Vol. 27, no. 1, Fall 2024

A Queer Iphis: Recovering and Reconsidering Translations of Ovid's "Iphis and Ianthe"

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Abstract: Women have translated Latin and Greek texts for thousands of years but have only recently begun to translate the epic poems of Homer, Vergil, and Ovid into English. Women's translations bring fresh interpretations to ancient texts and demand that twenty-first century readers approach these texts critically. This paper examines the translation of the myth "Iphis and Ianthe" from Stephanie McCarter's recent translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a text written during Augustan Rome and that focuses on stories of transformation. This paper argues that McCarter's translation of "Iphis and Ianthe" is a rhetorical one where she considers her contemporary audience. Her approach to grammar and word choice model her feminist strategy for translating the classics as well as a reconsideration of contemporary values around gender and sexuality, recovering experiences of marginalized characters in the Metamorphoses. This translation offers a way to reconsider the popular fictional retellings of ancient Greek and Roman myth, especially Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy*, as feminist acts of (re)inscription.

Keywords: translation, retelling, Ovid, recoveries and reconsiderations, feminist translation theory

Doi: https://doi.org/10.37514/PEI-J.2024.27.1.17

Recent fictional retellings of ancient myth establish an increasingly popular genre of feminist recoveries of women's experiences, where the often silent/silenced female character gets a chance to tell the story from her own perspective.[1] These recoveries necessitate the reconsideration of their source texts and the translations of those source texts. Alongside fictional retellings, women have begun to translate the epic poems of Homer, Vergil,[2] and Ovid, texts that, until recently, only men have translated.[3] The epic poems shape the literary canon and because of this influential position scholars should reconsider the import of these stories in the twenty-first century. Until this recent round of translations by women, the epic poems have mostly remained off limits for women to translate.[4] Women provide fresh perspectives to ancient texts, illustrate how to approach canonical texts critically, and articulate feminist and ethical strategies for translating the

1 The list of these novels is now very long and includes Madeline Miller's *Circe*, Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* and T*he Women of Troy,* Natalie Haynes' *A Thousand Ships* and *Stone Blind*, Nina MacLaughlin's *Wake, Siren: Ovid Resung*, Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy*, and Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* and *Atalanta*. The length of this list suggests that these are stories we need to read now and the perspectives that we need to hear them from.

2 This spelling of Vergil's name reflects his Latin name, Publius Vergilius Maro, and aligns with Ruden's and Bartsch's recent translations of his *Aeneid.*

3 Mary Innes is the first of these women to translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English in 1955. However, there is a great gap in this work from 1955 until 2004. Sarah Ruden translated Vergil's *Aeneid* (2004; new edition 2021); Caroline Alexander translated Homer's *Iliad* (2015); Emily Wilson translated Homer's *Odyssey* (2018) and *Iliad* (2023); Shadi Bartsch translated Vergil's *Aeneid* (2021); Stephanie McCarter translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2022). Additionally, Jane Alison published a translation of selected stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses, Change Me* (2014).

4 There are layers to this. Women have translated these texts in their entirety into other languages, the earliest is Anne Dacier's *Iliad* (1711) and his *Odyssey* (1716) into French (Wyles, 66). On the one hand, translation does not count towards professional advancement, and so many women do not do the work because it does not count toward promotion (Porter; Kennerly). On the other, Wilson writes that it is because of the "critical distance" of centuries between contemporary women and the male authors that they can take a different approach to canonical texts. (Wilson, "Found in Translation").

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classics.[5] Mostly men have translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses* until 1955 when Mary Innes became the first women to translate Ovid's text into English in its entirety. Now, McCarter is the second woman to do this, and her translation differs from Innes' translation and all previous translations by men. McCarter articulates her feminist translation strategies and situates her translation in a culture and time distant from the source text's. The feminist approaches to translation are the primary reason why myths like "Iphis and Ianthe" are ripe for recovery and reconsideration within the context of the history of rhetoric and translation. This paper reconsiders McCarter's translation of the story "Iphis and Ianthe" from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a rhetorical act and examines how her interpretation is a recovery of a story of female romantic love. I juxtapose translations of "Iphis and Ianthe" by Stephanie McCarter, Mary Innes, Rolfe Humphries, and Allen Mandelbaum to showcase McCarter's feminist strategies for translating Ovid and her rhetorical approaches to word choice and grammar. McCarter's interpretation of the story emphasizes the inherent queerness in the story as a positive quality for the characters, challenging traditional cultural values. These moves reflect a shift in cultural values around gender and sexuality and help reach twenty-first century audiences who recognize these issues as culturally relevant.

