroditic traits much like Pyrrha. The interaction of these two characters will prove as potentially disruptive as their liminal appearances.

#### IV A knowing seduction?

The crucial scene for a homoerotic reading of the *Achilleid* is Achilles' flirtations with Deidameia whilst he is still in female dress (and, to the court of Scyros, a girl; *Ach.* 1.560-591):

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| At procul occultum falsi sub imagine sexus          | 560 |
| Aeaciden furto iam noverat una latenti              |     |
| Deidamia virum; sed opertae conscia culpae          |     |
| cuncta pavet tacitasque putat sentire sorores.      |     |
| namque ut virgineo stetit in grege durus Achilles   |     |
| exsolvitque rudem genetrix digressa pudorem,        | 565 |
| protinus elegit comitem, quamquam omnis in illum    |     |
| turba coit, blandeque novas nil tale timenti        |     |
| admovet insidias: illam sequiturque premitque       |     |
| improbis, illam oculis iterumque iterumque resumit. |     |
| nunc nimius lateri non evitantis inhaeret,          | 570 |
| nunc levibus sertis, lapsis nunc sponte canistris,  |     |
| nunc thyrsos parcente ferit, modo dulcia notae      |     |
| fila lyrae tenuesque modos et carmina monstrat      |     |
| Chironis ducitque manum digitosque sonanti          |     |
| infringit citharae, nunc occupat ora canentis       | 575 |
| et ligat amplexus et mille per oscula laudat.       |     |
| illa libens discit, quo vertice Pelion, et quis     |     |
| Aeacides, puerique auditum nomen et actus           |     |
| assidue stupet et praesentem cantat Achillem.       |     |
| ipsa quoque et validos proferre modestius artus     | 580 |
| et tenuare rudes attrito pollice lanas              |     |
| demonstrat reficitque colos et perdita dura         |     |
| pensa manu; vocisque sonum pondusque tenentis,      |     |
| quodque fugit comites, nimio quod lumine sese       |     |
| figat et in verbis intempestivus anhelet,           | 585 |
| miratur; iam iamque dolos aperire parantem          |     |
| virginea levitate fugit prohibetque fateri.         |     |
| sic sub matre Rhea iuvenis regnator Olympi          |     |
| oscula securae dabat insidiosa sorori               |     |
| frater adhuc, medii donec reverentia cessit         | 590 |
| sanguinis et versos germana expavit amores.         |     |

But far away Deidameia alone in secret love had found out (*noverat*) that the grandson of Aeacus was a man, hidden as he was under the appearance of a false sex. But conscious of her hidden fault, she is afraid (*pavet*) of everything and thinks (*putat*) that her silent sisters know. For when rough Achilles stood (*stetit*) amongst the crowd of maidens and his mother's departure relaxed his callow modesty, immediately he chose her as his companion, though the whole crowd came at him together, and charmingly

sets into motion tricks new to her who fears nothing of the sort. He pursues her, boldly presses her, returns to her again and again with his gaze. Now he clings excessively close to the side of her not unwilling, now hits her with light garlands, now with baskets that fall over on purpose, now with sparing thyrsus. Now he shows her the familiar lyre's sweet strings, the slender measures and Chiron's songs, guiding her hand and bending her fingers to the sounding cithara. Now he seizes her lips as she sings and twines embraces and praises her in a thousand kisses. Willingly she learns how high Pelion is, who the grandson of Aeacus is, and she is constantly astonished at hearing the name and exploits of the boy, and sings of Achilles in his very presence. She too on her side shows him how to move his strong limbs more modestly and how to draw out the raw wool by rubbing it with his thumb, repairing the distaff and the skeins that his rough hand has spoiled. She marvels at the sound of his voice and his weight as he holds her, and—a fact which escapes her companions—how he fixes her with an over-intent stare and pants abruptly as he speaks. And now when he is preparing to reveal the deception she runs away from him with girlish contrariness and prevents him from confessing. So the young ruler of Olympus under mother Rhea would give guileful kisses to his unsuspecting sister, still only her brother, until regard for their common blood gave way, and the sister feared love that had changed.

Lines 560-563 have been subject to two different interpretations, and this interpretive issue is central for the perception of a homoerotic dimension to the entire scene. Immediately after Thetis entrusts Achilles to Lycomedes (349-365), there is a change of scene to the preparations of the Greek fleet and its mustering at Aulis, which occupies lines 397-560. Statius' catalogue of the fleet details a number of time-consuming preparations, including the manufacturing of weapons, armour, chariots and ships (415-435). After Calchas' prophecy and the clamouring of the army for Achilles, lines 560-563 indicate a transition back to Scyros. Dilke comments: '[*namque*, 564] introduces a narrative anterior in time to ll. 560-3, where *furto* and *culpae* indicate the full development of the love-affair. From l. 564 onwards St. reverts to the much earlier period when the affair was perfectly innocent'.<sup>22</sup> On this reading, Deidameia does not realise that Achilles is a man until he rapes her, and what goes on in the rest of the seduction scene is, for her, merely innocent horseplay with her vigorous new girl pal.

