Maintaining Untraditional Virginity

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Maintaining Untraditional Virginity: A Study of *Metamorphoses*’ Diana and *Twilight*’s Cullen Family

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English of the College at Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* contains a world full of supernatural beings, violent confrontations, and scandalous relationships. Many myths contain stories of sexual pursuits, which often involve a god lusting after a young virgin. Those tales establish the fragility of virginity within the poem, especially when a female is a beautiful huntress. According to those factors, Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt, should be unable to maintain her virginity. However, she defies convention and keeps her virginity, despite the many factors within her life that align her with the sexual pursued females. Because of that, Diana stands out among gods and mortals alike as a superior being whose life does not follow the standard rules of her world. In a similar manner, the Cullen family from Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* maintains their own brand of virginity by choosing to drink animal blood instead of human blood. They defy the conventions of their species and live as a part of human society. Although the Cullens possess a different type of virginity than Diana, there are striking similarities between the vampires and the goddess. Through their virgin connection, the two texts demonstrate the universality of the conception of virginity and the complexity that can come with it.
Introduction

When I read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for the first time, several characters, including Perseus, Jove, Apollo, and Diana, left a lasting impression. It was not until I started to look closely at the text for a paper that I realized that Diana should not be a character that stands out because she never occupies a starring role in a story. Despite her status as an Olympian god, she acts as a background character who is more of an influence on events than a catalyst of them. Her ability to resonate, even if she is never a central figure, shows that she has some quality that makes her different from the other characters. Originally, I thought her beauty set her apart, but then I realized that beauty is only a tiny factor within her complex characterization. What really stands out is her perpetual virginity, which is never threatened despite her violent world—one where rape, mass murder, and treachery are standard. Once I discovered that, I began to think that Ovid intentionally tried to make her power stem from her virginity, and I started to actively pursue that idea. The results of those efforts encompass the first three chapters of this work.

As expected, my thesis topic quickly expanded as I discovered more trends in *Metamorphoses* concerning virginity. Soon, the importance of Diana’s virginity began to center itself on its contradictory nature. For example, unlike the other goddess of virginity, Minerva, Diana has a sexual aura that makes her desirable even while she maintains her virginity. That quality is shown when Ovid avoids showing Diana hunting, despite her status as a famed huntress. Instead, when she physically appears in the poem, she is usually bathing or relaxing. By portraying Diana like that,
Ovid emphasizes her femininity and sexuality over her masculine hunting skills. Therefore, unlike Minerva who is de-sexualized through her association with war, Diana manages to tread the line between sexuality and virginity. That line is precisely what makes her virginity problematic because it represents Diana flaunting her sexuality without taking part in any sexual acts.

Diana’s distinct sexuality combined with her virginity makes her one of the most desirable females in the poem. Her persona becomes an issue when no man ever touches her, despite the inherent violence and lust in Ovid’s world. Through that, Diana is set up as a superior female who combines adult sexuality with innocence: one who can be desired yet chaste. She is the only female who can avoid the lust that affects so many other virgins. Even in comparison with the other gods, Diana possesses a unique brand of power that directly correlates with keeping her virginity intact; her power is emphasized when Ovid connects her to the poem’s victims of sexual pursuit through various physical and environmental characteristics. Diana uses her power to set herself apart without resorting to the violence other gods often use. Ovid engaging so many stories to make Diana have that status shows the importance he puts on her as a character and emphasizes his tendency to twist myths to meet his own purposes.

After I established my focus as Diana and virginity in Metamorphoses, I realized that my thesis needed another layer. Previously, I had noticed subtle connection between Edward from Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight (2005) and Diana through their physical descriptions. Because of that, I decided to try and weave the
young adult novel into my thesis. Once I started the *Twilight* portion, I discovered that my initial connection between the two texts was barely relevant to what my thesis had become. Through looking at the novel again, I formulated a base theory that the Cullens’ diet choice equated them to Diana and the virgin nymphs. From there, I was able to move forward by putting *Twilight* into the context of the contemporary vampire mythology and using the Cullens’ uniqueness as a parallel to Ovid’s virgins.

The strength of the connection between the Cullens within contemporary vampire mythology and Ovid’s virgins within *Metamorphoses* was the key to formulating the final chapter. Meyer and other vampire literature writers have done some Ovidian twisting to vampire mythology that has resulted in an analogous treatment of virginity when a vampire chooses abstinence from their standard lifestyle by refusing to bite (penetrate) humans. The classic vampire still occupies a starring role in many texts, but many contemporary stories also incorporate a new vampire breed that abstains from drinking human blood. Similar to how Diana maintains her superiority by avoiding the fate of other virgins, these vampires defy their contemporaries’ behavior and choose to adopt a more chaste way of life based on self-control, so they can blend easier into human society. One of the most recognizable examples of this new vampire trend is the Cullen family. They live as “vegetarian vampires,” choosing to only hunt animals. By abstaining from human blood, the Cullens form their own brand of virginity that centers on them maintaining control over their natural instincts instead of sexual desires. While the Cullens are
not the first literary vampires to make this choice, their personal characteristics as well as chosen lifestyle make them comparable to Ovid’s virgins.
Diana the Virgin, Diana the Huntress or Diana the Sexualized Female?

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, violence and sexuality dominate the existence of many characters, whether god, demi-god or mortal. Every young female is vulnerable to the whims of interested males, especially if she is beautiful and a virgin; moreover, young men are occasionally susceptible to the lust of those around them. In both cases, the pursuer often acts upon his/her desires with no regard for consequence. For most virgins, especially females, being victims of lust results in rape, transformation, death or, at times, a combination of two. However, the virgin goddesses, Diana and Minerva, remain immune to the desires of those around them. Of those two goddesses, only Diana is able to walk the line between sexuality and virginity, between huntress and femininity. That ability establishes a stark contrast between her, the nymphs, and Minerva, concerning experiences and lifestyle, which makes Diana's virginity stand out as problematic. While she cannot be called unchaste, the goddess still presents an image that is not quite reconcilable with the stereotypical conception of what a Roman virgin is supposed to be.

Scholarship on Roman women paints a clear picture of the expectations for women. According to Elaine Fantham, Roman legend states that the first women in Rome were 30 virgins stolen from the Sabines (216-7). By emphasizing that they stole virgins instead of wives, Romans elevated virgins above other women as more valuable and cherished. With the Sabine virgins, the Romans established women's

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1 The women referred to in this section are freewomen, not slaves. Slaves were unable to marry, susceptible to the sexual whims of their masters and often forced to take part in the sex trade (Pomeroy 192-204).
societal roles; Roman women were expected to marry and have children, especially during Augustus’ reign (Ovid’s time) when women were punished for not doing so (Fantham 297, 302). As time went on, virginity remained a prized attribute in unmarried women, as shown by the revered Vestal Virgins who tended a fire in Vesta’s temple that was believed to be essential for Rome’s existence (Hallett “Women...” 267). The value Romans placed on virginity, as shown by the Vestal Virgins, gave all virgins a unique place in society. Of Rome’s young virgin girls, Sarah Pomeroy says, “The lives of Vestals were severely regulated, but in some respects they were the most emancipated women in Rome...the most liberated females [were] those who are not bound to males in a permanent relationship” (213). A virgin’s youth, innocence, and single relationship status kept her from assuming many of an adult woman’s roles. Because of that, virgins in general enjoyed more freedom than women bound by marriage or motherhood.

Despite the benefits of virginity, few Roman women lived outside of traditional domestic roles. Judith P. Hallett explains, “All Roman women—except for [the Vestal Virgins]—were expected to marry, and ordinarily girls were wed at menarche to men several years older” (“Women...” 263). Most girls barely had time to realize what virginity was before they married for the first time. Before marriage, females were admired for their chastity and modesty; after marriage, women were expected to avoid a clear set of vices, including unchastity, greed, and inappropriate dress (Clark 44, 51). Hallett adds that women were admired for fidelity and prowess at domestic duties, not independent minds and actions (“Women...” 271). Overall,
the lives of Roman women were regulated before and after marriage with high expectations concerning familial responsibilities and, as a wife, duty to one’s husband.

Although many virgins pervade the pages of *Metamorphoses*, only Diana carries a complicated interpretation of virginity that resides outside of standard Roman perceptions. Even though other feminine characters also break Roman standards, Diana alone remains an unmarried, untouched female. The varied elements of Diana’s persona as well as the reverence for her chastity make her notable against others’ more clear-cut chastity: the nymphs are virgins until they are raped or transformed while Minerva’s virginity is almost inconsequential since she possesses no sexuality. The variety of virgin females Ovid incorporates illustrates Alessandro Barchiesi’s point about the characters in the narrative: “The sheer size of the poem and its alternation of short and long narratives is a constant invitation to compare and contrast, and the question about what makes a character (different from another) is never far from the surface” (197). In the virgins’ case, merely looking at their actions in the myths shows that not all virgins are the same. Diana, specifically, raises many questions because, as a sexualized huntress and a powerful goddess, she is a cross between the nymphs and Minerva. That mix makes Diana an extremely complex character, which is why she stands out from the others.

In order to fully understand Diana’s unique position, one must first explore the distinctions between Diana, Minerva, and the nymphs’ sexuality. The main differences between the two goddesses concern their patronages. Diana is the
goddess of the hunt while Minerva is the goddess of war. Being the goddess of the hunt allows Diana to maintain a good portion of her feminine sexuality because the hunt is either a recreational activity or a means of survival, not a tool for domination that requires brute force or hand-to-hand combat. As shown by the weapon Diana yields—a bow and arrow—killing an animal can be accomplished through an action from afar. Furthermore, the hunt is an activity that one chooses to begin and to end; it enables one to rest often and to commit only as much violence as is necessary or wanted. In contrast, Minerva’s wars are brutal clashes between enemies that often culminate in deaths by close-range weapons, like swords; war may go beyond the fighters’ control and often can only end with death and destruction. Warriors are defined by their strength, endurance, and brawn, which are all typically male attributes. All of those factors contribute to the perception of war as a masculine event; traditional conceptions leave no place for a feminine character within that blood and hostility. Through her association with those battles, Minerva is stripped of her feminine sexuality while Diana, because of her affiliation with a more subdued type of conflict, maintains her feminine desirability. Even though they are both virgins, only Diana occupies a position where others would think to threaten her sexually.

Mary F. Foskett explores the contrast between the two goddesses further when she talks of their roles in reference to culture and human life. Diana is also the goddess of childbirth while Minerva’s other roles revolve around wisdom and artisans. In reference to Diana, Foskett says:
The goddess whose own blood is never shed assists women whose social duty is to bleed, that is, to become fertile, to have sexual intercourse in marriage, and to bear children. By refusing participation in [those] spheres...[Diana] empowers others to become fully incorporated themselves. (66)

Diana’s association with female sexuality and reproduction is part of the reason why she must maintain her sexuality alongside her virginity. She can bless and protect married women because her own life is not ridden with the distraction of sexual relationships. By showing Diana’s focus on married women, Foskett illustrates why Diana protects some virgins, like Arethusa, who are being sexually pursued and scorns women, like Callisto, who are pregnant out of wedlock: their situations are outside of Diana’s concept of acceptable sexuality (Ovid 2.432-63, 5.600-40). On the other hand, Foskett acknowledges Minerva’s lack of sexuality when the writer states, “It is [Minerva’s] virginal status, her autonomy, that enables her to move in arenas associated with both male and female production...She ‘is not a goddess of procreation, but of creation’” (65-6). Minerva’s focus on reason and creativity adds to her existence outside of the typical female’s roles. Although she is a female, Minerva possesses no defining characteristics that gender her actions with female sexuality. Once again, when these two roles are compared, Diana’s is more sexualized, which enables her to project a more provocative aura than Minerva. In addition, as will be shown in chapter two, Ovid often associates Diana’s unyielding virginity with the sexual attacks on other beings in his poem, and, keeping in line with Minerva’s lack of sexuality, none of those myths are linked with Minerva.
While Minerva personifies the “non-gendered female,” the nymphs fulfill the role of stereotypical virgins. Throughout the poem, these carefree characters are predominantly shown relaxing, bathing, hunting or worshipping. Even though their activities are fairly innocent, they are often threatened by the violent nature of Ovid’s world when a male, usually a god, feels lust for a nymph’s body. Once a nymph is in that situation, she cannot escape unscathed; she either endures rape or transformation. As Hugh Parry says, “Weapons, violence and assault are the implements of desire in the world of the Metamorphoses” (270); unfortunately for the nymphs, they suffer from all those weapons. Because of the extreme amount of sexuality associated with these virgins, especially when they are attacked, they provide the foil to Minerva. Diana, with her combination of sexuality and virginity falls between the two and, therefore, is an anomaly within the poem.

Although Diana is only present or alluded to in a handful of the Metamorphoses’ myths, each mention serves to further complicate her character. Ovid initially introduces Diana in the Daphne and Apollo story, which is also the first case of a young girl being pursued sexually by an enamored male. The poet calls Diana “the virgin goddess Diana,” which immediately draws the reader’s attention to the goddess’s sexual purity (1. 476). When Daphne takes a vow of chastity, she pleads to her father Peneus saying, “Darling Father, I want to remain a virgin / for ever. Please let me. Diana’s father allowed her that” (Ovid 1.486-7). With those words, Ovid presents the reader with the knowledge that Diana is eternally a virgin. This concept is what begins the problemization of Diana’s virginity because Jove’s
gift defies the natural course of sexuality in *Metamorphoses*. As John Heath states, "...in Ovid's world [virginity] is usually a short-lived condition" (234); with the exception of Diana and Minerva, no virgin is safe from sexual assault, and Diana's ability to keep her virginity despite her desirability does not fit into the schema of Ovid's violent world.

The ending of the Daphne story establishes a stark contrast between the outcomes the attractiveness of Daphne's and Diana's bodies cause. Throughout the myth, Ovid closely associates Daphne with Diana when the nymph takes a vow of chastity and becomes a huntress. Therefore, when she is pursued and her virginity is threatened, the reader perceives that the same scenario could easily happen to Diana. Daphne prevailing and evading Apollo would also signal Diana's ability to thwart her own suitors, but Daphne's story ends when she is transformed into a laurel tree and raped by Apollo. The text reads:

Tree though [Daphne] was, Apollo still loved her. Caressing the trunk with his hand, he could feel the heart still fluttering under the new bark. Seizing the branches, as though they were limbs, in his arms' embrace, he pressed his lips to the wood; but the wood still shrank from his kisses. Phoebus then said to her: "Since you cannot be mine in wedlock, you must at least be Apollo's tree. It is you who will always be twined in my hair, on my tuneful lyre and my quiver of arrows." ...with a wave of her new-formed branches
the laurel agreed, and seemed to be nodding her head in the treetop. (1.553-9, 566-7)

Ovid suggests that Apollo still has a sexual relationship with Daphne, despite her transformation. Apollo’s ability to satisfy his desires, even at the cost of Daphne’s human beauty and virginity, begins the cycle of myths that show that any female with sexuality is susceptible to attack. Since Diana’s appearance is similar to many of the nymphs’, her body is just as desirable, but she evades situations like Daphne’s and remains untouched and unpursued. Her immunity defies the virgin stereotypes because, despite her desirability, she is never the direct target of a male’s lust. Diana only functions as a sexual object; she is never the subject of sexual pursuit.