In the myth of "Iphis and Ianthe," Ligdus vows that if his wife, Telethusa, gives birth to a girl, they must expose her because they cannot afford the dowry. When Iphis is born Telethusa claims that she is a boy.[6] Ligdus does not find out, and so they raise Iphis as a boy. When Iphis comes of age, Ligdus betroths her to a young woman named Ianthe, whom Iphis has grown up with and loves. However, Iphis knows that women are not supposed to marry women. Even though she loves Ianthe, Iphis has no model for romantic love between women and understands that women only have sex with men. Telethusa prays to the gods, and her prayers are instantaneously granted when Iphis turns into a young man and can marry Ianthe. Once Iphis undergoes transformation, the relationship changes into romantic love. Scholars have long interpreted the myth as one of female homosexuality, where "the real metamorphosis… is not Iphis' transformation into a boy, but the transformation of the bond between Iphis and Ianthe" (Boehringer, 235). Contemporary readers may identify how this story highlights LGBTQ+ issues especially transgender identities and queer women's invisibility. While human rights are a contemporary social issue, this connection is not uncommon when it comes to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[7] The remainder of this article examines McCarter's translation

5 Wilson and McCarter articulate these most clearly. Two of McCarter's four feminist approaches to translating the classics include "avoid misogynistic/sexist/gendered language not explicit in the original; take special care when translating the body, not introducing gendered or racialized language not in the original" (141). Wilson's "Seven Types of Feminist Translation Strategy" include "be (somewhat) visible, watch the time, give voice, keep your distance, contain multitudes, tell it how it is, and don't be evil" (283-286).

6 Iphis is a third declension noun. In Latin, nouns in the third declension are typically identified as neuter (where first declension nouns are feminine, and second declension nouns are masculine). In the myth, Ligdus names the child after his own father and Telethusa agrees to this because "it was unisex and not dishonest" (McCarter, 560). Having a neuter, third declension name is another way that Iphis inhabits the space between gender identities and an example of how gender is originally a grammatical concept.

7 The field of reception studies examines closely how contemporary audiences receive ancient texts. Myths are malleable. Morales notes that "myths are read selectively, re-created, adapted, cut and pasted, and they always have been" (128). Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy* (2007) and Nina MacLaughlin's *Wake Siren: Ovid Resung* (2019) are popular fictional retellings that reimagine Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the contemporary world. Ovid himself retells Greek and Roman myths in his *Metamorphoses*, including "Iphis and Ianthe" based on the story of Leukippos, which originally appeared in a text of Greek legends called *Metamorphoses*, written by Antoninus Liberalis, who got the story from Nicander (Boehringer, 213).

of “Iphis and Ianthe” as a rhetorical act. In her translation, McCarter recovers experiences of marginalized characters in ways that reflect shifting cultural values and prompts readers to reconsider the myth through a critical and contemporary lens.

Reconsidering Translation as a Rhetorical Act

McCarter identifies her goals and approaches for translating Ovid in her “Translator’s Note.”[8] Her goals include: “to create a clear, poetic rendering of the *Metamorphoses* in a modern idiom” (xxxi), “to clearly and reasonably translate Ovid’s scenes of sexual violence and rape” (xxxiv), and “to translate words describing gendered bodies as accurately as possible” (xxxiv). These goals situate her approach to translation alongside her interpretation of the text and a concern for her audience who receives this text in a different time and culture from the Roman Empire.[9] In their updated translations of the classics, women reconsider old, familiar stories, provide new interpretations through their accurate translations, and identify new strategies for translating the classics.