On the other hand, Heslin and Davis both make extended arguments based on the assumption that Deidameia realises Achilles is a man at some point in the course of the flirtations in this scene. Davis says of lines 560-563: 'It is not

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<sup>22</sup> Dilke (1954), 122.

through violation that Deidameia realises that Achilles is a man, but through her own perceptive intelligence. That she should do so is vital to the narrative, for it is only in this way that Statius can avoid the possibility that readers might view Deidameia's passion as homoerotic'.<sup>23</sup> Heslin, reading the lines in a similar way, criticises Slavitt's 1997 translation of the *Achilleid* for his 'misattribution to the couple of a progressively developing and overtly romantic relationship':<sup>24</sup>

Deidamia has figured out that all is not as it appears with Achilles' 'sister,' but in the succeeding narrative, it is quite clear that even privately between herself and Achilles the fiction is strictly maintained (1.564-591). The picture we get of Deidamia from this 'don't ask, don't tell' attitude towards Achilles' gender is sympathetic: she is indulging in a little wilful self-delusion in order to prolong an idyllic pre-sexual infatuation. So, when Achilles rapes her, her world is shattered, and her situation is genuinely moving. In Slavitt's version of these events, Deidamia is merely stupid.

Ironically, Dilke's and Heslin's interpretations lead to a similar conclusion, that the scene presents a 'perfectly innocent' and 'idyllic pre-sexual infatuation'. Both seem patronising to Deidameia, and dismissive of any kind of eroticism short of genital sexuality. In context, however, Dilke's suggestion that an anterior time period is being narrated is the more persuasive reading.<sup>25</sup> In the first place, the use of tenses implies as much: the scene changes from Aulis to Scyros, and Statius uses the pluperfect *noverat* (561) to narrate something that had happened on Scyros in the meantime, then switching to the present (563: *pavet, putat*), before finally using the perfect (*stetit*, 564) to indicate that the following narrative took place before the preparation of the fleet was completed. This is the only way, in fact, that *culpa* and *furtum* make much sense; neither Heslin nor Davis explain what these words refer to if not Deidameia's sexual intercourse with Achilles and resultant pregnancy. It seems a stretch to apply *culpa* and *furtum* to such activities as lyre-playing, but both terms are used of illicit sex. *Furtum*, according to Adams, 'indicates illicit sexual intercourse, such as adultery (Serv. *Aen.* 10.91, *furtum est adulterium*)'.<sup>26</sup> There is a thematic connection to Ovid's Callisto as she rejoins her nymph companions after her rape: *quam difficile est crimen non prodere vultu... silet et laesi dat signa*

<sup>23</sup> Davis (2006), 135.

<sup>24</sup> Heslin (1998).

<sup>25</sup> Ripoll and Soubiran also consider 560-563 to be the transition to the 'flashback' of the following lines (2008, 229).

<sup>26</sup> Adams (1990), 167.



*rubore pudoris / et, nisi quod virgo est, poterat sentire Diana / mille notis culpam; nymphae sensisse feruntur* (*Met.* 2.447-452). Jove also refers to his rape as a *furtum* (*Met.* 2.423). Like Callisto, Deidameia returns to a group of women guilty and fearful after a rape.

It is likely, furthermore, that some of the lyre playing and wool working referred to in lines 572-583 occurs apart from the other girls, offering Achilles ample opportunity to reveal himself, yet Deidameia is not said to have fled these situations—if she, fully aware of Achilles’ sex and his erotic intentions, wanted merely to prolong the ‘pre-sexual infatuation’ Heslin sees in this section, one would think she would avoid any intimate alone time with Achilles. The phrase *quodque fugit comites* in line 584 is interesting in this respect. Dilke takes it to mean ‘a point which escapes her companions’, making *quod* the subject of *fugit*, while Shackleton-Bailey asserts it to mean ‘how he avoids her companions’, making Achilles the subject of *fugit*. Dilke notes, however, that an indicative followed by two subjunctives, *figat* and *anhelet*, would be ‘highly unusual’ if Achilles were the subject of all three verbs.<sup>27</sup> Ripoll and Soubiran suggest two solutions to the divergence in moods: either the reading *fuget* instead of *fugit* (manuscript E), or *quod fugiat*—which lacks manuscript support—instead of *quodque fugit*.<sup>28</sup> The reading *fuget*, ‘how he put to flight’, from *fugo* (which they adopt in their text) would mean that ‘Achille écarte... les autres filles qui l’importunent’,<sup>29</sup> an interesting suggestion in itself; certainly the other girls exhibit an intense fascination with Pyrrha, crowding around her (1.566-567, 1.613-614) and staring at her (1.366-368). The two possible interpretations, then, are as follows:

1. either Pyrrha avoided/drove away the other girls (Shackleton-Bailey; Ripoll and Soubiran)
2. or the other girls did not notice Pyrrha’s interest in Deidameia (Dilke; Hall et al<sup>30</sup>).

A medieval glossator commented: ‘QUOD [sic] FUGIT COMITES: quia ut mellius possit osculari Deidamiam secreta loca amabat’ (‘[Achilles] loved

<sup>27</sup> Dilke (1954), 123; Shackleton-Bailey (2003), 356.

<sup>28</sup> Ripoll and Soubiran (2008), 231-232.

<sup>29</sup> Ripoll and Soubiran (2008), 232.