Although the nymphs and Diana lead similar lifestyles, the goddess’s virginity has a more powerful influence over her than other virgins’. For example, despite the presumption that virgins possess some ignorance concerning sexual activities, Ovid still enables the nymphs to realize their purity is being threatened before they are raped, even if they walk naively into the situation. When Callisto is raped by Jove, she is initially tricked by his method of disguising himself as Diana; however, as soon as Jove becomes unable to contain his lust and embraces her, Callisto understands the danger she is in. Ovid says, “...[Jove] gripped her / tight in his arms, and his subsequent felony gave him away. /...Callisto fought back; but indeed what man could a girl be a match for, / let alone Jupiter?” (2.432-3, 436-7). By overstepping the boundaries of affection set between Diana and her nymphs, Jove exposes his identity as male even before he shows his true form. Alerted to the danger she is in, Callisto
demonstrates the depth of knowledge about sexual advances that virgins in Ovid’s world must have in order to defend their bodies and is able to commence fighting back immediately, even though her efforts are easily overpowered by the king of the gods. After Callisto’s rape, when she returns to the real Diana’s troop, Ovid shows the extent of the goddess’ ignorance by contrasting her perception with her nymphs’.

Like Callisto, Ovid’s other nymphs, despite their sexual inexperience, possess some knowledge of lust and sex, which acts as a defense mechanism against their world’s sexual violence. However, Diana does not share that knowledge; Ovid demonstrates that when Callisto is standing in Diana’s presence immediately after she is raped:

[Callisto’s] eyes were fixed on the ground, and she wouldn’t resume her position close to the side of the goddess in front of the whole procession. Her silence and blushes were telling signs that she’d lost her virtue. Diana, but for being a virgin, could well have detected her guilt by a thousand tokens. The nymphs are said to have noticed.

(2.448-52)

Diana’s ignorance is shown several times in that passage. First, she does not question why or appear to notice that Callisto does not take her privileged place beside the goddess. In the politics of a troop such as Diana’s, Callisto voluntarily abdicating her honorary place indicates that she no longer believes she is worthy to stand there. Since Ovid shows Callisto’s favor to be based on her virginity and hunting skills, Diana should have realized that one of those traits was violated. Callisto also casts
her eyes downward and blushes, both of which are signs of shame that Diana does not notice. By making the goddess ignorant to the changes in Callisto, Ovid presents the reader with the depth of Diana’s obliviousness concerning matters of sexuality.

Moreover, the other nymphs in the troop recognize Callisto’s predicament even while Diana remains unaware. Ovid mentions that there are a “thousand tokens” that Callisto has lost her virginity, meaning that her appearance, her mannerisms, and her emotions all indicate what has happened (2.452). And still, Diana is oblivious (Ovid 2.416). Ovid also explains that the reason behind Diana’s lack of understanding is her virginity, and with that statement, he brings the problem to forefront: while other virgins can recognize danger, sexual advances, and lost virginity, the goddess remains ignorant (2.451). That revelation brings the reader to the last line of the aforementioned passage: “the nymphs are said to have noticed” (Ovid 2.452). Perhaps they notice because they are not virgins, which would explain Diana’s, the only virgin’s, profound misinterpretation of the situation. However, that cannot be true because an esteemed virgin, one who is praised for her purity and punishes those who are unchaste, would not surround herself with a group of sexually-experienced, unmarried women. Therefore, most, if not all, of her nymphs must be virgins. When Ovid comments on Diana’s virginity as the reason for her ignorance, he does so to highlight a distinct separation between the ignorance of the virgin goddess and the knowledge of her virgin nymphs.

Along with specific mentions of Diana’s virginity, Ovid presents tensions within Diana’s persona and image that, by their nature, defy the concept of her as a
virgin and further problematize that status. For instance, throughout the text, Diana is revered as the goddess of the hunt. The simple act of hunting can be considered impure because of the bloodshed involved; furthermore, the personality needed to be a hunter—determined, feral, skilled with weaponry, and most importantly, willing to kill an animal—defies the subdued, feminine qualities that are usually associated with virginity. Diana’s hunting allows her to commit violence from afar—unlike Minerva’s close-contact, brutal, calculated wars—so Diana does not become ungendered like Minerva. But, at the same time, the act of hunting emphasizes Diana’s feral qualities, the ones that defy the image of the demure virgin. The hunt’s ability to emphasize a female’s sexuality is best shown when Ovid uses hunting imagery during a sexual pursuit. By being famed for hunting and virginity, Diana embodies a contradiction centered on her sexuality. Jean-Pierre Vernant further explains Diana’s two conflicting images as follows:

[Diana] is the Huntress, the one who runs in the woods, the Wild One, the Archer, who shoots wild animals with her weapons...She is also the Maiden, the pure Parthenos, dedicated to eternal virginity, the one who leads, in joyous dance, music, and beautiful song the gracious chorus of adolescent girls she makes her companions—the Nymphs and Graces. (qtd. in Foskett 66)

Ovid often presents those two distinct personas simultaneously in the same myth. He uses several different stories and approaches to incorporate the opposing forces of virgin and huntress that add complications to Diana’s character.
One way Ovid fosters this contradiction is by showing Diana’s reliance on her knowledge of the hunt and the weapons involved. During the myth of the Calydonian Hunt, Diana unleashes a giant boar on the people of Calydon because they forget to honor her during a harvest festival (Ovid 8.277-81). The boar is “[as] huge as the bulls that graze on / grassy Epirus...his tusks were as long as an Indian elephant’s. / Lightening flashed from his mouth and his breath-blasts shrivelled [sic] the grassland” (Ovid 8.281-3, 287-9). The city’s best warriors hunt the boar, Diana’s weapon, and he rips many of them apart before being speared and killed by Meleager (Ovid 8.299-424). Although her boar is defeated, Diana uses it to demonstrate her prowess as a huntress. When deciding how to punish the Calydonians, she turns to a beast instead of a mighty warrior, which shows she trusts an animal over a human to complete her task; she knows the boar’s abilities and believes it will achieve her objective.

Diana also manages to deflect or break many of the hunters’ weapons while they fight the boar thereby demonstrating her knowledge of weaponry and hunting techniques (Ovid 8.344-424). In response to one spear that is thrown, Diana “lifted the tip of the javelin / off in its flight; the weapon arrived, but the point had gone missing” (Ovid 8.353-4). Since Diana disables the javelin but still allows it to reach its destination, she shows her knowledge of weaponry, her ability to know where the weapon will hit, and her respect for the hunter who threw it. By causing a hunt as punishment, Diana also emphasizes her involvement with the hunt and the sexuality Ovid associates with it. When Diana causes the Calydonians to attempt to spear
(penetrate) the boar, she contradicts her virgin status. However, because Diana does not kill any of the warriors and merely encourages her beast, she retains her feminine status unlike Minerva, who directly fights other gods and mortals on the battlefield.

In several other instances in the text, Diana demonstrates her ability to be part of bloodshed, yet not directly cause any deaths. This quality allows her to maintain the feminine purity that makes her a desirable virgin while still fulfilling her role as goddess of the hunt. However, as mentioned before, by occupying both of those positions, every hunting action Diana takes threatens to mar her reputation as a feminine virgin, especially if she goes too far and kills a human. In three stories, Niobe, Actaeon, and Daedalion, Diana plays a part in the death of a human. In each of these, while her innocence is risked, she is never defeminized (like Minerva) by her violent actions.

The poem's sixth book contains the story of Niobe, an arrogant woman whose vanity is only exceeded by her pride in her fourteen children. Since Niobe refuses to acknowledge Latona because the goddess only has two children, Latona asks Apollo and Diana, her children, to avenge her (Ovid 6.148-213). When Latona makes her request, Ovid shows the twins' response: "...‘Stop!’ interrupted Apollo. ‘Complaining merely delays / her punishment.’ Phoebe [Diana] agreed" (6.215-16). This instantly establishes Diana as a bystander since her nonverbal response only seconds Apollo's words. Even though Latona asks both her children to murder, Apollo puts himself in the position of power and takes the task at hand onto his own shoulders. When Niobe's children are killed, Apollo commits the murders; Diana is
not mentioned, directly or indirectly, after her silent agreement to Latona’s request (Ovid 6.216-312). Because both twins were asked to avenge Latona, the reader assumes Diana is by Apollo’s side as he completes his mission; however, Ovid very clearly separates Diana from the deaths by making her agreement that Niobe should be punished the goddess’s last presence in the story. That way, while the semblance of the hunt is still present through the bow and arrows Apollo uses, Diana does not cross the line into a warrior (Ovid 6.216-312). However, because of the cold-blooded murders that take place, her association with this episode still emphasizes the precarious nature of her virginity.

Ovid further demonstrates the complications behind Diana’s dual existence as a virgin and a huntress in the Actaeon myth. During Diana and Actaeon’s initial encounter, Ovid highlights Diana’s virgin purity. When Actaeon accidentally enters a grotto where Diana is bathing, her nymphs “struck their bosoms in horror, their sudden screams re-echoing / through the encircling woods. They clustered around Diana / to form a screen with their bodies...” (Ovid 3.179-81). Despite the nudity of the entire troop, the nymphs place precedence on protecting Diana’s prized modesty. Diana reacts to the intrusion like a typical virgin by blushing, trying to cover her body, and averting her face (Ovid 3.185-88). Foskett presents a classically-anchored interpretation that helps explain Diana’s reaction: “Greco-Roman sources, too, associate virginity with honor. Such honor is expressed most appropriately by a virgin’s sense of shame” (61-2). Diana’s embarrassment hints that she feels her honor and possibly status as a chaste goddess have been violated. Even though Ovid
gives no indication that Actaeon tries to glimpse Diana’s body, Diana and her
nymphs’ reactions show they realize the possibility that Actaeon could be lusting for
Diana. As demonstrated with Latona’s reaction in the Niobe story, failing to treat a
god properly can have dire consequences. By disrespecting Diana’s chastity when he
wandered into the grotto, Actaeon risked incurring the goddess’ wrath by failing to
treat Diana according to her status, even if his actions were accidental.

After Diana’s initial virginal reaction, Ovid incorporates her huntress side into
the scene as she punishes Actaeon for his mistake. After blushing and hiding, Diana
reaches for a weapon: “she wished that her arrows were ready to hand, / but used
what she could, caught up some water and threw it into / the face of the man
[Actaeon]” (Ovid 3.188-90). Diana retaliates with violence; however, she does not
inflict bodily harm on Actaeon. Instead, she transforms him into a stag (Ovid 3.188-
98). By choosing that punishment, Diana shows her strong connection to the hunt:
the stag is often a target of her favorite pastime. When Actaeon the stag is
slaughtered by his own dogs, Diana’s revenge is fully enacted, but once again, she
does not physically partake in the killing.

The Actaeon tale also highlights the extreme regard others have for Diana’s
virginity. When Diana’s nymphs register Actaeon’s presence in the grotto, they
immediately cluster around her. Even though the passage initially sounds scandalous,
a close reading reveals that Actaeon barely glimpses Diana’s body. Ovid says,
“...but sadly the goddess was taller; / her neck and shoulders were visible over the
heads of her maidens” (3.181-2). Here Actaeon only sees Diana’s head whereas
those who spot her when she is fully clothed can see much more of her body due to her short robes (e.g. 10.536-7). Since Diana is protected by her nymphs, he actually violates their modesty to a much greater extent than the goddess’s. With those lines, Ovid demonstrates how revered Diana’s virginity is, and how much more valuable it is over others’ virginity. The issue becomes more pronounced when Jove’s promise of perpetual virginity is factored in; the nymphs can easily be sexually violated while Diana cannot, yet Actaeon suffers for seeing Diana’s body, not her nymphs’.

After Actaeon’s death, Ovid describes a debate over whether Diana’s virginity warranted the severity of Actaeon’s punishment. The poet states, “Comments varied: some felt that the goddess had overdone / her violent revenge, while others commended it—worthy, they said / of her strict virginity (3.253-55). When the facts are examined, especially considering the vulnerability of the nymphs over Diana, the goddess’ choice of a punishment that resulted in Actaeon’s death reveals itself as harsh. G. Karl Galinsky offers an explanation for Diana’s choice when he says, “When [Ovid’s] gods punish mortals far more devastatingly than is just, they overreact from purely human motives” (171). Diana’s human emotions coupled with her divine powers allow her to neutralize and punish what she sees as a sexual threat more completely than any mortal ever could. By showcasing the argument over the justification behind Diana’s decision, Ovid again shows that Diana’s virginity is more important and more prized than any other female’s. The very nature of the world Ovid’s characters inhabit puts every being in danger of being subjected to violence, and for a virgin, the danger of sexual violation is almost inevitable. Therefore,
Diana’s need to protect her body, despite her perpetual virginity, emphasizes her superior virgin status; she takes no chances, even though she technically cannot be sexually attacked.

The last myth where Diana is associated with a violent action is Daedalion’s in Book XI. During the story, Chione, Daedalion’s daughter, claims that she is more beautiful than Diana and talks of flaws in Diana’s features and body (Ovid 11.321-3). Chione’s words infuriate Diana, and Ovid describes the goddess’ reaction as follows:

“No doubt she’ll be happy with facts!”

Diana retorted in fury, and instantly drew her bow to release an arrow which pierced the tongue of her wicked traducer. The tongue went silent, the voice was lost and the words wouldn’t follow; as Chione struggled to speak, her life flowed out with her blood. (11.323-7)

Even though Diana’s arrow does kill Chione, Ovid’s description shows that Diana was not shooting with the intent to murder the young girl. The evidence lies in the placement of Diana’s arrow: it punctures Chione’s tongue; the shot was meant not to kill, but to stop Chione from speaking. On the other hand, though Chione’s death was unintentional, Diana’s reaction reinforces her huntress persona since she immediately reaches for a weapon. As shown with Chione and Actaeon, when Diana senses an unfavorable situation, even if it does not involve physical danger, she reacts and fixes the problem using her hunting background. That response goes against the typical
image of an innocent virgin, like Io or Philomela, that the chaste side of Diana is expected to embody.

While the hunter-virgin tension is strong within Diana’s character, she also embodies another contradiction in several myths when she treads a thin line between blatant sexuality and guarded virginity. Ovid emphasizes her virginity by showing the goddess participating in no physical sexual acts; the closest she comes to being in a sexual situation is when she bathes with her nymphs. At the same time, Ovid includes hints of sexuality concerning Diana that defy her virginal innocence. It is those hints that add to the problems with her virginity.

For example, throughout the poem, Ovid mentions Diana’s tucked-up robes several times. While wearing shorter robes may be interpreted as merely convenient while hunting, Diana’s reaction in the Chione story coupled with Ovid’s allusion to Diana in the Venus and Adonis story show otherwise. When Ovid describes Chione’s insult of Diana, he says, “...Chione ventured to claim / she surpassed Diana and moved the goddess to violent anger / by finding fault with her face” (11.321-3). Since Chione’s criticism is focused specifically on Diana’s appearance, Diana’s choice to silence Chione reveals the goddess’s vanity. Even though Diana will never have a sexual relationship with a man and as a result, is not trying to attract one, she is still concerned about her physical beauty and what others say about it. That fact shows that Diana’s tucked-up robes serve a dual purpose: they are practical for hunting, and they show off her body.
Venus' adoption of Diana's dressing style reinforces the two-fold purpose of Diana's robes. Venus, the goddess of love, is one of the most sexual characters in the poem; however, it is not until she falls in love with Adonis that she begins to dress as provocatively as Diana. Ovid explains, "[Adonis Venus] clung to and constantly shadowed... with her dress drawn up to her knees / like Diana's, hallooing the hounds and chasing more harmless quarry" (10.533, 536-7). Even though both goddesses are hunters and need shorter robes\(^2\), they also are projecting a sexual undertone with their clothing. Venus' is emphasized through her obvious sexual chemistry with Adonis.

For Diana, who has no male partner, her choice of dress highlights the clashing sides of her persona: huntress, sexual being, and virgin. As Heath explains, "[Diana is] the goddess whose very character embodies the warring elements in the text—the hunt and sexuality/virginity" (238). While Venus only exemplifies that contradiction while infatuated with Adonis, Diana continually balances between the factions of her personality. The fact that she has two other parts—huntress and sexualized female—fighting against her virginity, as shown through her dress and lifestyle, demonstrates why her virginity cannot be passively accepted by the reader: every other part of Diana's being contradicts it.