Contemporary women translators do not approach the act of translation neutrally, but rather rhetorically.[10] They translate the texts for specific audiences and in specific times, places, languages, and cultures.[11] The task of the translator is to make the translated text relevant and accessible to the current audience. In this way, translation is related to the rhetorical concept of *Kairos*, where the translator takes into consideration the historical context in which she translates the text and fits “the persuasion to the right and appropriate circumstances of subject, audience, and moment” (Copeland, 19). The translator must find a way to convey the meaning of the text in English that readers understand *now*, rather than trying to reconstruct the English as Ovid, or some other ancient writer, would have written (Kennerly, 6). A translator structures her translation based on the reality of a certain language and culture and readers find that translation accurate or not based on their experience of that reality.[12] Ovid shared a certain reality with this ancient audiences and constructed

8 Metatexts (Introductions and Translators’ Notes) are places where women translators “develop a sense of self” and show they are “increasingly aware that their identities as gendered rewriters enter into their work” (von Flotow, 35). In their metatexts, “translators are introducing and commenting on their work, and offering explanations for it” (von Flotow, 35). The translator’s preface or translator’s note as we know it came about in the modern era in the form of “a prose essay in which to announce new translation manifestos, but also as a new form of writing, inextricably linked to the work it precedes,” (Balmer, 24). In this section, McCarter articulates the moves she makes in her translation, readers can then identify those moves as they read the text.

9 The translator exists between two cultures, “the original one in which the writer produced the text and the receiving one for which the translator must make the text accessible” and this rhetorical situation is most apparent “in cases where tastes or values of the original culture are at odds with those of the receiving one” (Carlos, 335). The contemporary United States is a culture that is at odds with the Roman Empire, however, texts like Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* still contains messages that resonate with contemporary audiences.

10 Like the orator, the translator “is in a rhetorical situation” where translation “is… a personal initiative, akin to that of the orator situated between a subject and a public” (France, 261).

11 Wilson writes that “all modern translations of ancient texts exist in a time, a place, and a language that are entirely alien from those of the original” (“Translator’s Note,” 87). Kennerly defines translation as “a taking across of terms from one time and place to another…” and “…from one language to another” (4). This is the rhetorical situation that women translators find themselves in and the challenge of interpreting an ancient text for a contemporary audience.

12 It is not that readers want “an objective description of reality, but the manner in which opinions concerning it are presented” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 262).

a reality in his stories that his audience shared with him. The translators of his Metamorphoses do the same as they translate and interpret his text in the reality of the twenty-first century. The writer conceives of a reality, and the audience believes or rejects it.[13]McCarter translates the story of Iphis and Ianthe as one that illustrates romantic love between women, and rather than a negative connotation, she provides an interpretation where queerness is positive and possible and readers may recognize and identify with this reality of the twenty-first century.

Similarly, translators create opportunities for readers to identify with stories not originally a part of their language or culture. The translator must make the text accessible in the target language and as a part of the reality of the twenty-first century. Accessibility in the target language creates opportunities, through translation, for audiences to identify with a text. To consider identification as a rhetorical aspect of translation, the ideas and tonality of the text where McCarter translates queerness in a positive register and the idea of queer love as a possibility situates the story in the twenty-first century where audience members may identify with similar experiences.[14] The translator must make the Latin into the kind of English that readers can identify with. Translating a story in a way that does not alienate an entire community or identity allows those communities and identities to engage in conversations with these texts and to read stories that reflect versions of their experiences.

Feminist translation theory holds that both translations and language are figured in "feminine terms," characterized using feminine qualities of faithfulness and beauty (Chamberlain, 458).[15] Gendered metaphors of faithfulness govern translation and place those same expectations of women on the act of translation. Traditionally, translation was accessible to women primarily because of this gendered metaphor, where "composition was a masculine art, the articulated original; translation was feminine – derivative, defective, muted, 'other'" (Glenn, 146). Women were limited to the translation of men's writing, and this kind of gatekeeping silenced women. Gendering translation as historically women's work devalues it as scholarly work (Porter; Kennerly, 6). Language is one part of women's gendered identity in a particular culture and impacts how they interpret ideas.[16] Women translate experience from private to public realms, where they "translate their private language, their specifically female forms of discourse, developed as a result of gendered exclusion, into some form of the dominant patriarchal code" (von Flotow, 12). Women use their craft to translate experiences from the private realm to audiences in the public.