<sup>30</sup> Hall, Ritchie and Edwards (2007), ad loc.

secret places because he was able to kiss Deidameia more sweetly’).<sup>31</sup> This gloss implies that Achilles could not kiss Deidameia as effusively as he desired in front of others, betraying an anxiety about the public display of affection between women, an anxiety apparently shared by an Achilles who would deliberately flee the other girls. If one instead adopts interpretation 2 above, it would seem the girls are oblivious to the intensity of Pyrrha’s attentions, failing to notice her gazing and breathlessness. Shackleton-Bailey makes the criticism that interpretation 2 fails to consider ‘why the following detail escapes the other girls and what that would signify in the context’;<sup>32</sup> one possible response is that the girls are oblivious because one woman’s intense, eroticised attention to another is simply not unusual or worthy of note to them. Such attention is either, therefore, the subject of anxiety and must be concealed (interpretation 1 above), or can be given in public view without anyone being suspicious or even noticing (interpretation 2 above). A small interpretive issue, as surprisingly often, leads to drastically divergent conclusions if one is sensitive to the text’s homoerotic potential. On balance, I prefer interpretation 2. As I shall discuss in section V below, in the unique environment of the Scyrian court, physical intimacy between women appears to be commonplace and does not attract unusual scrutiny.

The question of Deidameia’s knowledge is a slippery and ambiguous one. She certainly notices something unusual about Pyrrha, and is ‘amazed’ by ‘her’ voice, bulk, and intent, breathless attention. But, ‘when he is preparing to reveal the deception she runs away from him with girlish contrariness and prevents him from confessing’ (586-587, a phrase that no doubt fuels Heslin’s assessment of ‘wilful self-delusion’). Achilles may be ‘preparing to reveal the deception’, but we are not told that Deidameia knows this; she senses, perhaps, that Pyrrha has something to tell her, but this confession could equally be of homoerotic attraction as far as Deidameia knows. In this epic of gender lability, we cannot assume that a deep voice, bulk and erotic fascination in themselves make a man rather than a masculine woman, nor is it possible to tell exactly what Deidameia thinks is going on throughout. Feeney suggests, acknowledging that he is going against the grain of scholarly opinion, that Deidameia may be concerned by the

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<sup>31</sup> Clogan (1968), 83.

<sup>32</sup> Shackleton-Bailey (2003), 356.

intensity of affection from another woman, rather than immediately suspecting Pyrrha is a man:<sup>33</sup>

Deidamia can spot a difference between Achilles and the others, but what exactly is Deidamia seeing through when she suspects the love of Achilles? Can we be certain, as everyone seems to be, that these lines describe a girl suspecting that the girl fixated on her is really a boy? Especially with the transgressive simile comparing her feelings to the recognition of incest, can we be certain that these lines are not describing a girl suspecting that the girl fixated on her is a girl? Although no close verbal similarities emerge, the entire atmosphere of ambiguous sexuality and fluctuating identity is powerfully reminiscent of Ovid's story of Iphis' lesbianism, in particular, and of his Orphic stories of incest as well.

The Juno-Jove simile points to the narrator's assessment of the situation: Deidameia is suspicious of Pyrrha in the same way Juno was suspicious of the young Jupiter as she came to realise the sexual intent of his kisses. The 'innocent' love of siblings is changed (*versos amores*) as Jupiter gives 'guileful kisses' (*insidiosa oscula*). Thetis has already suggested Jupiter's assumption of 'a maiden's limbs' in order to seduce Callisto as a precedent for Achilles' escapade on Scyros, and here the young hero is placed again in the position of Jove giving deceitful kisses, like those of Ovid's Jove. Unlike Callisto, however, the Statian Juno fears the kisses and the sexual intent they presage, as one might perhaps expect in a situation of incest. Feeney (above) links the socially transgressive nature of incest to female homoeroticism as a social transgression, citing (again) Ovid's Iphis/Ianthe. As Sarah Annes Brown notes (in the context of the Actaeon myth), taboos can often stand for one another, and transgression and boundary-crossing can figure same-sex desire even as it is concealed behind another kind of desire.<sup>34</sup>

There is, however, something of a disconnect between the Juno-Jove simile and the preceding narrative. Achilles begins his seduction by 'sweetly [setting] new traps for [Deidameia] who feared nothing of the sort' (*blandeque novas nil tale timenti | admovet insidias*); it is to be expected that she is relaxed at this point. But even as he intensifies his attentions, following her, 'pressing' her, gazing at her 'again and again', she does not become fearful: he 'clings too closely to the side of her who is *not unwilling*' (*nimius lateri non evitantis*

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<sup>33</sup> Feeney (2004), 94.

<sup>34</sup> Brown (2005), 81.

*inhaeret*). Even after all this, the flirtatious pelting with objects, and the sexy music lesson, she is eager to learn more about this ‘Achilles’ fellow (*libens discit*), and is struck dumb by his heroic feats (*assidue stupet et praesentem cantat Achillem*). She herself teaches him wool working, how to ‘draw out raw wool with a rubbing thumb’ (*tenuare rudes attrito pollice lanas*). And her reaction to his voice, bulk and intent gaze, as mentioned, is described in terms of admiration (*miratur*) rather than fear. In the light of these details, a reader might wonder just how tendentious the narrator’s description of Deidameia’s flight as ‘girlish inconstancy’ is, and, again, what exactly she is fleeing from.