Although Diana is the goddess of the hunt, Ovid never shows her hunting and instead, places her in subtle sexual situations. In those cases, the reader enters the scene when the hunt is finished or postponed, and Diana and her nymphs are seeking shelter from the sun, usually near water. In the aforementioned incident involving

\(^2\) In this context alone is Venus a huntress; she reverts back to her former persona after Adonis' death (Ovid 10.503-59, 708-38).
Actaeon, Diana, and her nymphs are bathing because the goddess is “weary with hunting” (Ovid 3.163). Ovid carefully describes the preparation taken for the bath, including laying aside weapons, putting up Diana’s hair, removing her clothes, and finally pouring water over the goddess (3.165-72). The mental picture the reader is left with is very sexualized, especially when Actaeon, a male, enters the grotto.

In Callisto’s tale, Ovid also describes a scene of rest and relaxation after a morning of hunting, and once again, he highlights the tension between sexuality and virginity. When Diana finds a stream, she yells to her nymphs, “Let’s take off our clothes and refresh ourselves with a nice, cool swim” (Ovid 2.459). At that point, Callisto’s clothes are ripped off by the other nymphs and her pregnancy by Jove is revealed (Ovid 2.461-3). This moment serves several purposes. Immediately, it contrasts the chaste Diana to the raped and impregnated Callisto. It also highlights the vulnerability of bathing and its ability to reveal one’s body, a concept which carries a sexual undertone. Last, it reminds the reader of Diana’s ignorance concerning Callisto’s rape, which brings the complex nature of Diana’s virginity back to the forefront. In the midst of her bath, a potentially sexually vulnerable situation, Diana is faced with proof of sexual violation and her reaction is to banish Callisto from her troop (Ovid 2.464-5). As a result, she further reveals her ignorance of the rape by acting as if Callisto chose to be pregnant. Once Callisto is exiled, Ovid cuts away from Diana’s troop and completes Callisto’s story (Ovid 2.466-95). Diana and her nymphs are left nude and vulnerable without any reminders of the dangers of being a virgin; unfortunately for them, they risk sexual attack because, in Ovid’s
world, even without noticeable threats nearby, being nude always expresses sexuality.³

Despite the conflicting aspects of Diana’s persona, the goddess’ virginity is never questioned. While the other virgins in the poem demonstrate the precarious nature of virginity by being sexually pursued by lustful men, Diana’s ability to balance all the aspects of her character makes her untouchable. Even though Jove has guaranteed her virginity will last, her hunting skills and her divine powers enable her to defend herself if she feels threatened, as in the Actaeon story, and her sexuality makes her lasting virginity praiseworthy.⁴ Those factors project Diana into a position where she can neither fulfill her expected gender role nor fully embrace the ever-present violence in the poem. She is set apart as a female who can live in both worlds; at the same time, the stark contrast between her roles establishes her as an anomaly within the poem, a character that does not fit into the schema Ovid creates with his web of myths. As the next section will show, in order to maintain Diana’s virginity and therefore, her uniqueness and value, Ovid puts many other females in situations related to Diana that often result in contrasting outcomes, including rape and transformation.

³ In Book V, the myth of Arethusa and Alpheus demonstrates the dangers of being nude in Metamorphoses. When Alpheus chases her, Arethusa says, “…and since I was naked, I must have appeared more his for the taking” (Ovid 5.603).
⁴ As opposed to Minerva, who, while a virgin, is rarely mentioned in the text in reference to her virginity. In addition, she never feels her virginity is being threatened and is not placed in the sexual situations that Diana experiences.
Desire’s Virgin Victims

In *Metamorphoses*, Diana functions outside of the normal realm of sexuality. Within the poem, her most prominent foils are the nymphs whose virginity is vulnerable to the whims of those around them, especially male gods. As Foskett says, “[c]losely related to the notion of being subject to male authority is the presumption that virgins live under the threat of rape and seduction” (50). In Ovid’s world, that threat is a reality and the males, especially gods, do not hesitate to take what they desire. By allowing innocent girls who are equated to Diana to be sexually pursued, Ovid continually reminds the reader of the goddess’ perpetual chastity. Furthermore, Ovid establishes a starker contrast by subtly connecting the attacked virgins to the goddess through physical and circumstantial characteristics. Therefore, each conquest of a Diana-affiliated girl emphasizes the goddess’ virginity and her uniqueness in Ovid’s world.

The sexual pursuits of nymphs carry another purpose; they demonstrate the gods’ and goddesses’ absolute superiority. Michel Foucault explains the intricacies behind combining sexuality and power when he states:

> [Sexuality] appears as a rather dense transfer point for relations of power…Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest numbers of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies. (*Volume 1* 103)
Since gods, specifically males, commit most of the sexual transgressions in the text, the attacks act as a prime way for them to assert their power over lesser beings, especially vulnerable nymphs. No matter the approach the pursuer chooses, he always succeeds in altering the life of his victim. In some cases, the god succeeds and usually rapes the girl he lusts for; in others, the nymph convinces another god to transform her and periodically escapes rape at the cost of her body.

The way Ovid chooses to present the gods makes their dominant actions even more impressive. As Galinsky says, "Ovid makes it a point to humanize even the appearance of the gods." However, despite that fact, Ovid never lets the reader forget the stark difference between the types of beings in his world; Joseph B. Solodow explains how Ovid separates gods and mortals, "When [the gods] appear, they act just like men, men who happen to have greater powers and unending lives in which to exercise them" (90). The gods frequently demonstrate their superiority, especially when they experience desire. In one myth, Vertumnus, a lesser god, wants to gain access to Pomona’s garden; to do so, he uses a variety of disguises that involve him changing his physical appearance, including his gender (Ovid 14.641-55). Ovid’s gods do not hesitate to use any means necessary to achieve their goal.

One of the key components of the power relations between characters centers on Ovid’s presentation of the nymphs. Typically, nymphs are defined as “[f]emale spirits of divine or semi-divine origin...whom the Greeks believed to reside in particular natural phenomena” (Grant and Hazel 292). However, in Metamorphoses, they possess none of the defining characteristics of a goddess or demi-goddess; the
nymphs have no supernatural powers and are not worshipped. As a result, the reader intuitively perceives them as mortals. Even scholars interpret the nymphs as mortal humans; for example, Parry refers to the nymphs as “innocent mortal virgin[s]” (270).

Although Diana’s life parallels many of the nymphs’, she has a superior status due to her position as a god. She also stands out as a god because of the nature of her power. While many of the gods show their power by sexually attacking mortals, Diana’s virginal ways and reputation—the very qualities that earmark the nymphs as vulnerable—are the source of her power. The starkest example of this happens when Actaeon walks into the grotto where Diana and her troop are bathing, and the nymphs immediately shield Diana’s naked body using their own (Ovid 3.173-82). Even though the nymphs are vulnerable and the goddess is impenetrable, the nymphs put their own bodies in danger to protect Diana. With that scene, Ovid displays the importance of Diana’s reputation as a chaste woman and the value put on her maintaining that reputation. Because Diana’s reputation is such a large part of her persona, it, along with her supernatural abilities, gives her power in Ovid’s world. While other gods rape and kill as a way to demonstrate their superiority, Diana simply maintains her chosen chaste lifestyle.

Ovid demonstrates Diana’s godly power most clearly with the physical and circumstantial connections he presents that associate the goddess and several nymphs. Heath developed the basis for that association by dissecting Callisto, Daphne, and Actaeon’s stories for similarities in characters and environments. In summary of his findings, Heath says:
...the possible elements seem to be these: a virgin huntress devoted to Diana, with loosely arranged hair, is wandering through the woods. At midday she sets aside her weapons to rest from the hunt and escape from the heat in a shaded, sacred spot, perhaps taking a refreshing bath. She is invariably attacked sexually, transformed (Daphne, Syrinx) and/or raped (Io, Callisto)...” (238-9)

Using those elements, Heath demonstrates that, when Diana-affiliated characteristics are present, the nymph concerned is vulnerable to rape by any god who wants to assert his power. Each time one of those girls falls victims to a god’s attack, Diana’s unique ability to have perpetual virginity is reinforced. While Diana does not use sexual attacks to assert her power, Ovid does make her superiority clear through her lack of sexual vulnerability. She is the only female who is able to be both sexually-appealing and impenetrable. Ovid uses the aforementioned characteristics to show that.

While Heath does uncover many important Diana-related elements, he does not fully develop all of them; he also overlooks some characteristics. The following chart (Figure One) summarizes all of the pattern’s parts, including those Heath excludes. Even though the focus of this chapter will be on the nymphs who carry the greatest connection to Diana, Figure One outlines the Diana-affiliated characteristics used with each sexually-pursued nymph in order to demonstrate the full spectrum of the associations Ovid establishes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Virgin</th>
<th>Hunting/Huntress</th>
<th>Devotion to Chastity/Diana</th>
<th>Chase</th>
<th>Woods</th>
<th>Sets down Weapons</th>
<th>Sacred Spot/Water</th>
<th>Heat from Sun</th>
<th>Loose Hair</th>
<th>Pursued Sexually, Raped or Transformed</th>
<th>Name of Attacker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pursued, Raped, Transformed</td>
<td>Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pursued</td>
<td>Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leucothoe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped</td>
<td>Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped, Transformed</td>
<td>Apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped twice</td>
<td>Apollo, Mercury</td>
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<td>Io</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped, Transformed</td>
<td>Jove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callisto</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Raped, Transformed</td>
<td>Jove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped</td>
<td>Jove</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pursued</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syrinx</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pursued, Raped, Transformed</td>
<td>Pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crow</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pursued, Transformed</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caenis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped, Transformed</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liriope</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pursued, Transformed</td>
<td>Salmacis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arethusa</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Pursued, Transformed</td>
<td>Alpheus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philomela</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raped</td>
<td>Tereus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure One: A compilation of the Diana-affiliated trends present in each nymph's story as well as what happens to each nymph and the identity of her attacker.
As shown in Figure One, many elements associate Diana with nymphs in sexual situations. Each characteristic connects to a specific element of Diana’s life; the following section will explain each one individually, beginning with the hunter/huntress element. At first glance, this characteristic may seem clear-cut, but a virgin does not need to be a huntress for it to be present. At times, Ovid merely inserts a hunting metaphor. During Tereus’ attack of Philomela, Ovid calls her a lamb (prey) and him a wolf (hunter) (6.527-8). While some myths contain actual huntresses, others, like Philomela’s, have hunting imagery that connects the sexually-pursued virgin to the goddess of the hunt.

An element Heath does not mention that is part of several sexual pursuit myths is the chase, an integral part of the hunt. When Ovid incorporates a chase, the god or attacker fulfills the role of hunter while the nymph represents the prey. Once again, this element points out Diana’s unique position; although she lives like and resembles a nymph, she always fulfills the role of hunter, never the prey. The nymphs who are sexually-pursued transition from being the hunter to the hunted. Also, Diana is never a hunter in the same sense as many of the other gods. While their hunting is a sexually-charged pursuit of virgins, Diana confines her hunts to animals. Ovid often uses hunting metaphors to solidify the connection of the sexual pursuit chase to the hunt. During the Daphne story, Ovid states, “The hound is about to close in with his jaws; he believes he is almost / there; he grazes the back of [the hare’s] heels with the tip of his muzzle” (1.535-6). In those lines, Apollo is represented by the hound, the ravenous hunter, while Daphne is the hare, the
frightened prey. In contrast to earlier descriptions of Daphne hunting, she has now, through Apollo’s pursuit, been reduced to a scared piece of meat. By invoking one of the most exciting and important elements of the hunt, the chase, Ovid suggests that the reader affiliate and contrast the chased nymph with Diana.

One of the clearest signals that a nymph is susceptible to sexual violation is when she puts down her weapons. With that gesture, she gives up her means of protecting herself against any threat. Heath’s analysis is, “This symbolic gesture of putting aside the hunt, and thus setting aside the opposition to sexuality, becomes virtually a narrative invitation to attack” (237). While Heath’s perception specifically incorporates huntresses, other nymphs are also encompassed since the definition of weapons can be expanded outside of hunting equipment. In Leucothoe’s tale, the nymph drops her wool and distaff, the tools of her trade as a weaver, when Apollo reveals his identity (Ovid 4.229). By doing so, she opens herself to sexual pursuit in a similar fashion as a huntress setting down her bow and arrow.

Another characteristic that makes the nymphs vulnerable to sexual attack is devotion to chastity and/or Diana. This one is present when a nymph spurns all her suitors and refuses to marry. Likewise, since Diana will always remain a virgin, she has no interest in men or marriage; even though she is sexualized, she never encourages or accepts a male’s advances. Diana allows other females to share in that distance from males through being part of a group of nymphs who are devoted to her and her lifestyle. Those girls concentrate on chastity and hunting over all other
pursuits. Being a part of that troop signifies that a nymph has a strong connection to Diana.

Loose hair is also frequently associated with Diana and her nymphs. At times, Ovid shows this attribute by saying that a nymph wears only a simple band in her hair or specifically referring to a nymph’s hair as “loose.” This characteristic connects back to the vanity that Diana shows in Chione’s story, which was explored in chapter one. Since Diana and her nymphs hunt so frequently, wearing their hair tied up would be a more practical option. By choosing to leave their hair down, the troop demonstrates their desire to look attractive, even if they are not actively pursuing men.

One of the most subtle characteristics in these stories is the use of setting as a Diana connection. A myth’s location often plays an integral role, whether it provides a place to hunt, serves as a resting spot or is the site of a bath. Ovid specifically highlights the settings for the stories where Diana is present; they are actually part of a story instead of understood. One of the most frequently used backdrops is the woods; since they are a dominant location for her most well-known pastime, hunting, and the goddess spends most of her leisure time in them, they can be considered her domain. In Callisto’s story, the goddess “entered the cool of a wood, where a babbling brook / was smoothly flowing along its familiar sandy bed” (Ovid 2.455-6). Within that scenario, Diana is looking for a place to rest from the hunt, and she chooses a brook in the shade of some trees. Parry addresses Ovid’s frequent references to natural settings, like the forest, when he says, “…for Ovid such
landscapes more often than not form the essential backdrop for what may be described as variations upon the erotic connotations of the hunt” (269). When a sexual attack happens in a place associated with the hunt, the aforementioned chase between a lustful god and a frightened virgin quickly evolves into an erotic romp through the landscape.

Ovid also frequently uses water or sacred spots as a setting for this type of story. This connection to Diana is just as strong as the woods because, while the goddess is never shown hunting, she is described bathing and resting by water or in a sacred place (e.g. Ovid 3.161-4). In reference to the poem’s locales, like water, Galinsky states, “Love and landscape are almost always associated and often landscape provides the backdrop, sometimes contrasting, sometimes agreeing, for the violent behavior of the protagonists” (98). Water is a setting with potential for both violence and salvation. If a virgin is bathing, she is potentially sexually vulnerable, especially in Ovid’s violent world. Since water is transparent, even if she is fully submerged, her body is visible and has the ability to incite a male’s lust. However, water can also save, as shown by the transformations of pursued nymphs enacted by water gods and the use of transformations into water as means for escape from rape. Either way, Ovid’s frequent use of water in Diana-affiliated stories makes this characteristic a part of the pattern.