Glenn writes that "rhetoric always inscribes the relation of language and power at a particular mo-

13 "The speaker can conceive a certain reality in accordance with different types of relations. Moreover, nothing guarantees that these connections are always understood in the same way by the speaker and his hearers" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 263).

14 Burke's concept of identification posits that "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (55). Translators of the classics create opportunities for identification with ancient stories when they make them accessible in languages other than Latin or Greek and update vocabulary.

15 The same feminine terms are applied to language in general, with the term "mother tongue" (Chamberlain, 458).

16 Spivak argues "the task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency" (37).

ment (including who may speak, who may listen or who will agree to listen, and what can be said)" (1-2). The connection between language and power captures the rhetorical nature of translation, where translators are responsible for interpreting messages across languages to make texts accessible to audiences. Women translators embody the relationship between language and power. They use their power as translators to build bridges between languages and cultures that help readers see texts in ways that are relevant to the present moment and break out of the norm concerning these canonical texts.

Rhetorical Word Choice

McCarter's word choices illustrate her approach to accurately translating gendered bodies. McCarter subverts previous interpretations of the story in favor of a more contemporary one to show a specific interpretation of Iphis. One controversial passage shows the cultural impact of deviating from, or sticking to, traditional dictionary definitions of Latin vocabulary. Ovid describes Iphis' love for Ianthe as "…*prodigiosa novaeque*/ Cura…" (727-8). Humphries translates the phrase as "…such a strange and unnatural passion…" (231). Innes, similarly, writes, "…a strange and unnatural kind of love" (222).[17] Mandelbaum flourishes a bit more with: "…love so strange that none has ever known its monstrous pangs" (319). All three of these translators focus on strangeness and monstrosity to describe the kind of love Iphis feels for Ianthe. The Latin, however, does not suggest such a negative connotation as these translators' versions would suggest. McCarter writes: "…by this queer longing for a novel kind of lovemaking that no one understands" (274). Definitions for *prodigiosus* in *Lewis and Short* include "unnatural, wonderful, marvelous, prodigious" and those for *novus* include "new, not old, young, fresh, recent."[18] While definitions for *prodigiosus* include unnaturalness or strangeness it is possible to connect the word to not only ancient Roman cultural norms, where romantic relationships between women were not often visible, and any trace of their sexuality was deemed improper and unnatural, but also American cultural norms of the mid-twentieth century.[19] The word "queer" is not a standard dictionary definition for *prodigiosus*. McCarter's choice to translate *prodigiosa* as "queer" shows an updated approach to the kind of love between Iphis and Ianthe and reflects an updated definition of the term "queer." In her "Translator's Note" for the version of this story published in *The Sewanee Review* in 2021, McCarter writes that "the contemporary register of 'queer' communicates … what Iphis sees as the marvelous strangeness of her desire without saddling her with judgements about that desire that she does not express" (566). McCarter's translation reflects an interpretation of strangeness and newness that isn't negative, and can be marvelous, as well as the contemporary understanding of the term "queer" as reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community. The word choices in her translation reflect a contemporary cultural understanding and acceptance of love and relationships that are not heterosexual.

17 Even though Innes has written a prose translation, she is the only other woman to translate the *Metamorphoses* in its entirety, and the similarities between her and Humphries' translations, published in the same year, show how culturally embedded language and beliefs around queerness and romantic love between women are.

18 *Lewis and Short* is an authoritative Latin dictionary.

19 In general, women in ancient culture were invisible, so it's not surprising that this story would reflect the way that the female sex was not valued: from the near infanticide at the beginning of the story to the strangeness of the lesbian relationship here. On the other hand, homosexuality was hardly a foreign concept between men in antiquity. The question for men was not who they were doing it with, but rather who penetrates whom.