The passage is heavy with sexual suggestiveness. *Premitt* can be used as a sexual metaphor, as can, as we have seen in Ovid, the phrase ‘joined to the side’, here taking the form ‘clinging too closely to the side’. *Haereo*, as Bolton notes in a relatively similar context (Ovid’s *Heroides*), ‘recalls the vocabulary of Latin elegy where it refers to the physical proximity of the lover and the outward physical reaction of love and passion’.<sup>35</sup> The passage also dwells on hands, fingers and thumbs; *attrito pollice* is an especially suggestive phrase, considering the widespread use of *tero* as a metaphor for a variety of ‘sexual acts other than *fututio* and *pedicatio*’.<sup>36</sup> Lyre-playing and wool-working become almost substitute sexual acts, offering opportunities for ‘a thousand [Catullan?]<sup>37</sup> kisses’. Embracing, holding and striking were also used as sexual metaphors,<sup>38</sup> and given the phallic symbolism of the thyrsus in the *Achilleid*,<sup>39</sup> the phrase ‘he struck her with a sparing thyrsus’ could hardly be less subtle. In context, all these activities take on the air of mightily heavy petting.

The passage is also saturated in the erotic-elegiac tradition, particularly as represented by Ovid. The scenario of erotic singing and music playing has a significant precedent in Ovid’s *Amores* (2.4.25-28):<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bolton (2009), 282.

<sup>36</sup> Adams (1990), 183.

<sup>37</sup> Ripoll and Soubiran (2008), 230, note the Catullan connection and the way in which it serves to eroticise the scene.

<sup>38</sup> Adams (1990), 181-182 (embracing/holding); 145-149 (striking).

<sup>39</sup> See Heslin (2005), 239-242.

<sup>40</sup> Note also the fascinatingly close parallel in Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* 1.24: both scenes begin with gazing, proceeding to incidents involving garlands and pelting with objects, and culminating in a music lesson in which correction of technique is a pretext for physical contact. The general context is similar: amorous adolescents in the process of enculturation engage in flirtatious play in a setting that is in some sense idyllic. The close connection may hint at common motifs in the literary tradition of erotic pastoral, which would speak to the question of

haec quia dulce canit flectitque facillima vocem,  
 oscula cantanti rapta dedisse velim;  
 haec querulas habili percurrit pollice chordas:  
 tam doctas quis non possit amare manus?

This woman sings sweetly and turns her voice with the greatest ease—I should wish to give stolen kisses to her as she sings. This other runs over the querulous strings with nimble finger—who would not love such learned hands?

Another significant point of comparison is *Heroides* 15.43-44: Sappho says to Phaon, ‘I would sing, I remember—lovers remember everything—and you would give stolen kisses to me as I sang’, *cantabam, memini—meminerunt omnia amantes— / oscula cantanti tu mihi rapta dabas*. In the *Achilleid*, both Pyrrha and Deidameia sing and play the lyre, though it is Pyrrha who gives kisses and embraces (apparently not, however, stolen ones). One does wonder, however, whether the words of Ovid’s *amator* could equally have come from Statius’ Deidameia as she marvels at Pyrrha’s singing, even though the focus is on the actions of Achilles. A number of scholars have noted also how Achilles’ actions mirror the precepts of Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, primarily charm (*Ars* 1.273, 362, 619, 663), song (*Ars* 1.572), praise (*Ars* 1.621),<sup>41</sup> and making friends with the desired girl to inspire her confidence (*Ars* 1.721).<sup>42</sup> This scholarly account of the seduction, then, attempts to place it within the familiar paradigm of cynical Ovidian game-playing<sup>43</sup> incorporating male enthusiasm/activity and female ‘coquetry’.<sup>44</sup> A lack of attention to Deidameia’s perspective draws the reader away from what could be a much more disruptive scenario: a sexually assertive woman (Pyrrha) pressing herself upon another woman (Deidameia) who does not object.

It is, in fact, possible to uncover hints of Deidameia’s perspective. Line 592 (*tandem detecti timidae Nereidos astus*, ‘at last the tricks of the fearful

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the *Achilleid*’s generic status, or perhaps Longus was even familiar with Statius’ *Achilleid*; certainly the closeness of the connection is startling.

<sup>41</sup> The preceding three items are noted by Davis (2006), 132 with references to the *Ars* in n 8.

<sup>42</sup> See Sanna (2007), 209; Micozzi (2007).

<sup>43</sup> Though Davis suggests that Achilles’ genuine passion for Deidameia ‘differentiates him from the Ovidian teacher’s implied students’ (2006, 132).

<sup>44</sup> And these are the terms in which Sanna sees the scene between Pyrrha and Deidameia: ‘The poet outlines with irony and amused detachment the pressing approaches of the *magna virgo* Achilles, and the girl’s coquetries’ (2007, 208).

Nereid were revealed’) implies that Thetis’ deceit has not been exposed prior to this point, that is, in as many words, Deidameia has not realised that Pyrrha is Achilles throughout the wool-working-lyre-playing-heavy-petting, but is about to (at the Bacchic festival where he rapes her). *Tandem* emphasises the long duration of the foreplay in which Achilles was undiscovered, and the phrase as a whole makes a rather strong comment about Deidameia’s (lack of) knowledge of Achilles’ sex, considerably reinforcing a homoerotic reading. Although some editors consider the line to be an interpolation, the most recent texts of the *Achilleid* (Hall et al, 2007, and Ripoll/Soubiran, 2008) retain it.<sup>45</sup>

Deidameia’s reaction to the rape provides some further clues as to the extent of her knowledge (1.662-669):

Obstipuit tantis regina exterrita monstris,  
quamquam olim suspecta fides, et cominus ipsum  
horruit et facies multum mutata fatentis.  
quid faciat? casusne suos ferat ipsa parenti 665  
seque simul iuvenemque premat, fortassis acerbas  
hausurum poenas? et adhuc in corde manebat  
ille diu deceptus amor: silet aegra premitque  
iam commune nefas...