The final piece of the pattern that exists in sexual violation stories is the sun’s heat. In many myths, Ovid treats noon as the appropriate time to halt the hunt for the day. Often, the concept of resting at noon leads into other characteristics, like laying
aside weapons and bathing. Even Diana stops hunting to escape the sun’s rays, and non-huntresses are also shown trying to escape the heat (e.g. Ovid 2.454). For example, Jove says to Io, “You should rest in the depths of these shady woods...while the sun is so high in the sky, at its zenith, and burning so fiercely” (Ovid 1.591-2). Jove realizes the appeal the cool shade will have at midday. Through Jove’s words, Ovid lays the basis for the other Diana-affiliated characteristics that make Io vulnerable to rape, like the woods.

With that characteristic, a more subtle connection to Diana also exists through Apollo. That god is Diana’s twin brother and he is associated with the sun\(^5\), which is the focal point of this characteristic. Since Apollo commits some of the sexual transgressions in the poem and as a result, demonstrates his power, the use of this specific characteristic highlights the need gods have to control mortals. If Apollo did not cause girls to rest and bathe, gods like Jove and Alpheus may not have had the opportunity to pursue the girls they desire. Without those pursuits the dichotomy between Diana and the nymphs would not be established. Through the direct connection to Apollo, this characteristic suggests that the gods, though humanized, share the common goal of establishing their superiority over mortals.

By using all of the elements in Figure One, the reader can explicitly link each rape or attempted rape in the text to Diana. Some myths closely associate the nymph with Diana while others only have a few threads of connection. Either way, in order

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\(^5\) Ovid makes Apollo’s role as the sun clear at the conclusion of the Phaethon myth; the poet says, “Meanwhile Phaethon’s father [Apollo], unkempt in his mourning, had lost/ his accustomed splendour, as though there had been a solar eclipse./ Detesting the daylight and so himself, he surrendered his spirit/ to grief” (2.381-4).
to fully understand how Ovid manipulates the text to establish Diana’s superiority, one must study the stories in question, especially those that carry the strongest links to the goddess: Daphne, Syrinx, Callisto, Arethusa, Caenis, Hermaphroditus, and Actaeon.

Daphne and Apollo’s story is the first instance of sexual attack in the poem, so it establishes the contrast between Diana and the nymphs and the use of sexual pursuits to show power. The myth begins when Cupid shoots Apollo with an arrow of love and Daphne with a lead arrow that causes her to scorn Apollo (Ovid 1.470-5). Afterward, “[Daphne] joyed [sic] in the forest lairs / and in the spoils of captive beasts…binding her carelessly flowing locks in a simple headband. / Courted by suitors in droves, Peneus’ daughter rejected them” (Ovid 1.475-8). In that simple passage, Ovid introduces four Diana-affiliated characteristics: woods, hunting, loose hair, and devotion to chastity. Because of them, the reader begins to associate the two huntresses and, as Daphne falls victim to Apollo’s lust, both Apollo and Diana’s superiority over mortals is shown. In Ovid’s world, while the nymphs work to avoid desire and maintain their virginity, the gods, with the exception of the virgin goddesses, often succumb to their lust and violate mortals. The gods take the human feeling of lust and use it to deprive their victims of their treasured chastity, which is the basis for Apollo’s pursuit of Daphne. Once Ovid establishes the consequences of the characteristics in the aforementioned passage, Daphne’s story directly introduces the reader to the hermeneutically fruitful possibility of connecting the sexually-pursued nymphs to Diana.
Ovid cements Daphne’s association with Diana through the nymph’s extreme emulation of the goddess. For Daphne, who knows that Apollo is in love with her, becoming a huntress and chaste woman, like Diana, is not enough. The nymph wants a guarantee that she can continue living this lifestyle, so she asks a god, her father Peneus, for the gift Diana was given by Jove: perpetual virginity. When Peneus refuses, Daphne is left as susceptible to rape as every other nymph in the text (Ovid 1.486-9). Ovid uses Peneus’ denial to show the difference between Diana and Daphne; while they both are virgins, only Diana can maintain her chastity. Even though Cupid’s actions lead Daphne down a path that makes her scorn all men, her desire to be as immune to sexual attack as Diana makes the nymph stand out as one trying to defy the standards of Ovid’s world. Unfortunately for Daphne, only Diana can possess the gift of perpetual virginity and live the huntress lifestyle. When Daphne makes her request, she draws the reader’s attention to her association with Diana and heightens the reader’s awareness of the patterns being used in similar stories, especially because the two stories that follow Daphne’s—Io and Syrinx—both involve sexual pursuit, rape, and/or transformation.

After Ovid establishes Daphne’s connection to Diana, the poet adds two more elements that frequent sexual violation myths: the chase and transformation. While the chase happens in many of the poem’s myths, in stories like Daphne’s, it acts as an additional catalyst for a god’s desire for his prey. While Apollo is racing after Daphne, Ovid says, “she left him behind with his speech unfinished. / Her beauty was visible still, as her limbs were exposed by the wind” and “flight made her all the more
lovely" (1.526-7, 530). Watching Daphne's attempt at escaping heightens Apollo's sexual attraction to her and makes him quicken his pursuit. In relation to that, Leo C. Curran comments, "Beauty and sexual desirability are enhanced by disarray of clothing or hair, by discomfort and embarrassment, or by fear. For the rapist these are all aphrodisiacs" (275). Curran's observation demonstrates the extent that lust affects gods in these situations; while raping a girl shows their superiority, it also fulfills their sexual needs. In contrast, while Diana is desirable and may appear to have human needs, she is immune to sexual encounters, which adds to her power.

As the chase continues and Daphne tires, her way to escape Apollo introduces the alternative to rape: transformation. When Apollo gets too close, Daphne pleads with Peneus: "...mar the beauty which made me admired too well, by changing/ my form!" (Ovid 1.546-7). He concedes and Daphne becomes a laurel tree. Concerning fates like Daphne's, Galinsky writes, "Regardless of the way they are brought about, such transformations...turn out to be very meaningful because they set in relief the true and lasting character of the persons involved" (45). Galinsky's statement fails to recognize the lack of connection between Daphne's two forms. While Galinsky's point holds true for a few characters, like Lycaon, it misses the mark concerning sexual pursuit victims (Ovid 1.233-9). Even though their beauty may be preserved, the qualities that defined their lives, like independence and freedom, are taken from them. Concerning Daphne, as a tree, she can no longer run or hunt, like she loved to

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6 Lycaon tries to feed cooked human meat to Jove and is turned into a wolf as punishment (Ovid 1.226-9). Ovid says, "He was now transformed to a wolf. But he kept some signs / of his former self: the grizzled hair and the wild expression, / the blazing eyes and the bestial image remained unaltered (1.237-9)
do as a human. Ovid emphasizes her loss of motion when he says, “The feet that had run so nimbly were sunk into sluggish roots” (1.551). All that remains of Daphne is her beauty since she has become part of nature. In her new form, she also becomes a symbol of the hunt she loved; as Heath writes, “It is only fitting that the resulting laurel, a symbol of rejected love, should now garnish Apollo’s quiver, an appurtenance inextricably bound to the hunt” (234). Through the quiver, a connection to Diana has been established and Apollo has shown his power over Daphne by making a piece of her part of his image.

Most importantly, transformations, like Daphne’s, demonstrate the unique power status Diana has. When Daphne realizes metamorphosis is her only chance of escaping Apollo’s lust, she sacrifices her human body. Her action shows the lack of control nymphs have when vying against a higher being, especially because she has to ask a god for help. Diana, on the other hand, shares many of the same qualities as Daphne, yet she is never sexually-pursued. She is able to keep her body, live her life, and know that she is safe in the violent world. Diana’s unfailing security is an important facet of her power.

Even after Daphne is transformed, much of her inner character still remains, which explains why Apollo’s desire for her is not deterred. Andrew Feldherr offers insight into the connection between Daphne the nymph and Daphne the tree when he states:

Indeed if anything has been preserved of Daphne it is the tragic discrepancy between her inner will and outer appearance. To read her metamorphosis as a
clarification, then, implies that her essence lay in what she seemed to others to be rather than recognizing her as a subject in her own right. (172)

Regardless of her form, Daphne’s appearance remains beautiful while her emotions resist any male’s affections, including Apollo’s. Unfortunately, as a tree, she is unable to evade her relentless pursuer. As a result, her consent at the end of the myth amounts to her agreeing to what she feels is inevitable. Furthermore, the dominance of others’ perceptions in influencing her fate demonstrates the nymph’s lack of control: Daphne cannot even avoid Apollo’s intentions through Peneus’ transformation of her. Even though Daphne asks for her metamorphosis, she is forced to make that decision and in doing so, she loses her human freedom as well as her virginity. Stories with that outcome also show the stark difference between the nymphs’ sexuality and Diana’s and demonstrate the strong desire the gods have to prove their superiority, even if a lesser god thwarts their pursuit by causing a metamorphosis.

Moreover, transformations as a result of passion, like Daphne’s, often counteract the violence involved with the rapes. Feldherr explains, “…the fairy-tale elements of metamorphosis distance the reader from the story by neutralizing the tragic and distressing” (164). Barchiesi observes the innovation behind Ovid’s use of transformation when he states, “…only here in the whole mythological tradition is the rape frustrated” (191). By allowing another option outside of rape, Ovid acknowledges the sanctity of virginity; however, if every girl escaped her pursuer, the power structure built through the sexual pursuits, especially the rapes, would be
weakened. Therefore, some girls must succumb to the gods’ desires even while others are transformed. Even if a transformation happens, the virgin still suffers as a result of the attack. In most cases, although the victims do not lose their virginity, they no longer have the choice to remain chaste or marry; they have no sexuality at all. While they technically remain virgins, they lose their desirability, which contrasts them to Diana, who is able to remain chaste and desirable.

Syrinx’s myth is another case in Metamorphoses where a god’s desire persists after a nymph’s transformation. The story takes place in the forest of Nonacris where Syrinx lives as a part of the woodland nymphs. She is devoted to chastity and has evaded many male pursuers, including gods (Ovid 1.689-95). The strongest connection the nymph has to Diana concerns her appearance:

[Syrinx] modelled [sic] herself on the goddess Diana

in daily life and by staying chaste. When she dressed as a huntress, you might have been taken and supposed she was [Latona’s] daughter, but for her bow, which was made of horn, while Diana’s is gold.

Despite it, she passed for Diana. (1.694-8)

That is the poem’s most specific description that equates a nymph with Diana; by establishing their bows as the biggest difference between the two, Ovid draws attention to two specific insights. One is that Diana’s most well-known pastime, hunting, is prevalent in this story; the other is the contrast between the two females’ statuses: Diana’s gold bow signals she is a superior god while Syrinx’s horn bow indicates her lesser nymph status. After making those observations, the reader
separates Syrinx from Diana and realizes the vulnerability of the nymph’s virginity, so Pan’s sexual attack is not unexpected. The position of Pan’s entrance within the story—right before the narrative style switches from storytelling to summary—shows that the poet was trying to highlight Syrinx’s similarities to Diana before he talked about Pan’s lust. By putting this story in the center of the Io myth, Ovid reminds the reader that, even though Io is not as strongly connected to Diana, her attack still signifies the goddess’ position as the only invulnerable chaste, sexualized female.

In addition, like Daphne, the sexual attack on Syrinx culminates in a transformation. Since Syrinx’s fate is similar to Daphne’s, Ovid strengthens the narrative schema he has established by putting three rape myths in a row. Specifically, Syrinx’s metamorphosis is into reeds: “So just at the moment when Pan believed that his Syrinx was caught, / instead of a fair nymph’s body, he found himself clutching some marsh reeds / …Pan exclaimed, / ‘This sylvan pipe will enable us always to talk together!’” (Ovid 1.705-6, 709-10). Pan’s choice to play Syrinx the reeds is a covert reference to rape with the suggestion that his desire for her body has been replaced with a desire for the sound she now makes. Since Pan makes an instrument out of the reeds, he continues to stay connected to the object of his passion by becoming famous for his music. Pan’s reed pipes become his emblem, just as the laurel wreath became Apollo’s (Galinsky 174).

Metamorphoses like Daphne and Syrinx’s establish one of the differences between Metamorphoses and other classic epic poems, like Homer’s Iliad or Virgil’s Aeneid. Feldherr explains, “…the fabulous aspect of metamorphosis tales made them
very difficult to reconcile with the aesthetic principles of serious epic, where supernatural solutions to human problems are pointedly avoided” (167). In Ovid’s work, transformations are one way gods demonstrate their power over mortals. If the lustful god cannot succeed, the mortal still must be established as inferior through the use of a supernatural metamorphosis, even if another god enacts the transformation. In order to stay true to that schema, despite its unconventionality, Ovid plays with the content of the tales, working off the base myth and transforming it to fit his purpose. In other words, as Fritz Graf says, Ovid “turn[s] a story on its head” (114). When looking specifically at the “rape myths,” one of the poet’s rationales for the structure of his tales is enabling Diana to maintain her powerful position as the impenetrable virgin even while others suffer.

While chapter one showed that Callisto’s story exposes several issues relating to Diana’s virginity, parts of that myth also carry strong connections to the characteristics Ovid uses to affiliate the sexually-attacked nymphs with the goddess. At the beginning of her tale, Callisto’s description equates her with Diana:

“[Callisto’s] garment was clasped by a simple / brooch, while a plain white band kept her loose-flowing tresses in order. / Armed with her smooth-polished javelin or bow, she served as a soldier / in Phoebe’s troop” (Ovid 2.412-5). As the story’s plot unfolds, Ovid adds more elements of the Diana-affiliated pattern when Callisto rests from hunting in the woods at midday without her weapons (Ovid 2.417-21). When Jove enters the scene, Ovid says, “When [Jove] spied her lying exhausted and unprotected, / he reckoned: ‘My wife [Juno] will never discover this tiny betrayal’”
The poet’s assertion of what Jove is about to do reinforces the reader’s perception that Callisto is about to be raped. Jove’s words also remind the reader of another god’s way of showing power; Juno often unleashes cruel acts of vengeance on objects of Jove’s consummated lust, like when she forces Io to remain a heifer and assigns Argus to watch her so Jove cannot reverse the transformation (Ovid 1.610-31). Even though all the gods are humanized, they have various ways of showing their power, especially in reaction to human emotions, like lust or jealousy.

Ovid makes his intentions involving Diana’s character even clearer when Jove disguises himself as the goddess prior to raping Callisto (2.425-37). The introduction of Diana’s presence, even if it is really Jove, sends a message to readers that Ovid wants them to remember Diana’s ability to maintain her virginity when Callisto reluctantly succumbs to Jove’s desires. By choosing to embody a goddess that does not pose a sexual threat, Jove reinforces the idea that male gods use rape to assert their dominance over humans. Initially, Callisto feels unthreatened and even starts a conversation with “Diana”; then, when Jove melts into his true form, Callisto is faced with a lustful male god that appears human. As Jove rapes Callisto, especially because of his physical dominance of her, he demonstrates how precarious a mortal’s position is when she struggles against a god. Also, because of Callisto’s affiliation with Diana, her mortal weakness highlights Diana’s godly superiority.

Using disguise to trick a nymph, like Jove did with Callisto, is a technique employed by several males in the text. For example, Jove disguises himself as a bull
in order to get near enough to Europa to kidnap her (Ovid 72). Foskett comments on this characteristic when she states:

In Greco-Roman tradition, parthenoi [virgins] are objects of both divine and human desire. Beverly Ann Bow shows that sexual interaction between deities and mortals is not uncommon in Greco-Roman myth and demonstrates how women in such stories are victims of divine deceit. (51)

The disguises become part of the erotic game being played throughout the poem; they lend variety to the approaches gods use and therefore, allow them to complete more of their sexual conquests and assert their power. Utilizing a disguise also keeps lesser gods from interfering and transforming the prey because no chase occurs. In Callisto's story, Jove's altered appearance allows him to approach the nymph, embrace her, and immediately rape her (Ovid 2.425-37). If Jove had not employed that strategy, a situation like Daphne's, where a metamorphosis occurs and the god has to desist or achieve his goal with the nymph in another form, might have happened instead.