The invisibility and impossibility of love between two women in antiquity becomes a concern for contemporary translators as they interpret the story of Iphis and Ianthe. Iphis, like other queer women, becomes monstrous in mid-twentieth century English translations because of her unnatural desire for women, reflecting homophobic culture of the mid-twentieth century. McCarter's translation, on the other hand, reconsiders Iphis and Ianthe and recovers some of their humanity through her rhetorical use of word choice. McCarter's "…by this queer longing for a novel kind of lovemaking that no one understands" hints that the story is in fact about both longing and lovemaking (274). Iphis loves Ianthe but is unable to marry or have sex with her because they are both women, that is, Iphis lacks a phallus and is unable to consummate the marriage.[20] In ancient Rome the penetrative act consummates the marriage. Iphis and Ianthe want to be together, although they don't know how because they have no models, no other stories about the kind of love that they share. Identifying Iphis and Ianthe's relationship as queer suggests that Iphis does not appear to have a problem with her genitalia or her gender, rather she lacks examples and wonders how she could love another female when not even animals do this.[21] Iphis' desire is monstrous because it is considered unnatural – a girl desiring another girl. When Iphis becomes a boy, however, he can be with Ianthe. The transformation erases the monstrosity and rather portrays queer women's invisibility, by "heterosexualizing" the love between Iphis and Ianthe ("Iphis & Ianthe Translated by Stephanie McCarter," 566). Their relationship is no longer monstrous because it appears heterosexual.

The Grammatical and Cultural Concept of Gender

In Latin, gender is a grammatical concept more than the cultural one that we know today.[22] As in English, Latin has specific words to designate biological sex and gender. Latin and Greek languages assign gender (masculine, feminine, and neuter) to all nouns.[23]As in English, Latin has specific words to designate biological sex and gender. Latin and Greek languages assign gender (masculine, feminine, and neuter) to all nouns. These words illustrate how gender comes to be understood to exist on a binary, words on opposite ends of a spectrum make our understanding of gender conform to one thing or another with discomfort surrounding those that exist in the middle. We often confuse words that indicate gender (boy/girl) with those that indicate biological sex (male/female). For this story about queer women, the concept of grammatical gender reveals non-normal gender behaviors and how these behaviors function within cultures.

The transformation from female to male is necessary for Iphis and Ianthe to be together. However, the transformation in the Latin is a transformation of grammar: Iphis becomes a boy and "is the active,

20 Beek writes that "Roman authors vehemently reject both the idea of a woman taking the penetrative role in sex, as well as the idea of sex occurring without a dominant partner who penetrates," while its generally agreed upon that what matters in the question of male homosexuality is who is doing the penetrating (66).

21 Or, as McCarter writes: "Iphis's dilemma is not that she finds her love morally reprehensible… she finds it instead physically impossible, which speaks to the strictly penetrative view of sex that comes down to us from Roman sources" ("Iphis & Ianthe Translated by Stephanie McCarter," 565-566).

22 Glenn writes that "even though *gender* is merely a concept borrowed from grammar, it, nevertheless, continues to have far-reaching effects on cultural notions of the relation between the sexed body and its behavior" (*Rhetoric Retold*, 173).

23 In English, nouns such as boy/girl, man/woman, king/queen contain "intuitive" gender (Corbeill, 79).

penetrative *puer* in the grammar of Roman sex and is gendered masculine – but she may not have a penis" (Ranger, 239). In English, the shifts in pronouns and gender terms indicate transformation of gender, but not necessarily biological sex. In the description of Iphis' transformation, every feature is explained in comparison to how Iphis appeared as a girl. The transformation preserves feminine endings: *Quam solita est, maiore gradu* (Ovid, IX.787 in Anderson). McCarter renders this line: "And Iphis follows with a longer stride than usual" (275-6). Humphries writes: "But taking, somehow, longer steps than usual…" (233). Mandelbaum translates the line: "Iphis walked behind her, but her stride was longer than it was before" (321). The participle *solita* is feminine and provides a grammatical reason for the use of female pronouns in the description of Iphis' stride. However, McCarter's English translation does not give Iphis a pronoun yet. Crucially, the metamorphosis does not describe the transformation of the part of Iphis' body that would allow Iphis and Ianthe to consummate the marriage, suggesting that Iphis does not have a penis even after the transformation from *femina* to *puer*. This also brings up the question of whether the transformation from female to male is what Iphis wants, or if she longs to see models of queer women.[24] Without a transformation, Iphis is not able to marry Ianthe.