The princess was shocked and horrified by such monstrous occurrences. Although she had long suspected his good faith, she now shuddered at his very presence and his much-changed appearance as he spoke. What should she do? Should she herself carry the news of the incidents to her father, and ruin herself and the youth at once, who would perhaps receive harsh punishments? And still that long-deceived love remained in her heart. The poor girl is silent and suppresses the now-shared wrongdoing.

The phrase *quamquam olim suspecta fides* makes it clear that Deidameia suspected Pyrrha was hiding something and thus not acting in good faith, but does not specify what this something might have been: male sex, or female homoerotic attraction? We also learn that Deidameia has harboured a *diu deceptus amor*. Such a ‘deceived love’ would seem to imply that she was convinced by Achilles’ disguise and thought him to be a woman; the phrase as a whole hints at a long-harboured (*diu*) affection for another woman, the character

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<sup>45</sup> Shackleton-Bailey retains the line at 592, asserting it ‘makes an appropriate enough introduction to the narrative that follows’ (2003, 357). Dilke brackets it as ‘an interpolated summary based on l. 385, *timido commisimus astu*’ (1954, 123). Goold (1951) makes a rather detailed argument that the line should be moved to replace 1.772, suggesting (not entirely convincingly) it makes little sense in its current position. One wonders whether the unintelligibility of female homoeroticism has something to do with the editorial anxiety.

of which *amor* fails to pin down (it may equally refer to a non-sexual affection or erotic love).

The meaning of the phrase *facies multum mutata fatentis* is, furthermore, not immediately clear. How exactly has Achilles' appearance changed? The loaded word *mutata* may point to the important Metamorphic intertext: perhaps we should see this as a moment of metamorphosis from woman to man to parallel the earlier change from man to woman, equivalent to Jupiter's moment of revelation as he rapes Callisto. Jupiter's Callisto is also said to take on the *facies* of Diana (*Met.* 2.425). The description *facies mutata* is focalised through Deidameia: it is in her eyes that Achilles now looks different—now she can really see the man in him, whereas previously she thought him to be a girl? The condensed expressions *suspecta fides*, *deceptus amor* and *facies mutata* do not expressly specify whether or not Deidameia realised Pyrrha's sex, but can be read in such a way to indicate she did not. Combining these ambiguous phrases with the Callisto intertext and the strong eroticisation of the seduction scene, a reader is free to conclude that Deidameia responded with fascination to what she thought to be the sexual advances of another woman.

As a whole, Achilles' transvestite adventures have the unintended consequence of revealing the fact that even (especially?) in the staged Greek-style seclusion of Lycomedes' court, young women can flirt, touch, kiss and play without arousing the slightest hint of suspicion. The next section will examine more closely the nature of this homosocial society.

## V A(n) (un)spoken world

There are further ways in which the *Achilleid* gestures towards possibilities it does not explicitly discuss. To take one example, the Bacchic setting for the rape and revelation is richly suggestive. It is, first and most importantly, an exclusively female homosocial environment, aggressively patrolled, and furthermore, a women-only religious festival. During such festivals, women could interact freely amongst themselves, albeit always under a watchful and suspicious male gaze, even if from without.<sup>46</sup> Achilles' transvestism provides a

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<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Winkler (1990), 188-209; Goff (2004).

legitimate reason for Statius to bring the narrative directly inside one of these festivals (albeit of course an imagined version thereof), and the reader too is invited to speculate. An ancient female reader would have rather a different perspective, perhaps able to recognise her own experience or even to critique Statius' (in)accuracy. Gender controls access to experience, within the text and without, and again the fascination of male authors with all-female spaces is evident.

As we have seen, Ovid, Callimachus and Parthenius all incorporate similar all-female spaces into their texts, with a note of homoerotic suggestivity (all three use bathing scenes, and their connotations of nudity and sensual contact, in this way, as well as the motif of the hunting intermission). Bacchic festivals were notorious in the literary tradition for sexual license, regardless of the extent to which sexual activity took place during the actual festivals (ideal worshippers of Bacchus, it would seem, were chaste).<sup>47</sup> Euripides' Pentheus fantasises about the sexual pursuits of the Theban Bacchae (*Ba.* 957-958): *δοκῶ σφας ἐν λόχμῃσι ὄρνιθας ὡς | λέκτρων ἔχεσθαι φιλτάτοις ἐν ἔρκεσιν* ('I think that they are in the woods, being held like birds in the loving snares of sex'). He does, however, elsewhere in the play at least, seem to imagine men having sex with the women (e.g., 223); whether he is visualising homoerotic activity in addition to heteroerotic he does not specify. As Brown notes, Plutarch's account of Clodius' transvestite infiltration of the Bona Dea (*Caesar* 9) seems to point to a more secure association between women's only religious festivals and homoeroticism.<sup>48</sup> A female attendant approaches the cross-dressed Clodius and propositions him: *ὡς δὲ γυνὴ γυναῖκα παίζειν προῦκαλείτο* ('she invited him to play, as a woman would another woman'). Though *παίζειν* could refer to the playing of a musical instrument, it is eminently susceptible to double entendre, especially if a pre-existing association existed between women's only festivals and homoeroticism.

In the context of the *Achilleid*, the combination of the reputation of Bacchic festivals for sexual license (whether hetero- or homoerotic), the ambiguously homoerotic flirtations between Pyrrha and Deidameia, and the structural similarity with Ovid, Callimachus and Parthenius (homoerotic

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<sup>47</sup> Heslin (2005), 242.