After Jove reveals his true identity and rapes Callisto, Diana-associated narrative characteristics continue in the story. When Callisto's "naked body expose[s] her shame," the nymph troop, including Diana, is bathing in a forest brook (Ovid 2.455-62). Diana's words after Callisto is disrobed—"'Be gone!' cried the goddess. 'This sacred spring must not be polluted!'"—reinforce the characteristics already presented through the troop's activities (Ovid 2.464). After Diana's exclamation, Callisto is banished and Juno enters the story to get her revenge for
Jove’s indiscretion. She turns Callisto into a bear saying, “I’ll make you pay, by destroying those lovely looks which allow you/ to fancy yourself and attract my husband…” (Ovid 2.474-5). Juno’s words and actions demonstrate the need of female goddesses to assert their own type of power within Ovid’s world. In general, when a girl garnerers the favor of the king of the gods (Jove), she cannot have that sliver of superiority over other mortals that begins to equate her with the gods, and she is either transformed or killed by a god of either gender. That type of petty action becomes one of the main techniques the gods use to maintain supremacy above the mortals. Along the same lines, since Diana has been singled out as the only desirable perpetual virgin, even if a nymph is like Diana, she cannot have that same standout quality concerning chastity that Diana possesses.

In Book V, Arethusa tells the story of the river-god Alpheus’ attempt to rape her. The background of her story establishes some familiar characteristics. Arethusa begins her narration by explaining that she was an Achaean wood nymph who, on the day of her transformation, was wary from hunting in the heat. To alleviate her fatigue, she paused at a river (she is unaware that Alpheus inhabits it) and decided to bathe (Ovid 5.578-95). Before Alpheus reveals his presence, Ovid uses the woods, heat, rest, hunting, and bathing to associate Arethusa with Diana. He also reminds the reader of Arethusa’s vulnerability to sexual attack. Curran explains, “Arethusa is especially threatened because she is naked. Nudity makes both men and women feel more vulnerable, even when there is not overtly sexual danger” (280). When Arethusa tells the part of her story where Alpheus pursued her, she says, in part, “Just
as I was, completely undressed, as my clothes had been left / on the farther bank, I fled... The faster I ran, the hotter the river-god pressed on the trail...” (Ovid 5.601-2, 604). The complete chase scene is one of the most vivid in the text; later in the pursuit, Ovid strengthens the parallel to the hunt by adding a metaphor that equates Arethusa with doves and Alpheus with a hawk. The poet writes, “as doves will flee from a menacing hawk on their fluttering wings / and the menacing hawk will fly on the trail of the fluttering dove” (5.605-6). By including a strong reference to a hunter and its prey, Ovid presents the reader with another type of power structure: the food chain.

During the latter half of the myth, Diana herself influences Arethusa’s fate. The goddess’s presence is the first clear indication in a sexual pursuit story of the hierarchy that exists among the characters in the poem. The Olympian gods\(^7\) encompass the topmost tier, and they assert their power through their influence on others’ lives. For example, Diana transforms Arethusa. The Olympians can even disrupt the escapades of the middle tier’s lesser gods, like Alpheus, although the Olympians cannot physically transform those gods. Also in the middle tier are the nymphs, who are allowed to interact with gods and therefore, are above mortals. Unlike the gods of this tier, the nymphs, who are presented as mortals, are at the complete mercy of all the gods. Since the lesser gods are male and the nymphs are female, a gender hierarchy also exists in this tier. The nymphs are susceptible to the gods, but the gods cannot be harmed by the nymphs. Mortals have the lowest status.

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\(^7\) The Olympian gods—residents of Mount Olympus—are Jove, Juno, Neptune, Ceres, Apollo, Diana, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Minerva, the Vulcan, and Vesta (“Greece” 124, “Rome” 143).
in the general structure; they are vulnerable to any member of the higher tiers, including the nymphs, as shown when Salmacis, a nymph, attacks Hermaphroditus.⁸

Despite the nymphs’ lower position in the hierarchy, in cases like Arethusa’s, a god’s abilities can be advantageous for the nymphs. When Alpheus draws too close and Arethusa becomes too tired to continue running, she pleads with Diana to save her. In response, the goddess encases the nymph in a cloud and then, when Alpheus persists, turns her into water (Ovid 5.618-36). By enacting the transformation, Diana is blatantly defying the wishes of a lesser god. Despite the Olympian’s influence, Alpheus persists; Arethusa describes his reaction by saying, “But now the river-god saw that the stream / was the nymph that he loved. He dropped the human guise he’d assumed / and reverted to water in order to be united with me” (Ovid 5.636-8). At this point, Diana opens a crack in the earth’s crust so that the nymph can escape before she is raped through the mingling of waters (Ovid 5.639). Once again Diana has blocked Alpheus’s pursuit, and, since Alpheus cannot directly defy the goddess, Arethusa escapes with her virginity, although not with her human body. When Diana chooses to transform Arethusa, the goddess asserts her superiority by showing that the nymph must change bodies to maintain her virginity while Diana can remain chaste and keep her human form. Arethusa’s transformation also shows the ability of other gods to manipulate mortals’ lives, even if the god—in this story, Alpheus—does not achieve his goal.

⁸ Although Hermaphroditus is the child of two Olympians, Ovid presents him as mortal because he has no powers or grand destiny (4.288). He also does not associate with gods, like the nymphs do. If Ovid had not mentioned Hermaphroditus’ parents, the reader would never suspect he could be more than mortal.
Although Arethusa’s situation still contains the parameters shown in Figure One, beginning with her chase scene, her parallels to Daphne are more noticeable than the ones to Diana. For example, Barbara E. Stirrup explains, “...like Arethusa, Daphne prays for help. The river god Peneus is no slower than Diana in his response...and the metamorphosis is immediately effected” (177). Like Peneus, Diana has a physical effect on the story; even though she is not there in body, her presence allows Ovid to take another path in his quest to make the reader associate the sexually-pursued nymphs with Diana. By making Arethusa’s experience mirror Daphne’s, whose myth established many Diana-affiliated characteristics, Ovid reinforces the importance of the Diana connections at about the halfway point between the beginning and the end of the poem’s sexual pursuit stories. The reader is reminded of Diana’s status as an anomaly, a unique woman within Ovid’s world, by recalling Daphne and all the other nymphs who have suffered similar fates since. Furthermore, the knowledge imparted with the Daphne story is refreshed for the next sequence of stories, which is important because only a couple of the remaining sexual pursuit stories carry as strong a connection to Diana as Daphne and Arethusa’s myths.

One of those later sexual attack myths describes Neptune’s conquest of Caenis, a famous beauty from Thessaly (Ovid 12.190). Caenis “accept[s] none of her suitors” and chooses to maintain her virginity (Ovid 12.195). However, her chastity does not last; one day, while she is walking by the sea, Neptune rapes her (Ovid 12.196-7). In an interesting twist, the sea god further asserts his power by offering to give Caenis any gift she wants as compensation for his actions; Caenis replies, “let
me never be able to suffer / such wrong again. If you will make me a woman no
more, / your promise will be fulfilled” (Ovid 12.202-4). Initially, Caenis’ request
resembles the ones Daphne and Arethusa make, and the reader expects her to undergo
a metamorphosis into a non-human entity. However, when Neptune grants Caenis’
request, he takes a different approach and changes her gender; she loses her feminine
sexuality as well as her virginity. In contrast, Daphne and Arethusa maintain their
feminine desirability, and their pursuers are not deterred by their new forms. All
three nymphs’ fates demonstrate the importance of the female body as an object of
desire. By having that body but not inspiring lust, Diana is established as superior to
the nymphs.

Furthermore, Neptune makes Caenus’⁹ change even more complete by making
him impenetrable (Ovid 12.207). By doing so, Neptune ensures that he is the only
one who can ever take advantage of Caenis’ sexual vulnerability and that no one can
physically harm Caenus. Alison Sharrock suggests another aspect of Neptune’s logic
when she states, “Real men are not penetrated; ‘women’ are…” (97). If that is true,
Caenis needs to switch genders if she wants to protect herself from being raped again.
Although males can be raped, the sexual attacks that help form Ovid’s power
structure are all on females by lustful male gods. Diana’s unique gift of
impenetrability is protected through those sexual attacks, and Caenis has to become a
man in order to achieve the same type of unfailing sexual protection. Therefore, this

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⁹ Caenis is the feminine form of the name; when Caenis changes genders, her name becomes
masculine: Caenus.
myth demonstrates the amount of privilege behind a female, like Diana, possessing perpetual virginity.

In Book IV, Ovid presents a curious myth where a male is pursued and both parties fulfill different elements of the Diana-associated pattern. Salmacis, the attacker, is "the only naiad not to belong to the train of Diana" (Ovid 4.304). Ovid describes the nymph's daily routine by saying, "Instead [of hunting] you would find her washing her beautiful limbs in her favourite / fountain...[or] softly [reclining] on a cushion of leaves of luxurious grass" (4.310-1, 314). Salmacis' activities, bathing and relaxing, parallel her to Diana, despite her disavowal of the goddess. Hermaphroditus, the object of Salmacis' desire, is an attractive, innocent boy who "didn't know what love was" (Ovid 4.330). His looks and inexperience easily remind the reader of the young, Diana-associated girls, like Io and Europa, who are attacked earlier in the poem.

As the myth's plot unfolds and Hermaphroditus refuses Salmacis' advances, her actions recall the hunt. The nymph's behavior illustrates one of Parry's points: "We should not be surprised, then, to observe that attempts upon virginity frequently are couched in language more befitting the exploits of a hunter scenting blood in the chase than the tender advances of a young gallant" (270). While Salmacis hides in the bushes and watches Hermaphroditus bathe, her stance recalls a tiger hiding and waiting for a stray gazelle to walk by. When the nymph's desire becomes too great, she attacks Hermaphroditus in the water and twines herself around him like a snake on its prey (Ovid 4.339-60). The boy refuses to submit to her demands, so she asks
the gods to merge their bodies; her request is granted and as a result, the couple 
becomes a shape “...which couldn’t be fairly / described as male or as female. They 
seemed to be neither and both” (Ovid 4.378-9). Once again, a god changes the 
gender of a being as a result of a sexual attack. However, while Caenis merely 
changes from female to male, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus form an entirely new 
type of human. Even though the couple does not lose their virginity, they both are 
vulnerable to the whims of the gods, and Salmacis’ plea results in a being that caters 
to neither gender’s preferences. Either way, Salmacis, Hermaphroditus, and Caenis’ 
fates coupled with the transformations of other virgins show the difficulty mortals 
have preserving their virginity and/or sexuality and staying in their original human 
form.

Interestingly, in Salmacis and Hermaphroditus’ tale, an Olympian god never 
appears. Three are mentioned briefly: Diana in reference to her absence in Salmacis’ 
life and Mercury and Venus, as Hermaphroditus’ absent parents (Ovid 4.304, 289). 
Through Ovid’s references to those gods, he is deliberately drawing the reader’s 
attention to which types of beings appear in this tale; namely that no top tier gods are 
present. Without a strong presence vying to prove its power, the story focuses more 
on its task of showing the consequences of a mortal’s desire;¹⁰ Salmacis experiences 
it and Hermaphroditus tries to fight off an attack because of it. When the two beings 
are transformed, Ovid says, “Her prayer found gods to fulfil [sic] it. The bodies of 
boy and girl / were merged and melded into one” (4.373-4). By not attributing that

¹⁰ Although gods also experience desire, they are never shown suffering physical consequences 
because of it.
action to a specific god, Ovid projects the myth into a unique place within the power relations. While it shows the power of gods in general, it does not connect to the strongest, most active gods, the Olympians. That is because Salmacis and Hermaphroditus’ transformation is outside of the natural realm; since Ovid roots the gods in nature, he cannot corrupt one of them by pinpointing him/her as the cause of this unnatural metamorphosis. While this transformation would demonstrate power, it would also reflect negatively on the catalyst for choosing to cause a transformation into a being that is not yet commonly known to exist.

Actaeon’s story stands out in the text because it incorporates various elements of Figure One and is one of the few stories where Diana is physically present. The characteristics that make rape a possibility appear in both Diana and Actaeon’s part of the myth. Concerning Actaeon, the tale begins by describing the morning of hunting his troop has just completed. At noon, he asks them to cease for the day, so the reader assumes Actaeon has put aside his weapons (Ovid 3.143-54). Like Hermaphroditus, Actaeon is associated with Diana, despite his gender.

After presenting Actaeon’s situation, the story switches locations and describes a sacred grotto that Diana frequents. Ovid says, “Here the goddess who guards the woods, when weary with hunting, / would come to bathe her virginal limbs in the clear, clean water” (3.163-4). Although neither character has entered the grotto yet, the reader recognizes its importance and realizes that it connects to the Diana-affiliated characteristics through its sacredness, the resting and bathing that happens there, the water, and Diana’s favor towards it. Once Diana enters the story, Ovid
reiterates the correlation of some characteristic—loose hair, setting aside weapons, bathing, and resting from the hunt—to the goddess by having Diana’s actions reassert them (3.164-73).

Following the initial descriptions, the story collapses into one that seems to follow the typical sexual attack structure except, this time, Diana appears to be the victim. Ovid states, “And while the virgin goddess was taking her bath in her usual / pool, as fate would have it, Actaeon, Cadmus’ grandson, / wandered into the glade” (3.173-5). Those lines give the reader two important pieces of information. The first is that Actaeon is related to Cadmus, the brother of Europa, who was kidnapped and raped by Jove (Ovid 3.1-8). By recalling a former story of sexual violation, Ovid reminds the reader of the interconnectivity of all the myths where a virgin is attacked. In addition, with the aforementioned lines and in several other parts of the Actaeon myth, Ovid mentions the influence of fate concerning Actaeon’s mistake, which shows the lack of control characters, especially mortals, have over what happens to them. Each of them is part of a greater purpose and, in Ovid’s world, with sexual attacks, that purpose is to help Diana maintain her power by asserting her superior status over the stereotypical virgin.

Although the characteristics in Actaeon and Diana’s parts of the myth make them both vulnerable to sexual pursuit, only Diana is able to break from the pattern and avoid the consequences usually associated with their circumstances. That makes this story one of the strongest displays of Diana’s unique power. This time, instead of using transformation to save another from sexual violation, she uses it to save her
own reputation. Also factored into Diana’s action is the fact that Actaeon, a young virgin hunter, is very close to Diana’s male equivalent. By transforming someone who is like herself, she builds a distinct separation between them and establishes herself as unique in both genders. Diana’s acclaimed virginity may prevent her from asserting her power through lust, but she still manages to show her superiority whether she is neutralizing a male threat (Actaeon) or transforming a pursued nymph (Arethusa) into a non-human object.