Following the comparison, McCarter preserves the second person pronouns found in the Latin: "… she has more vigor than is normal for a female. You who were just a girl are now a boy!" (563).[25] The shift to second person pronouns allows the author to address the characters in the story and avoid the question of which gender pronouns to use in English, while still marking the grammatical change from *femina* to *puer* (girl to boy) and not limiting them to specific sets of pronouns (563). The Latin juxtaposes *puer* and *femina*, where *puer* exclusively refers to a boy, while *femina* has a wider range of connotations for women, but usually indicates an adult woman. McCarter's use of gender terms "boy" and "girl" also suggest that the transformation is not one of biological sex. The "female" in the previous clause refers generally to females, not specifically to Iphis. Humphries, rather than using the second person in his translation writes: "The vigor less becoming to a woman. She was no woman now, but a young bridegroom!" (233). Humphries' term "bridegroom," defined as "a man just married," may suggest that a penis is present in his translation, as the marriage night is associated with consummation. Mandelbaum's translation reads: "You are more vigorous than you had been, o Iphis, when you still were feminine—for you who were a girl so recently are now a boy!" (321). Innes writes: "She showed more energy than a woman has – for she who had lately been a woman had become a man?" (224). The Latin simply states that Iphis, as a man, has more energy and vigor than a woman. A concern for women and their physical activities also reflects a dated cultural concern in the translations. The translators, however, address a shift in vigor or energy as part of the transformation and comment on the acceptability of energy or vigor for a woman. For Humphries, the vigor is not becoming to a woman, not something that is generally accepted for a woman, while others indicate merely that Iphis as a man has more.

24 Beek asks would "some instruction in lesbian sexual practices [be] more concenial to her?" (56-7). It is important not to discount the value of the visibility of others living similar lives.

25 "*Plusque vigoris adest, habuit quam femina. Nam quae/ Femina nuper eras, puer es*"" (Ovid, IX.790-1 in Anderson).

Conclusions and Implications: Retelling as a Feminist Rhetorical Practice

The act of retelling is deeply ingrained in feminist rhetorical practices. Fictional retellings and translations of ancient texts recover and reconsider women's experiences. They provide a way to reconsider the stories, taken out of their contexts and applied to the contemporary in explicit ways.[26]Women have shown that there are new ways of interpreting ancient epics that focus on accuracy of word choice and creating accessible texts, while also displaying an inclusive and culturally relevant interpretation for contemporary audiences. Feminist translation strategies and fictional retellings share some key similarities. Each engages in (re)inscription of the source texts, each recovers and reconsiders the characters from the source text in a new light. These strategies are similar to feminist rhetorical practices, where feminist scholars engage in methods that rescue, recover, and reinscribe rhetorical history to include women, and place contemporary women in conversation with historical ones (Glenn, 2; Royster & Kirsch, 14). Writers' identities as women shape their interpretations of the source texts and the stories they tell (Enoch, Jack, & Glenn, *Retellings*, 9). Women's translations of the classics and women's retellings of ancient myth have an entwined relationship. Hardwick includes adaptations and versions in her interpretation of translations (Hardwick, 342). Ali Smith's novel *Girl Meets Boy* is a contemporary fictional retelling of Iphis and Ianthe's story. The novel takes place in contemporary Scotland where the characters face a culture that still grapples with accepting homosexuality and serves as an example of how one author reinscribes the story of Iphis and Ianthe for contemporary audiences that recovers queer identities. Smith's novel celebrates queerness and non-conformity as she reimagines the story of Iphis and Ianthe in contemporary Scotland. She demonstrates how readers should reconsider the story in the contemporary moment, putting Iphis and Ianthe, as Robin and Anthea, in the twenty-first century. Robin reflects the gender-bending qualities of Ovid's Iphis. Anthea's attraction to and love for Robin reflects the kind of model relationship that did not exist in antiquity, where romantic love between female characters is possible. Visibility and exposure to different interpretations of these stories shows readers (often young people) that there are many ways to approach and work with these texts, and many ways to interpret and understand these stories.