<sup>48</sup> Brown (2005), 89.



flirtation progressing to potentially erotic setting) makes it plausible that a reader might imagine homoerotic activity regularly taking place during Bacchic festivals (in the world of the *Achilleid* at least).

In Ovid's account, Deidameia discovered Achilles' sex when he raped her in a bedchamber: *forte erat in thalamo virgo regalis eodem / haec illum stupro comperit esse virum* ('by chance, the royal maiden was in the same bedchamber; she knew he was a man through violation', *Ars* 1.697-698); Bion's account seems similarly to envision sexual contact via communal domestic sleeping arrangements. By transmuting the rape to a Bacchic festival, a move which does not seem to have literary precedent, Statius infuses the scene with strong connotations of sexual license, transgression and danger to men (the kind of danger that is manifested in Ovid's Actaeon, Callimachus' Teiresias, and Parthenius' Leucippus).<sup>49</sup> Seeing female intimacy can destroy men, but Achilles, through his disguise and his affirmation of phallic dominance, avoids destruction, and Deidameia makes sure that the other girls do not find out. The Bacchic setting, however, allows Statius to retain the ghostly traces of what might have been: both a homoerotic encounter between women, and the destruction of a man who saw too much.

The more general homosocial setting of Scyros opens up other vistas. When Pyrrha joins the Scyrian girls, they are compared to 'Idalian birds' (*Idaliae volucres*, 1.372) welcoming a new bird into their flock. The reference is to doves, sacred to Venus worshipped at Idalium on Cyprus.<sup>50</sup> This is an environment of eroticism, even though all the girls are apparently sisters (though see below). Achilles remains undetected on Scyros for quite some time, therefore his behaviour towards Deidameia must be of the sort that, within the text, customarily occurs between women. At the most vital moment, when Ulysses and Diomedes have arrived and are surveying Lycomedes' girls, Deidameia ardently clasps Achilles and touches him quite intimately (1.767-772):

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<sup>49</sup> Arico (1986), 2945 notes the shift from Ovid's situation ('piu banale') to Statius' Bacchic festival, commenting that 'Le tenebre notturne e l'atmosfera orgiastica sono gli elementi esteriori che, in maniera poeticamente congruente, stimolano e incoraggiano l'audacia del giovane'.

<sup>50</sup> Dilke (1954), 110.

quid nisi praecipitem blando complexa moneret  
 Deidamia sinu nudataque pectora semper  
 exsertasque manus umerosque in veste teneret  
 et prodire toris et poscere vina vetaret  
 saepius et fronti crinale reponeret aurum? 770

But what if Deidameia had not warned the rash youth, enfolding him in her gentle embrace, and kept covered the chest that was often bared and the exposed arms and shoulders, and prevented him from leaving the couch and asking for wine, and repeatedly put back on his head the golden circlet?

If this sort of physical contact between women were not customary, Achilles' cover would instantly be blown at the very time it must not. This moment is revealing, laying bare the lack of limits on propriety in a casual way. The assumptions and ideologies under which a text labours are often clearest in the case of such throwaway statements. The narrative focus here is the tension between Achilles' desire for war and Deidameia's desire for him to remain, and her rearranging of him serves this narrative focus. Only secondarily, as if unwittingly, does it speak to female intimacy. Ideological imperatives, as often, 'banish to the text's margins certain niggling details which can be made to return and plague them'.<sup>51</sup> Such 'apparently peripheral fragments'<sup>52</sup> as Deidameia's embrace of Achilles at dinner contain within in them the potential to unravel the text's ideologies, and to reveal what is not said, whether because it is simply ignored or deliberately suppressed.

Another of these 'peripheral fragments' is Statius' mention of the 'chaste companions' of the daughters of Lycomedes who accompany them to dinner (*cum pater ire iubet natas comitesque pudicas / natarum*, 757-8). What are we to make of the puzzling presence of these girls, who drop out of the text as suddenly as they appear, not to be mentioned again? Is Lycomedes in the habit of adopting the neighbourhood's stray daughters as he does Achilles' 'sister'? Are they merely that day's 'playmates', and if so why are they present at this rather ceremonial occasion? Such a casual one-off statement is especially susceptible to interpretation. What it does indicate, at any rate, is that Lycomedes' daughters are in the habit of socialising with girls who are not their sisters; therefore, we can more easily read homoerotic potential without suggesting incest at the same time. Again, what is merely hinted at and rapidly

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<sup>51</sup> Eagleton (2008), 115-116.

<sup>52</sup> Eagleton (2008), 116.

passed over reveals the extent of the closed world of exclusive female homosociality, often of interest only when it affects the lives of men. A reader would have had particular room for interpretive movement here as the text ‘gestures beyond itself’, points to the things with which it is not directly concerned but nonetheless cannot elide altogether.