While many of the other sexual pursuit stories only show Diana’s superiority through the example of the nymphs, Actaeon’s actually illustrates the goddess’ higher status. As mentioned in chapter one, the nymphs’ quick reaction to cover Diana’s impenetrable naked body with their own vulnerable ones is one of the clearest incidents of separation between the nymphs and Diana. The same principle applies to Diana’s choice of punishment for Actaeon. By deciding to transform him for seeing her nude neck and shoulders, Diana defends herself from a sexual threat in a way that the nymphs never could (3.182). While the nymphs must plead to a god for help or suffer the consequences of their pursuer’s lust, Diana can transform Actaeon, neutralize the threat, and start his punishment with a splash of water and a few well-chosen words: “Now you may tell the story of seeing Diana naked—/ If story-telling is in your power!” (3.190, 192-3). The ease with which Diana asserts her power shows the extent of her superiority over the nymphs; while they struggle just to survive and stay in human form, Diana can manipulate another’s fate with a flick of her wrist if she feels her chastity is at risk.
Although the subject matter of Diana-associated myths often borders on distasteful, Ovid’s use of varied approaches to sexual attacks keeps the reader from getting bored with the frequent stories that contain parts of the same pattern. Ovid applies differing scenarios and narrative elements within those myths while also keeping them connected through the characteristics shown in Figure One. Galinsky describes Ovid’s technique when he states:

The frequency of myths which contained the theme of agony, death, physical misery, and suffering presented the literary and artistic problem that their serious treatment would have resulted in a profound shift of the tone of the *Metamorphoses* to the serious and tragic side—an emphasis that was thoroughly unsuitable to revitalizing myth on a larger scale. Thus a great variety of means of varying intensity had to be marshaled to counteract the *gravitas* inherent in these themes: amused detachment, irony, parody, travesty, grotesque exaggeration, over-explicit visual detail, literary wit and allusiveness, incongruities jarring and subtle, bathos, and burlesque (153).

By varying the emotions, situations and outcomes of his myths, Ovid keeps the reader engrossed in the poem. Even though several myths serve the same purpose of demonstrating godly power and superiority, especially Diana’s, the reader strives to uncover the characteristics and complexities within each story that connect to the greater purposes of the text. The importance of virginity in the narrative may leave the reader wondering why Ovid employs so much effort on that subject; in the next chapter, the purpose behind virginity and its role in the poem’s sexual world will be
explored as well as why Diana can successfully defy the stereotypes in *Metamorphoses.*
Virginity is Nothing?

In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid presents virginity differently from the traditional scholarly perception, which emphasizes virginity as representing a lack. While Ovid’s version of virginity still includes innocence and purity, it functions more as a symbol of power and independence. In this chapter, several different perspectives on virginity and sexual experience will be addressed. It will begin with conventional virginity theory, move to Ovid’s culturally-influenced perspective, explore gender theory’s connection, and finally theorize how all that is incorporated into Diana’s role in the poem.

Hanne Blank expresses the typical scholarly perspective concerning virginity in *Virgin: An Untouched History*. On the second page, she bluntly states, “By any material reckoning, virginity does not exist” (2). Those words assert the common view that virginity represents an absence: a lack of sexual activity. Blank further explains, “Virginity is invariably defined in terms of what is not, and is believed to be proven most incontrovertibly by whatever signs (blood, pain, etc.) became obvious only in the moment of its obliteration” (96). The central problem is that the point where the absence of sexual activity is negated carries the strongest visible proof that virginity exists. Since it must be lost in order to be defined, scholars have struggled to pinpoint tangible elements that can be labeled as indicators of virginity.

Although related to the human body, virginity plays no role in one’s survival. Virginity is simply the name given to the state a person’s body is in before the introduction of sexual activity. Blank describes virginity’s function outside of
practical purposes, “Unlike many of our habits and practices, virginity reflects no known biological imperative and grants no demonstrable evolutionary advantage, nor has being able to recognize it in others been shown to increase anyone’s chances of reproduction or survival” (2). Without any of those elements, the source of virginity’s strength lies in people’s perception of it; throughout history, virginity has been taken so seriously that losing it or taking it was punishable with a wide range of penalties from a fine to death (Blank 125). Virginity, despite its intangibility, has historically been seen as an essential element of innocence and purity.

In spite of its abstractness, loss of virginity often represents a key moment in a person’s life; that first sexual experience has become emblematic in human culture. As Blank writes:

Throughout history, losing one’s virginity has been viewed as a ritual of transformation. Not merely the transformation from being one of the people who hasn’t slept with anybody to being one of the ones who has, but a ritual that transforms a boy into a man, a girl into a woman, a child into an adult. (97)

With the loss of virginity, a new phase of life begins that often includes marriage, especially in traditional cultures, and the possibility of reproduction. The void virginity represents becomes filled with intimate relationships and perhaps children, actual physical entities that contrast the concept of virginity. Even if virginity is taken forcibly, the victim’s innocence is still acknowledged as gone, and he/she is seen as more mature whether or not he/she was ready for the sexual activity.
Although the nymphs maintain their virginity, Ovid never focuses on the absence of sexual activity in their lives. Despite that, their virginity is often the reason they are important and allows them to live a rare type of life separate from human societies. Their lifestyle choice gives the nymphs power and allows them to avoid becoming dependent on men. By breaking from society’s norms and living a life full of non-sexual pleasure, the nymphs defy Blank’s idea that virginity is associated with passivity and waiting for something to happen. Ovid, on the contrary, gives virgins power and purpose. They manage to function as adult women without the “transformation” losing virginity offers and they use virginity as a prerequisite for their lifestyle as nymphs, thereby defying the concept that virginity’s importance merely lies in waiting for it to end. Since Blank’s theory does not offer a complete enough picture of virgins in *Metamorphoses*, the next step is to study Ovid’s perception.

Although Roman society had distinct conceptions of virginity and feminine sexuality, Ovid chose to incorporate only certain aspects of them in his writing; that choice parallels the poet’s tendency to twist myths to fit his own purposes. Graf explains that characteristic, “[Mythical narrative’s] role as a discursive tool about emotion and experience made it as ideal for providing a template and standard in expressing new experience as for proving a point” (112). For example, in traditional myth, one of Niobe’s children survives; William S. Anderson describes Ovid’s divergence, “Here, however, the audience might well be reminded of the story which Ovid has ignored, that Neleus married Chloris, the sole surviving daughter of Niobe”
(Books 6-10 207). Although Neleus is part of *Metamorphoses*, he has a minimal role and his wife is never specifically mentioned. Ovid only mentions Neleus twice; once in Battus’ story as his master and in Periclymenus’ tale as the father of Periclymenus, the sole survivor of Hercules’ slaughter of Neleus’ twelve sons (2.690, 12.552-6). As shown through those stories, Ovid’s use for Neleus is as one of the poem’s many minor characters, ones who offer a link between myths, especially those in different books. By making choices like omitting Neleus’ marriage, Ovid manipulates myth to tell the story he wants. Similarly, he takes the concept of virginity and turns it on its head. He picks and chooses the parts of Roman society that he wants to incorporate; he uses his culture to reinforce his points, not dictate them.

Concerning sexuality, the poem’s element that best showcases Roman society involves Diana and Minerva. With Ovid’s presentation of them, he comes close to correlating with the typical writings of his time: “Classicized virgins, among them rather a lot of Artemises [Diana] and Athenas [Minerva]...were depicted as sexually attractive but also as inaccessible, and in fact opposed to carnality” (Blank 200). Ovid’s Diana holds true to most of that statement; she is a desirable perpetual virgin, and she rarely has contact with men. Minerva, on the other hand, is not presented as desirable or inaccessible. While she does maintain her virginity, Ovid never puts her in a sexual situation and thereby defeminizes her through her association with the typically masculine concept of war.

While Ovid did not exactly follow the traditional formula for his virgin goddesses, with Diana and Actaeon he still acknowledged the punishments associated
with any violation of a virgin goddess. Blank explains the typical Diana/Minerva myth: "...those who tried to treat the virgin goddesses as erotic objects paid a hefty price: Actaeon was turned into a stag, [Tiresias] was blinded..." (200). Concerning Actaeon’s story, various versions of the myth exist; Ovid chooses to leave Diana’s punishment of Actaeon intact, but he plays with the cause for her anger (3.193-200). Usually, Actaeon’s offense is bragging of his superior hunting skills or walking into a place where Diana is bathing and not averting his eyes immediately (Cotterell 11). In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid uses the more sexual version of the myth where Actaeon glimpses Diana’s nude body and, by doing so, reinforces Diana’s position as a virgin of strong reputation and power. He also incorporates tradition with Actaeon’s transformation (3.131-200).

Ovid’s choice of Actaeon myth relates to the Tiresias story that Blank mentions. Similar to Actaeon’s tale, Tiresias’ myth has more than one version. In one, Minerva blinds the seer for glimpsing her bathing; in the other, Juno blinds him for siding with Jove in an argument over which gender garners more pleasure out of sexual relationships (Cotterell 84). Ovid uses the latter version of the Tiresias myth where Minerva is not present or mentioned (3.316-38). In contrast to Actaeon and Diana, in this case, Ovid chooses the myth without nudity and the possibility of sexual intercourse, which demonstrates his intent to keep Minerva out of potentially sexual situations and highlight Diana’s virginity by deliberately placing her in them.

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11 A more in-depth exploration of the Actaeon myth’s variations will be presented later in the chapter.
Ovid’s writing also shows a strong connection to his culture through his use of virginity as a source of power. During pagan antiquity, virgins were just as revered as they were with Christianity. Foucault describes one ancient view of virginity when he comments, “In some people, such extreme virtue was the visible mark of the mastery they brought to bear on themselves and hence of the power they were worthy of exercising over others” (Volume 2 20). That perspective offers insight into Ovid’s decision to give his nymphs a superior status over mortals within the poem’s power structure. Because of their chastity vow, the nymphs would naturally be considered “better” than mortals. However, while Foucault’s concept of virgin power is present in the poem, Ovid does not explicitly address the concept of mastery that the theorist discusses. The nymphs experience very little male contact and show no desire; they are not mastering their sexuality, as much as dismissing the possibility of having a sexual relationship until they are forcibly thrown into one through rape.

When Ovid associated feminine virginity with power, one of his inspirations may have been Rome’s Vestal Virgins, the keepers of Vesta’s temple. Before puberty, these girls were chosen out of the upper class to live chastely for 30 years and tend the temple’s fire (Fantham et al. 234). Like Diana, those females were revered for their virginity. The Vestal Virgins had a high status in society and therefore, were given more privileges than other women; for example, they had special seats at public events and were permitted to write personal wills. But they also had to follow the rules of their station, which included the consequence of being buried alive for breaking their celibacy vow (Fantham et al. 236-7). With Diana’s
reputation, Ovid follows a similar concept as the Vestal Virgins, especially concerning their superior status; at the same time, he also breaks from that tradition by deliberately shattering several nymphs’ chastity vows outside of marriage.

Ovid again deviates from the Roman standard when his nymphs openly refuse to have children by following Diana. The Vestal Virgins are the exception to the Roman tradition because their sacred duties demanded they abstain from sexual intercourse, so they had no opportunity to reproduce. In contrast, the nymphs have no society-induced sexual restrictions and could have children, if they had not taken a chastity vow. Like other Roman women, especially during Augustus’ reign, the nymphs would have been expected to attempt to reproduce, despite the risks (Fantham et al. 304). According to Fantham, “the open refusal to bear children brought women much criticism” (301). In contrast to the positive, carefree presentation Ovid gives the nymphs associated with Diana, in reality, the nymphs’ lifestyle would not have been revered or accepted by the Romans. Ovid demonstrates that through the rape of several nymphs; by becoming pregnant, however unwillingly, those girls fulfill part of their obligation as newly-introduced members of Roman society.

Furthermore, the independence Ovid gives the nymphs broke Roman tradition. Since Ovid presents them as daughters of demi-gods, lesser gods, and kings, the nymphs presumably would have been among Roman society’s upper class. Because of that position, they would have been married at the onset of puberty (Pomeroy 207). Fantham elaborates:
No information remains either about the likelihood of a young girl from the upper classes carrying on a love affair in which loss of virginity was involved; such girls seem to have married so early that there may not have been much time or opportunity for premarital experiments. (325)

Ovid’s nymphs defy two parts of that statement when they refuse to marry and/or lose their virginity before marriage. The poet gives the impression that the nymphs are young, so if they were a part of the Roman society, they would never have had the opportunity to live like Diana. In addition, many of Ovid’s nymphs participate in some type of premarital affair, either by force or by choice.

When a nymph loses her independence in *Metamorphoses*, the cause is often her being thrust into a gender role through the introduction of intimate relationships and sometimes pregnancy. Her days of hunting and relaxing, of living an atypical lifestyle where feminine sexuality balances with innocence, are over. She is now faced with what she may see as the harsh realities of womanhood, a state very different from what she has previously experienced. During the sexual pursuit, if the victimized girl loses her virginity, she also loses the power she holds in Ovid’s world. When she is brought down to the level of a mortal woman in the power structure, she is forced into a completely new lifestyle that often involves dependency and submission. Her independence is shattered and her newfound mortality is asserted.

In the following section, the writings of Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, Susan Bordo, and Simone de Beavoir will be used to try and reconcile that concept with contemporary gender theory. Since traditional conceptions of virginity and Ovid’s
culture do not adequately explain the way Ovid uses virginity, gender theory may, especially because almost all of Ovid’s virgins are female.

The loss of a nymph’s virginity signifies her separation from the life she led with or in emulation of Diana; her body acts as a vessel for a life-changing moment. Butler discusses the importance of the body in human social culture, “...the body is not a ‘being,’ but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality...” (2499). When one applies Butler’s words to Ovid’s poetry, the males’ domination over the females corresponds to the lustful gods’ treatment of nymphs. With that in mind, the penetration mentioned involves Butler’s female and Ovid’s nymph. At the moment when the desired virgin is attacked and raped, her body is violated and her inferiority is established through that violation. In the same manner, if she is transformed, her body is again harmed when its shape is twisted. Therefore, the taking of virginity (through rape or transformation) represents the attacker crossing a line into dominance over the victim. The power hierarchy that exists in Metamorphoses because of that characteristic functions similarly to Butler’s male-female gender hierarchy.

Although Ovid’s hierarchy may seem centered on males and females, like Butler’s, it actually focuses on species. In the case of Metamorphoses, species refers to the distinct difference between gods, nymphs, and mortals; each category has its own defining characteristics and therefore, is a separate species. The immortal gods have supernatural powers and can alter the course of others’ lives. Nymphs have no
powers but are immortal while mortals only have a single lifespan. For the purposes of the first two chapters' discussion of sexual relationships, nymphs and gods were the dominant focus, but many more stories involving sexuality exist in the poem. Curran estimates that *Metamorphoses* contains about fifty incidents of "forcible rape, attempted rape, or sexual extortion..." (263). Of those, several branch outside of Butler's traditional male-female hierarchy. For example, Salmacis, a female, sexually attacks Hermaphroditus, a male, in a pool (Ovid 4.356-73). Also, in book ten, Ovid says, "Orpheus [who scorned women] even started the practice among the Thracian / tribes of turning for love to immature males and of plucking flower of a boy's brief spring before he has come to his manhood" (10.83-5). Those instances, as well as others of female pursuers and homosexuality, demonstrate Ovid's willingness to reject the traditional male-female dichotomy.

Although most of the god-mortal sexual relationships put the male in the power position, Ovid's fluid use of both genders in other instances emphasizes species over gender in respect to power. If that concept is applied to Ovid's use of virginity, the virgin's status as god, nymph or mortal trumps his/her gender. This is especially important concerning the nymphs' fall from immortal to mortal, as discussed in chapter two, when they lose their virginity. At that point, their species has more of an effect on their life than their gender; their rape does not change their gender, but it does alter their species.

One of the driving ideas behind Butler and Ovid's hierarchies is that they allow one being to influence another without consent. As Bordo says, "The body
is...a *practical*, direct locus of social control" (2362). Historically, men have asserted their dominance over women in many ways, including sexually. With Ovid’s gods and virgins, the control focuses on two main points: rape and transformation. Both actions stem from sexual pursuit. Once a nymph is in a situation where her virginity is threatened by a god, no matter how she resists, she will lose the independence, the power, her virginity gives her. As each nymph suffers at the hands of a lustful god, Ovid demonstrates a form of social control that centers on the gods’ ability to influence mortals’ lives. Instead of one gender dominating another, one type of being asserts superiority over another through the actions that force the victim into a role outside of the one they would otherwise occupy. For the nymphs, the consequence means falling from a carefree huntress to a woman burdened by a violent reality that ultimately signifies submission into a constricted societal role compared to men.