Smith recovers and reconsiders the story by giving voice to the characters and their desires. In Ovid's myth, Iphis does not believe how she could marry another woman. Smith gives Iphis-as-Robin this chance, even as she still does not really give specific terminology to Robin, she celebrates the in-betweenness of Robin's identity and makes those in-between qualities exactly what Anthea desires. Smith gives Ianthe-as-Anthea, who does not speak in Ovid's myth, the chance to voice her desire.[27] Smith describes Robin from Anthea's perspective, where readers also see the desire and excitement in discovering Robin's identity. Smith writes: "It had been exciting, first the not knowing what Robin was, then the finding out. The grey area, I'd discovered, had been misnamed: really the grey area was a whole other spectrum of

26 It is necessary to find a way to translate these texts and what they mean now, rather than trying to preserve only what they meant to ancient authors in antiquity (Kennerly, 6).

27 In Ovid's myth, Iphis gets a speech, much like a man, even though it is about confusion and uncertainty. Ianthe does not get to speak. It is characteristic of feminist retellings to tell the story from the woman's perspective, the woman who is often silent or silenced. Hauser argues that women's silence has a generative quality, where writers recognize the silence and want to tell the story (195).

colours new to the eye. She had the swagger of a girl. She blushed like a boy. She had a girl's toughness. She had a boy's gentleness" (Smith, 83-84). As the list of qualities goes on, Smith bends the expectations for each description with that of the opposite gender (usually we expect a boy to swagger and a girl to blush). In English, a language that lacks grammatical gender, the description of the character creates opposition and contradiction in how readers think about gender expression. The qualities that Anthea observes in Robin do not equate to a biological sex change, and so readers must reconsider their observations and what they know about gender.

Smith also reconsiders Ovid himself, giving readers new ways to think about the ancient poet. Where Ovid existed in the patriarchal and hegemonic world of Augustan Rome, Smith recovers him as "fluid," recalling Robin's own identity (97). She acknowledges the contradiction of his existence: "he can't help being the Roman he is, he can't help fixating on what it is that girls don't have under their togas, and it's him who can't imagine what girls would ever do without one" (97). In this way, readers also imagine how stories change and take on new meaning as they read them in different and distant time periods, and how authors never shift from their existing times, but readers reconsider the author's identity and the reality into which they receive the texts. The twenty-first century is a difficult time to consider the classics, but Smith's recovery of both the myth of Iphis and Ianthe and Ovid himself give hope that there are other ways to reconsider these ancient authors that help us to figure out what we value now, rather than trying so hard to figure out what Ovid and Augustan Rome valued thousands of years ago.[28]

This essay provides one example of how translators use rhetorical strategies and feminist approaches to address contemporary social issues in their interpretations of ancient texts. Through translation women reclaim ancient stories, recover the voices of ancient and mythological characters and reconsider their meanings for contemporary audiences. McCarter's *Metamorphoses* shows how translation embodies a possibility for change by using new words to tell an old story. This possibility for change is as important for "impressionable young people" in high school and college as it is for wider, popular audiences (Wilson, 296). Translations and retellings shift the way that we perceive the classics, once inflexible and unquestioned, now translations and retellings show readers that change is possible. McCarter's updates to Iphis and Ianthe help us to read Iphis and Ianthe's queerness in a positive register. Both translations and fictional retellings give readers examples of ways to reconsider texts from ancient patriarchal societies and different languages in the current time, a way to think critically about them and challenge interpretations. They provide models for how readers and writers might do their own work of recovering ancient texts.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank Stephanie McCarter, for reading an early draft of this piece and offering some guidance on the project, and also Lynée Gaillet, George Pullman, Ashley Holmes, and Michael Harker.

28 Kennerly calls for rhetoricians to update the translation of rhetorical terminology, words such as "pistis, ethos, and arete," not to "get closer to what Arisotle meant then" but to "help us get closer to what we mean *now*" (6).

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