## VI Conclusion

Pyrrha is not Callisto, Daphne, Chariclo or any of the other companions of virgin goddesses we have become acquainted with throughout this thesis. She is more physically masculine, it seems, than any of these figures, and it is not suggested that she is sexually attractive to men (though later, early modern accounts of the Scyros myth featured Lycomedes’ attraction to her<sup>53</sup>). She is also, apparently, more sexually aggressive than these other women, but in Callisto’s forwardness and active preferences and Daphne’s assiduous embraces we see hints of female sexual activity. Pyrrha’s closest analogue, as I have suggested above, is perhaps Callimachus’ Athena, the bulky yet beautiful warrior-lover. How a Flavian audience would have perceived Pyrrha is difficult to tell: she is certainly the closest one gets in this thesis to the stereotypical figure of the *tribas*, and indeed she is literally a phallic woman. But, as the *Achilleid* hints, Deidameia and the other daughters of Lycomedes inhabit a liminal life stage similar to Pyrrha’s, and have something of the Amazon-huntress in them; despite the simplistic trinkets/weapons dichotomy of Ulysses’ trick, Lycomedes’ girls cannot easily be contained on the ‘trinkets’ side. Indeed, even the physically masculine, sexually aggressive Pyrrha is able to live amongst them for a considerable period of time undetected, the most telling clue that we are dealing with something troublesome here, something that transcends all the text’s attempts to essentialise gender.

When it comes to sexuality and gender, for all its limitations the *Achilleid* has a powerfully subversive undertone, and it is only by focussing on its conceptions of femininity, both normative and eccentric, as much as on masculinity that its full subversive force becomes apparent. Although the text

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<sup>53</sup> See Heslin (2005), chapter 1 for an overview of these early modern appropriations.

tells an invaluable story about masculine enculturation and anxiety, as scholars have fruitfully detailed,<sup>54</sup> what it has to say about the hidden lives of women is perhaps just as significant. Lined up with, especially, Ovid's Callisto, but also the Greek texts analysed in chapter 3, this subtext gains additional vigour, and the *Achilleid* makes a substantial contribution to the narrative of non-tribadic female homoeroticism.

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<sup>54</sup> See especially Barchiesi (2005).

## Conclusion

[In Philip Gillespie Bainbrigg's *Achilles in Scyros*] Achilles and Deidamia debate the appeal of boys versus girls, and the chorus [of Scyrian maidens] expresses its distaste at this display of apparent heterosexuality on Scyros:

I can't endure to overhear this prurient conversation  
The only comfort left to us is mutual masturbation.<sup>1</sup>

There is no 'lesbian utopia' to be found in the ancient world, but neither is the picture as bleak as some modern scholars would suggest. Away from the mockery of satire, the pathologising of medical texts and the dourness of declamation, amidst a series of ludic and irreverent poetic texts there lies a space for intimacy between women and its erotic expression, as this thesis has demonstrated. The emblematic kiss between Callisto and Diana/Jupiter represents a particularly overt manifestation of a dynamic that lurks right beneath the surface, just beyond the edges, of a number of texts. Outside of marriage, female sodality brings women together, and allows for close relationships to form, whether between a goddess and her mortal favourites, the mortal followers of a goddess, or unmarried young women at court. Ambiguous scenes of intimate interaction allow readers of a certain disposition to detect a note of homoeroticism, sometimes rather explicit, at other times subtler and shiftier.

Vocabulary drawn from the erotic lexicon appears in these stories repeatedly, and the narratives continually return to similar settings, replay similar scenes, and reuse character types. The wilderness; the pool; the bath; the hunt, its devotees and its patron goddess; the alluring young virgin. Even when the setting, in the *Achilleid*, is transferred to the court of Lycomedes, the figures of the huntress, the Amazon, and the goddess Diana remind readers of the liminal space of the wilderness and the liminal behaviour that occurs there. No reference can be found to aggressively penetrative women and their masculinised bodies; not once in these texts is the word *tribas* to be found. Yet, as in the accounts of tribadism, a consistency of motifs can be perceived. Considering the texts together, it is possible to glimpse a rather different

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<sup>1</sup> Heslin (2005), 54.

conception of female homoeroticism, in which erotic sensuality between conventionally feminine women is a visible possibility even as it is closely succeeded by heteroeroticism. The male heroes Jupiter, Achilles and Leucippus infiltrate the female-homosocial world for the reader, revealing what is normally either unseen or deemed insignificant, while in other cases poets' accounts of virgin goddesses incorporate descriptions of their intimacies with mortal women. Often these intimacies play a central role in the stories: the relationship between Athena and Chariclo is the centerpiece of Callimachus' *mythos* in his *Hymn to Athena*, whilst the relationship between Diana and Callisto is the very factor that enables Jupiter's rape.

Challenging the cultural ideal of women as passive in both sexual behaviour and general demeanour, mythical and poetic texts allow scope for other kinds of behaviour and other desires. Diana's huntresses pursue a conventionally masculine activity, while respecting the authority of the goddess rather than that of men or male gods, and forming close bonds with other young women. Close physical contact often forms a part of these bonds: Callisto 'joined to the side' of her goddess and kissing her; Daphne clinging to Leucippus, whom she believes to be female, and continually embracing 'her'; Deidameia willingly accepting the caresses and kisses of Pyrrha. In the case of these sorts of contact, not specifically genital but decidedly eroticised, the phallogocentric idiom of active/passive, masculine/feminine loses its explanatory force, especially where both women are conventionally feminine in appearance, or both exhibit what I have labelled, along with Eleanor Irwin,<sup>2</sup> the 'dynamic androgyny' of the *parthenos*.