As a consequence of being victimized through a sexual pursuit, the nymph finds herself in a situation where she loses her independence. Unfortunately, she does not always have control over what happens to her body, due to the power of the gods. Once her virginity is gone, her body becomes open to sexual experience because her scared chastity is no longer intact. In that respect, the god-nymph relationship again parallels the male-female, this time in one in of Beauvoir’s observations: “men use [women’s natural roles] as a pretext for increasing the misery of the feminine lot still further, for instance by refusing to grant woman any right to sexual pleasure, by making her work like a beast of burden” (1409). The rapes that occur in the poem are
the epitome of sex without pleasure for the victim; the violent act snatches virginity away from the pursued nymph and cruelly introduces her to the sexual part of life. Beauvoir’s comparison between women and beasts is most effectively illustrated by Ovid with Chione, who unwillingly loses her virginity to Mercury and within hours is raped again by Apollo; in the first case, she is asleep, and in the second, “[Apollo] stole the pleasure / his brother had taken before him” (11.305-11). With those words, Ovid gives the impression that Chione’s body is simply used to satisfy the males’ lust and experiences no pleasure of its own.

When sexual pursuit results in transformation, another involuntary violent change to the body, the victim suffers further from the loss of her human form. In Book I, Io’s story illustrates the layers of misery a desirable virgin in Ovid’s world can experience. After she is raped by Jove, she also endures transformation into a heifer (Ovid 1.591-617). Ovid uses Io’s plight to indicate the difference between virgin females and sexually-experienced women. Although Io does not follow Diana, the manner in which her virginity is lost equates her tale to the ones about nymphs. By simply presenting Io as a young girl whose life is ruined by rape, Ovid shows the effect sexual pursuit can have on a girl not blessed with immortality and a god’s good graces. Io and the nymphs relate through their virginity, confidence, and beauty, so the reader understands that what happens to Io could also happen to a nymph, especially because Io’s story is right after Daphne’s. Ovid employs Io’s new form as a metaphor for the destruction of self that sexual pursuit causes. Io is transformed into a female cow, an animal that provides milk, like mothers do with their infants.
Also, Jove makes her a young cow, which further recalls the possibility of birthing children once one's virginity is lost. Since Io's story is the second rape myth in the poem, Ovid utilizes her as an indicator of the effect the loss of virginity can have on a nymph.

Ovid increases the complexity of Io's situation when he writes of Io regaining her human form. After this second transformation, Ovid says, "but frightened to speak, in case she still lowed / like a heifer, she nervously tried a few words in her long-lost language" (1.745-6). Io's hesitation to speak symbolizes the effect the loss of her virginity had on her. Because of Jove's lustful actions, she has lost her independence and the confidence that went with it. She changed from a young woman who dared to defy the king of gods and run to a scared, timid girl. Io's experience shows an element of virginity that not many other stories so clearly illustrate: virginity gives its bearer an assurance of her identity without the complications of intimate relationships with others.

To many readers, especially contemporary ones, Ovid's nymphs' chaste lifestyle may seem odd because they have no desire for the opposite sex. The way Ovid spins his myths suggests that, until the nymphs are violated or transformed, they are unconcerned with the existence of men. In her gender theory, Butler discusses female desire when she explains that she feels female repression through society's gender roles has prevented women from having "a genuine or authentic sexual identity" (2490). However, the nymphs have a stronger identity before they have a sexual experience. Prior to Jove's rape of Callisto, Ovid describes her as a woman
who puts aside domestic duties and occupies a superior position in Diana’s troop (2.411-6). She shuns the traditional dependent role of a Roman woman. After Callisto unwillingly loses her virginity, she almost forgets to retrieve her bow and arrows, the weapons that partially signaled her independence (Ovid 2.439-40). Also, when Callisto returns to Diana, Ovid says, “Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she wouldn’t resume her position / close to the side of the goddess…” (2.448-9).

Although Callisto is not yet aware of her pregnancy, she recognizes that the loss of her chastity will destroy her honored place in Diana’s troop of chaste girls. Now that Callisto has a sexual identity, she has lost much of what defined her life prior to the rape: her hunting and her favored position. In contrast to Butler’s assertion that a female can gain a sexual identity only by breaking from repression, Callisto enters a state of repression by joining conventional society when her sexual identity is formed.

Ovid’s virgin nymphs, despite their strong sense of self, forgo one of many women’s most treasured experiences: motherhood. Since they do not experience physical intimacy, they miss out on more than sexual experiences; they also can never have children. Wittig offers insight into the effect that has on the feminine status, “Furthermore, not only is this conception still imprisoned in the categories of sex (woman and man), but it holds onto the idea that the capacity to give birth (biology) is what defines a woman” (2015). Although the girls in their nymph-state have the capacity to give birth, Ovid’s presentation effectively masks that fact until they are sexually pursued. If, and only if, a nymph is raped, she may have a child, as in the cases of Chione and Callisto (2.462, 11.311-5). Along the same lines, when a nymph
manages to escape her pursuer and is transformed, she maintains her ability to reproduce, no matter the form she is given. While she cannot produce a human child, she can produce offspring. Plants, like Daphne as a laurel tree, regularly multiply and animals, like Callisto the bear, can also reproduce (Ovid 1.567, 2.485). Unless a nymph is sexually pursued then raped or transformed, she does not conceive a child, which according to Wittig, could compromise those nymphs’ feminine status because they do not participate in the traditional defining role of a woman: motherhood (2015).

In lieu of making his nymphs occupy traditional female gender roles and reproduce, Ovid most clearly asserts their femininity by having them share in Diana’s vanity; they too wear their hair loose and their robes short. Salmacis is one of the strongest examples of Ovid’s efforts to feminize his virgin nymphs. The poet writes:

- Instead you would find her washing her beautiful limbs in her favourite fountain, or lazily drawing her boxwood comb through her tresses,
- using the pool as a mirror to find the most fetching hairstyle;
- or else she’d put on an alluring dress which was fully transparent,
- and softly recline on a cushion of leaves of luxurious grass. (4.310-4)

Even though, at this point, Salmacis experiences no sexual desire, she is portrayed as distinctly feminine. By focusing on the nymph’s appearance and discussing beautiful parts of nature, Ovid emphasizes Salmacis as having a distinctly female identity even though she operates outside the normal realm of sexuality.
While gender theory offers some insight into the effect assuming the role of a mortal woman has on the nymphs, it does not work with Diana since she never embraces her full role as a woman. Because Ovid uses the nymphs as foils to Diana in order to emphasize her perpetual virginity, theory that works for the nymphs cannot be applied to the goddess and vice versa. In Ovid’s world, Diana’s complex status, especially as a virgin, means that the only way to form a clear theory about her virginity is to use the poem’s power structure to interpret it. As an Olympian goddess, Diana could also choose to live like other gods by residing apart from humans, and not participating in their lives, except to do violence. Instead, she puts herself in the role of an independent, virgin nymph where she parallels beings with a lower status. She asserts her top tier power through being the only sexualized female to keep her virginity, not by harming others. By doing so, she, and by extension Ovid, makes a very strong point: only a god can have the freedom to live in a mortal world without consequence.

For Diana, the independence that her virginity brings is the key to her power. When she keeps her virginity, she also maintains her status as a goddess of chastity and her role as a leader within the troop of virgin huntresses. Diana’s entire persona—the tucked-up robes, minimal interactions with men, use of a bow and arrow instead of a sword—hinges on her keeping her virginity and her innocence. For her, virginity’s absence equates to the absence of suffering, distress, and

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12 By using a bow and arrow, Diana can maintain distance between her and her victim thereby avoiding the violence. If she wielded a sword, she would be in close contact with her victim, a much more violent situation. Avoiding violence is one of the ways Diana maintains her innocence, as discussed in chapter one.
violation. Every action Diana takes is carefully calculated to keep her reputation intact. When she steps aside while Apollo murders Niobe’s children, she manages to please her mother and keep herself distant from violence (Ovid 6.221-301). Even Diana’s harsh punishment of Actaeon serves the purpose of protecting her perfect reputation; she cannot risk Actaeon telling others of her nude body, so she transforms him (Ovid 3.193-3). By doing so, she effectively thwarts a relationship or association with Actaeon, a young male. Unlike the raped and transformed virgins who are thrown into relationships with the opposite sex, Diana maintains her distance, keeps herself from getting hurt, and protects her chastity. Since no man deliberately approaches her, she easily avoids situations like Io’s. Ovid uses that contrast between goddess and nymph to establish the power that virginity has in his world when wielded by the right person.

The relationship between virginity and hunting is also an important part of Ovid’s presentation of Diana. Both sex and slaying involve penetration of another’s body. By refraining from showing Diana participating in either, Ovid keeps her from penetrating or being penetrated. In both cases, she is defying the stereotypes presented in a poem where sexual and physical violence reign supreme. Most characters take part in one activity or the other, sometimes both. Diana, with her dominant activities of bathing and relaxing, participates in neither and remains in her little corner, which attracts less violence than most, if not all, of the poem’s other settings. Ovid’s choice to keep Diana separate from that marks her as morally superior to the other characters in the poem, including the other gods.
Diana’s interactions with nymphs are almost exclusively with her troop, which function as her surrogate family. In Callimachus’ “Hymn III” he writes, “And the maiden [Diana] fared unto the white mountain of Crete leafy with woods; thence unto Oceanus; and she chose many nymphs all nine years old, all maidens yet ungirdled” (63). Since Diana is also very young at that point, Callimachus (whom Ovid would have read) shows that Diana and her nymphs grew up together. Since the goddess does not live with other gods, these girls function as Diana’s family. They allow Diana to belong to a close-knit group without making her take on the responsibilities and repercussions of motherhood. Although the goddess will never have children, her role as the leader of a family-like group keeps her associated with femininity without sacrificing her virginity.

Even though the troop is a unit, Diana is clearly served by the other girls because she is a god. The bathing scene Ovid includes in the Actaeon story demonstrates that: “Two more were removing her boots, while Crócale...gathered the locks that were billowing over / her mistress’ neck in a knot...Néphele, Hýale, Rhamis, Psecas and Phíale charged / their capacious urns with water and stood all ready to pour it” (3.168-72). Although she lives like a mortal, Diana occupies a power position in relation to the nymphs. Even with girls outside of the troop, like Daphne and Syrinx, Ovid makes Diana’s position as a revered goddess clear through the nymphs’ emulation of her (1.476, 694). Those girls try to live and look like Diana, as a result of the goddess’s appealing reputation as a woman living independent from men.
One of the strongest examples of the contrast between Diana and the sexually attacked nymphs happens in Callisto’s story. As discussed in chapter two, when Callisto’s pregnancy is revealed, Diana banishes the nymph from her troop (Ovid 2.462-4). Since Ovid chooses to follow Callisto as she encounters Juno, the reader’s last impression of Diana is of her bathing in the stream with her nymphs. Now that Diana has successfully gotten rid of the proof within her troop that males exist (Callisto), she can continue with her carefree lifestyle, and Ovid has no reason to further describe the scene. Callisto, on the other hand, undergoes several more trials, including transformation into a bear and eventually a constellation. Of those changes, Ovid says, “she often was driven over the rocks / by the yelping hounds, and the huntress would flee in terror from huntsmen” and “[Callisto and Arcas] were wafted together / and granted places in heaven as neighboring constellations” (2.491-2, 506-7). Callisto’s new forms contrast greatly with the last image of Diana the reader has: a pretty nymph relaxing and bathing in a stream.

That image of Diana compared to Callisto’s banishment is an important example of how the goddess’ virginity gives her power. Once Callisto’s virginity is taken, her life becomes a mixture of emotions that suggest powerlessness: shame, timidity, and fear. Diana, on the other hand, maintains complete control and shows her power several ways. When she banishes Callisto, the goddess demonstrates her expectation of purity within her troop; she also asserts her position as the group’s leader. More importantly, when Diana is left in a sexually-vulnerable situation, her ability to defy the conventions of Ovid’s world is highlighted. She conquers Curran’s
claim concerning the poem: "Nudity makes both men and women more vulnerable, even when there is no overtly sexual danger" (280). Because of her flawless reputation, Diana can exist in potentially violent situations and avoid the sexual attacks that the nymphs who live the same lifestyle risk experiencing.

Even though Diana’s virginity allows her to live an idealized lifestyle, it also represents a lack similar to the one Blank discusses. Despite Diana’s virgin body being emphasized through her frequent bathing, it still is not used for any sexual purposes. Because Diana does not use her body to its fullest purpose, she is rejecting her human semblance and reasserting herself as a powerful god, an Olympian god, and establishing herself as unique within the poem due to her sexuality not resulting in the loss of her virginity. Even though Diana appears human and lives a humanized life, unlike the nymphs, her virginity cannot be taken by gods or mortals; her chastity is a strong source of her power.

Within the poem, Ovid’s version of the Actaeon story stands out as an opportunity to interpret how Diana’s virginity functions. To seize it, each part of the myth must be explored, beginning with the variations on what Actaeon did to upset Diana. According to Lamar Ronald Lacy, six versions exist that explain Diana’s punishment of Actaeon: Diana wants to stop him from marrying Semele, he boasts of his hunting skills, he sees Minerva bathing, he attempts to marry Diana, he kills a stag sacred to Diana or he spots Diana bathing (27-8, 37). In Metamorphoses, Ovid adopts the last version of Actaeon’s offense. Lacy suggests that the origin of that variation cannot be labeled as Hellenistic, classical or archaic (31). He describes its
probable origin by saying, “Consequently, scholars have long held that the bath of
Artemis [Diana] is a product of Alexandrian poetry inspired by the interrupted bath of
Athena [Minerva], and it was soon argued that in Hymn v [sic] [Callimachus] rewrites
the myth of Aktaion to parallel that of [Tiresias]” (29). When Ovid chooses to follow
that story, he makes a deliberate choice to place Diana in a sexual situation instead of
Minerva, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Ovid also plays with the reason behind Actaeon glimpsing Diana’s nude body
and his punishment for seeing it. Anderson explains that Ovid changed Callimachus’
version of the myth by making Actaeon’s limited glance at Diana’s body a mistake,
not an intention (Books 1-5 351). In both cases, Actaeon’s action results in his
transformation by the “indignant, plainly unjust goddess” (Anderson, Books 1-5 351).
However, Actaeon’s punishment was not always transformation. Lacy explains,
“...we would have to consider the hunter’s transformation a Roman invention:
Aktaion suffers no preserved literary metamorphosis before those of Diodoros and
Ovid” (30). By making Diana transform Actaeon, Ovid separates her from violence
and asserts the importance of keeping her reputation—her main source of power—
intact. He also gives the story a stronger connection to the rest of the poem’s many
metamorphoses. In relation to Diana and her virginity, that connection relates to the
transformations many nymphs suffer to avoid or as a result of rape; their purpose is to
highlight Diana’s virginity and her status as a woman who cannot be attacked
sexually.
Traditionally, the expanded ending of Actaeon’s story is not varied as much as omitted. The standard conclusion is to stop after Actaeon’s death. Other possible details of Actaeon’s demise were often excluded; Lacy explains the characteristic of excluding further details as follows:

Neither [Callimachus’ Minerva] nor Euripides’ Kadmos gives a full account of the myth of Aktaion. Both poets leave out traditional material which is superfluous to their analogies and emphasize that which is useful. Both omit the catalogue of Aktaion’s hounds and the dogs’ wanderings after their master’s death.¹³ (30)

Contrary to some other versions of that myth, Ovid includes the catalogue of the hounds in his patchwork story (3.207-33). That genealogy parallels those in other myths Ovid uses, which adds to the congruity of the varied stories in the poem.