The state of *partheneia*, more elastic than 'virginity' or 'chastity', plays a vital role in the homoerotic dynamics of the texts examined in this thesis. Diana's hunting companions refuse to play the passive role to men, but nonetheless are not devoid of sexuality. Attempting to make Diana and Callisto allegorical figures of immaculate chastity, a move made both by early modern appropriators of the Callisto myth and modern classical scholars,<sup>3</sup> occludes the strong charge of eroticism that surrounds the *parthenos*, and its expression via

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<sup>2</sup> Irwin (2007), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Early modern appropriators: see Traub (2002), 234. Modern scholars: see above, chapter 2, page 42.

intimacy with other women. Unlike figures such as the *fututor* Bassa, censured by Martial for lacking the chastity of Lucretia (*Epigrams* 1.90), the huntress-companions of Diana and the daughters of Lycomedes are able to combine socially-recognised ‘virginity’ with homoerotic sensuality without reproach. The social irrelevancy of non-procreative, non-tribadic homoerotic behaviour enables a space for it to exist within the bounds of social acceptability. It is necessary, when considering female sexuality, to avoid equating ‘sexual activity’ with ‘heterosexual activity’; an antipathy towards sex and/or marriage with men is not the same as a wholesale antipathy to sexuality. This is not to say that all women who reject marriage with men desire women; merely that, in some cases, such women are represented as having homoerotic desires and participating in homoerotic behaviour. An acknowledgement of this fact would render analysis of the figure of the *parthenos/virgo* more comprehensive. Furthermore, even though the texts examined in this thesis are mythical and fictional, their presentation of socially tolerated homoerotic behaviour amongst young women may well have relevance to Roman reality.

Another way of shifting these texts from the realm of pure myth is to consider the possible responses of ancient readers. Intertextual relationships exist between the texts: Ovid’s insertion of an ominous bathing scene into the Callisto myth recalls Callimachus’ *Hymn to Athena* and Parthenius’ story of Leucippus and Daphne, both of which take place, in one way or another, under the aegis of Artemis, and both of which feature close female companionship. A reader of Ovid familiar with these texts could have made the connections to formulate a more complete synthesis of the Diana-and-companions milieu. Later on, a reader of Statius’ *Achilleid* is given many opportunities to recall Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in general and the Callisto episode in particular, through both Thetis’ explicit reference, similar wording in places, and a similar overall story. It is even possible to consider Achilles’ seduction of Deidameia a replay of Jove’s seduction of Callisto, enlivened by the same homoerotic frisson, the same ambiguity in the reaction of the seduced woman.

In the Callisto episode, the *Hymn to Athena*, Parthenius’ Daphne story, and the *Achilleid*, we gain access to these female homosocial environments only in unusual circumstances: when male intruders—Jupiter, Teiresias, Leucippus, and Achilles—enter. Yet all the texts narrate a period before the intrusion/the

revelation of the intruder: Callisto's tenure as the leader of Diana's band and the goddess' favourite; the woodland companionship of Athena and Chariclo; the close friendship between Daphne and Leucippus, whom she believes to be female; and the flirtatious play of Pyrrha and Deidameia, whose state of mind is left open to the reader's interpretation. There is more than one way of reading these texts, especially when they are read together. Intense female intimacy precedes male intrusion, and is ever-available as an imaginable possibility. Where there's one Callisto, there's a whole band more, and the story of Leucippus teaches us that they form relationships amongst themselves as well as with their patron goddesses. The *Achilleid* adds to this new homosocial *mythos* by changing the scene to a more domestic one, and thus even closer to the social setting of Roman readers. Readers who were able to resist the masculine teleology of the texts and focus on the more fleeting moments of female intimacy would have been able, as Victoria Rimell suggests of readers of Ovid's poetry, to 'discover, dream, think outside the box'.<sup>4</sup> The reception history of the texts explored in this thesis hints at the possibilities. To name but a few examples: a plethora of early modern artists painted the kiss between Callisto and Diana as a moment of sensuous, feminine plenitude;<sup>5</sup> sometime in the early twentieth century the classicist Philip Gillespie Bainbrigge wrote a play transforming Lycomedes' Scyros into a coterie of militant lesbians;<sup>6</sup> the nineteenth-century, classically-educated Yorkshire gentlewoman Anne Lister, who loved women exclusively, referred to one of her lovers as 'Kallista'.<sup>7</sup> Both men and women have been able to appropriate the texts explored in this thesis to reflect their own homoerotic desires and fantasies; it would be surprising if ancient readers did not do so also.

Aside from speculating on such possibilities, my ultimate aim has been to suggest a more expansive way of conceptualising female homoeroticism in the ancient world. Two main points have emerged: first, it is important not to limit analysis of female homoeroticism to texts that explicitly describe genital sexuality, just as one would not limit analysis of heteroeroticism to such texts.

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<sup>4</sup> Rimell (2006), 205.

<sup>5</sup> See Simons (1994), *passim*; Sheriff (1998); and Traub (2002), 270-275.

<sup>6</sup> Heslin (2005), 52-55.

<sup>7</sup> Clark (1996), 41. *Kallista* may just represent the superlative of *kalos*, but Lister's classical education provides a further resonance with the Callisto myth, as Clark suggests.



Secondly, distortion or oversimplification may result when one attempts to fit all erotic relationships into the phallogentric active/passive system, or when one assumes, *a priori*, that everyone in the ancient world did so. I hope to have demonstrated that keeping these two points firmly in mind allows one to view texts with fresh eyes, and to avoid despairing *aporiai* faced with limited and/or hostile evidence. One must do as the poets do, and playfully flip around the old myths and the old orthodoxies. Ovid, Statius and Callimachus would, I hope, have approved.

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