By combining all those pieces into one Actaeon story, Ovid creates a myth that highlights Diana’s virginity without completely sacrificing mythological tradition. With his choices, like including the genealogy, he also makes the story fit into his poem. Furthermore, through casting Diana as the goddess and making Actaeon’s intrusion a mistake, Ovid designs a story that highlights Diana’s unique role within the poem. While much of the violence against mortals is ultimately caused by lust, Actaeon’s transformation is a result of the goddess’ desire to keep her reputation and virginity intact. When Acateon interrupts her innocent daily routine, she has to take advantage of the situation to protect her image since her chaste

¹³ Lacy mentions several versions that incorporate one or both elements, including the writings of Apollodorus and the Boiotians (30).
reputation is the basis for her power. Although Actaeon does not see her nude body, the fact that he was in the same location as Diana bathing causes her to transform him to keep him from speaking of his experience (Ovid 3.192). If Actaeon was left human, he could exaggerate the story and hurt Diana’s reputation or inspire others to deliberately sexually pursue the goddess. Even though Ovid presents Actaeon making an innocent mistake by saying the young man “sauntered aimlessly,” the poet’s frequent use of the word “fate” throughout the myth shows that he is using this story deliberately to show how Diana will inevitably react to any unwanted intrusion on her male-free life (3.131-252).

Ovid’s use of Diana’s virgin reputation as her strongest demonstration of power shows his intent to make her the most superior female in the poem. Unlike the nymphs, she can never suffer from rape or transformation resulting from sexual pursuit, so she retains the independence associated with virginity. Since Diana is an Olympian god, she is already one of the most powerful beings, as shown through the transformations she enacts, especially those that defy lesser gods. But her power is morally superior since she does not assert it by wounding or killing others. All those factors combine to make Diana a superior female, one who retains her beauty, independence and most importantly, virginity.

Now that the idea of virginity as a way to demonstrate superiority has been established, it is time to turn to a different type of myth. Ovid incorporated the concept of having a single character defy convention and maintain her virginity in a world full of violence in the beginning of the first century, A.D. (Anderson, Books 1-
54). 2000 years later, the same type of idea has appeared in contemporary vampire mythology. Writers have started to have their vampires abstain from the violence of penetrating humans with their fangs and sustain themselves on animal or artificial blood. The next chapter will explore this trend using Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* with support from other parts of vampire mythology.
Vampires and Virginity

Authors who incorporate vampire mythology into their texts often apply two concepts Ovid showcases in *Metamorphoses*. One is changing classic stories to fit the author’s purpose(s); just like Ovid twists myths, writers of modern vampire stories frequently stray from the stereotypical vampire to make their tales more interesting. The other parallel element is based on Ovid’s use of virginity as a critical part of identity and a form of power; when authors create a vampire who refuses to penetrate (bite) humans, the stories include many characters that parallel Ovid’s virgin nymphs and Diana. To better address those connections, this chapter will begin by discussing the relationship between sexuality and vampirism and then move to exploring virginity-centered parallels between *Metamorphoses*’ virgins and *Twilight*’s Cullen family.

Traditionally, vampires have been considered sexual creatures; the quintessential vampire action—penetration with fangs—exudes sexual imagery. John Allen Stevenson explains the connection, “the ironic thing about vampire sexuality is that, for all its overt peculiarity, it is in many ways very like human sexuality...[vampire sexuality] initially looks strange but quite often presents a distorted image of human tendencies and behavior” (142). Think about the classic image of a vampire attack: a tall, pale vampire dressed in black, fangs glistening with blood, leaning over a defenseless woman’s neck. That picture screams sexuality, from the female’s exposed skin to the vampire, poised to penetrate.
Count Dracula and his wives from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) function as some of the strongest classic examples of vampire sexuality. In the novel, Count Dracula tries to weaken his adversaries through attacking their women, Lucy Westerna and Mina Harper (Stoker 101-401). On that subject, Stevenson comments, “...the count, undeniably long in the tooth, attempts to hoard all the available women...” (139). That quote emphasizes the phallic imagery Stoker uses, even though Count Dracula never participates in sexual intercourse with Lucy or Mina. Stoker does suggest a sexual relationship between Count Dracula and the three female vampires, commonly called his wives, who live with him. Jonathan Harker encounters them while he is staying at Castle Dracula (Stoker 44). Carrol L. Fry describes the image Stoker projects during that scene, “The frequent references to ‘love’ and to ‘kisses’ and the type of physical description of the lady vampire makes the parallel between seduction and vampirism apparent” (21). By the end of that scene, Harker is waiting in “languorous ecstacy [sic]” for the golden-haired, sapphire-eyed vampire bite him (Stoker 45-6). Stoker’s imagery clearly asserts a connection between a vampire approaching a human with the intent to bite and the beginning of a sexual rendezvous.

One of the more surprising links between vampire bites and human sexual relationships is the ability both have to produce a type of offspring. Vampire mythology consistently makes a bite the essential action for making mortals transition from human to vampire, being reborn as undead. The cause of this reproduction is the exchange of bodily fluids—blood substitutes for semen—and the effect is
analogous to human reproduction (Stevenson 142-7). In some stories, vampire “parents” even guide their “children” through their first days of life. In David Greenwalt and Joss Whedon’s television show Angel, Darla, Angel’s sire, waits for him to rise from the grave so she can help him procure his first kill. When he winces after emerging from the ground, she says, “Birth is always painful” (“The Prodigal”). Darla recognizes the stark initial parallel between the two types of births. Although vampire children are unconventional, they are still created through the same action as human children—penetration—and cared for in a similar manner.

The parallel nature of vampirism and human sexuality suggests that virginity may also have an equivalent in vampire lore. Although vampires can choose to abstain from sexual relationships, a stronger, more relevant type of abstinence exists concerning their thirst for human blood. In this case, the loss of “virginity” equates to a vampire biting a human or a human being bitten by a vampire. That loss represents the same image (penetration), possible consequence (reproduction), and entry into a more desire-driven existence that human virginity’s loss entails. Therefore, as a vampire, abstaining from biting humans14 or, as a human, avoiding being bitten by a vampire, keeps one’s virginity intact.

Vampire bites happen because of one key part of vampire anatomy: fangs. Stoker describes Count Dracula’s mouth as “fixed and rather cruel looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; those protruded over the lips…” (24). Despite the wide acceptance of that image, in recent years, as some vampires have begun to avoid

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14 Since sexual intercourse resulting in reproduction involves two humans, the equivalent in vampirism also must include two human forms: a vampire and a mortal.
human blood and attempt to integrate into society, their fangs have evolved from Count Dracula’s blatant ones to a more subtle look. *Angel*’s vampires have fangs, but they can choose when to show them. These vampires morph between their human face and their vampire face, complete with raised forehead bones, yellow eyes, and fangs. Until Angel lets his face change, he looks like he is the same species as his human colleagues. Stephenie Meyer uses a completely different approach; she forgoes Count Dracula’s traditional fangs and replaces them with normal-looking teeth (e.g. 216). As a result, her vampires’ smiles are indistinguishable from a human’s. In *Dead Until Dark* (2001), Charlaine Harris combines all those concepts by having her vampires’ fangs ascend when they are hungry or aroused and retract when they calm down (183). In that case, the fangs are blatantly analogous to an erection. Even though the authors incorporate different types of fangs, the focus on making vampires have superior teeth reinforces the basis for all vampire stories: drinking blood to sustain life. The fangs also emphasize the overtly sexual aura of many vampires. As mentioned earlier, the image of fangs penetrating a human is very phallic, which is why many authors, like Stoker and Harris, associate vampire bites with sex as well as hunger.

The most striking evolution of the vampire myth is the movement from vampires having an all-consuming desire for human blood to sustaining themselves on animal or artificial blood. Count Dracula, a stereotypical vampire, feasts on humans like Lucy, whom he bites repeatedly over a series of weeks until she dies and becomes a vampire (Stoker 101-90). While diets like Count Dracula’s have remained
a staple in vampire stories, in the last few decades, some authors have started to modify that tradition. By doing so, they have created a less threatening vampire that is better able to exist as a part of human society. In *Interview with a Vampire* (1976), Anne Rice included one of the first examples of a vampire who tries to abstain from human blood with Louis, who attempts to drink only animal blood until he encounters Claudia, a defenseless child and succumbs to his body’s desire to drink her blood (71-74). Greenwalt and Whedon present the most complicated conception of a vampire who chooses not to kill humans with Angel, a vampire with two personae: as the soulless Angelus, one of the most vicious vampires ever to exist, he kills humans mercilessly; however, as Angel, a vampire with a soul and therefore a conscience, he only drinks refrigerated pig’s blood. Like Angel, minus the refrigeration, Meyer’s Cullen family chooses a lifestyle where they feed only on animals (186). In a unique twist, Harris takes those diets one step further by writing about a synthetic blood that can sustain vampires just as well as human or animal blood (50).

Even authors who include those non-traditional vampires in their altered myths also incorporate vampires that follow in Count Dracula’s footsteps and hunt humans. By doing so, the writers acknowledge the overwhelming desire vampires feel for human blood as well as the ever present option to succumb to that desire. Even those who steadfastly abstain from it still thirst for the more appealing human blood. The rare choice vampires like Angel and the Cullens make parallels the life of virginity Diana and her nymphs live in *Metamorphoses* and will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.
As shown, many texts in contemporary vampire mythology hold the potential to be paralleled with *Metamorphoses*. Of those, *Twilight* carries the strongest connection as much because of Meyer’s writing as her animal blood drinking vampires’ controlled lifestyle. The novel also is a popular example of young adult vampire literature. With the previous chapters’ *Metamorphoses* analysis, the main focus was traditional virginity; the type of virginity being addressed with vampire stories is more accurately called abstinence. For the sake of clarity, vampire abstinence from biting humans and human abstinence from being bitten will be referred to as figurative virginity from this point on; although traditional virginity and figurative virginity parallel each other conceptually, the physical qualifications for them are very different. Within vampire mythology, *Twilight*, with its central abstinent vampire family, offers prime examples for theorizing the connection between human virginity and vampire figurative virginity. The Cullens and their lifestyle contain elements that allow them to be easily compared to Ovid’s many virgin characters. Meyer also presents a romantic relationship that incorporates figurative virginity with Edward and Bella. They correlate with any human couple who decides to refrain from premarital sex when Edward suppresses his urges to bite Bella.

For many fans of the vampire mythology canon, talk of a virgin or abstinent vampire would not immediately bring *Twilight* to mind; instead, they would think of Angel, a vampire who abstains from drinking human blood and having sex with humans. He does so because of his soul. If he drinks human blood, he will add to the
thousands of memories that torment him from his days as Angelus. If he has sex with a human, as he found out during his relationship with his sometimes partner Buffy, he risks experiencing a moment of perfect happiness and losing his soul ("Innocence"). The intricacy involved with Angel’s two personas, Angel and Angelus, as well as the extent of his immersion into the demon world are only part of the reason why his story does not lend itself to comparison with *Metamorphoses* as easily as *Twilight*. Another reason is the importance of abstaining from sex as part of Angel’s virgin ways. It is just as emphasized as his diet. In both cases, he has participated in the activities he is now abstaining from. Concerning sexual relationships, the consequence he can suffer (losing his soul) makes his chaste ways more of a necessity than a choice. Along the same lines, Angel’s diet stems from his inability to handle the guilt associated with killing an innocent human, guilt that he only experiences because of his soul. While Angel may function as the poster boy for vampire abstinence, his lifestyle is not really freely chosen, like it is for the Cullens and Ovid’s virgins. Unlike Angel, those characters stay virgins for reasons unaffected by outside sources; if they chose to do so, they could just as easily live a life without virginity.

Bella Swan, *Twilight*’s narrator, offers readers the novel’s initial bridge to Greek and Roman mythology several times throughout the novel when she attempts to describe Edward’s beauty; often, her description equates the young vampire to a god or classical hero. At one point, Bella states, “Edward hadn’t moved a fraction of an inch, a carving of Adonis perched on my faded quilt” (Meyer 299). By
incorporating Adonis, a classical hero, Meyer illustrates Joseph DeMarco’s comment on vampires in young adult literature: “As the vampire allows his or her new life to merge with its humanity, it becomes something more than human but less than a god” (26). Meyer’s use of classic mythology makes her novel correspond with a teenager’s typical conception that vampires are superbeings on a similar level as gods.

Later in *Twilight*, while Edward tells Bella about his hunting, she forms a mental picture that connects him with the type of violence Ovid often incorporates. Bella says, “And Edward, Edward as he hunted, terrible and glorious as a young god, unstoppable” (Meyer 343). The violence and transformations Ovid centers his poem on can often be described using those same adjectives. The violence Callisto endures when Jove rapes her as well as her banishment from Diana’s troop can be called terrible while her attention from the king of the gods and everlasting life in the stars can be described as glorious (2.409-507). Whether intentional or not, Meyer’s use of god-associated imagery in this context and others links her text to classical mythology like *Metamorphoses*.

Meyer also incorporates an almost painfully chaste relationship between Bella and Edward that connects neatly with *Metamorphoses*. Ovid writes of nymphs who avoid his world’s violence and sexuality by living apart from society; even when they are faced with temptation—if a god desires them—they still struggle to maintain their virginity and avoid sexual pleasure. At the same time, some gods, like Vertumnus, struggle to control their lust so they can have a willing relationship with their desired nymph (Ovid 14.655-7). Because Edward is a vampire, Bella and he go through a
similar struggle. Both have to tame their sexual desires while Edward must also curtail his lust for Bella’s blood. In the same manner, the nymphs must control their bodily urges or risk expulsion from their lifestyle, as shown when Salmacis loses her physical form because she acted on her desire (4.339-79). This too is a common thread in gothic young adult literature; a survey by Norine Dresser reveals that the biggest draw for teenagers to vampires is sexual attraction. Dresser states, “The vampire represents the forbidden, the mysterious and the exciting” (qtd. in DeMarco 27). For Edward and Bella, those same qualities add to the intensity of their relationship. Neither should be pursuing it but neither stops.

While Bella and Edward’s relationship carries the most obvious link to Metamorphoses, the strongest connections actually lie in the choice the Cullen family makes to abstain from biting humans, meaning they maintain their figurative virginity. That life choice is characterized through the color of their eyes, which, depending on the extent of their hunger, range from gold to black, rather than the dark burgundy of “normal” vampires (Meyer 376). The Cullens’ eyes act as physical indicators of their bodies’ state, just like Callisto’s pregnant belly betrays her loss of virginity. The two works also connect through abstinence, which acts as a symbol of control, either over natural human sexual desires or the unceasing thirst for human blood. This control is easily broken, as shown by Ovid’s nymphs being raped or succumbing to desire (e.g. 1.600, 4.356-60). In Twilight, Meyer suggests that if a vampire loses control, even for just a few seconds, a human dies. But, if the virgins
in both texts can maintain control over their own bodies, they are able to maintain a powerful independence that sets them apart as superior in their worlds.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, virginity is a state that allows the holder to maintain a distinct advantage over other beings. Diana garners much of her power from her perpetual virginity, the reputation it gives her, and the actions she takes or avoids to maintain it. The Cullens’ brand of figurative virginity gives them power over three distinct elements of their lives. The first is over their own instincts; Edward explains, “But you see, just because we’ve been...dealt a certain hand...it doesn’t mean that we can’t choose to rise above—to conquer the boundaries of a destiny that none of us wanted. To try to retain whatever essential humanity we can” (Meyer 307). That idea of striving to keep humanity is common throughout young adult vampire literature and, according to DeMarco, is often what draws teenage readers to vampires (26). By rebelling against their nature, the Cullens resist their urge for human blood, conquer their own bodies, and maintain their figurative virginity. They also allow themselves to live more stable lives than others of their kind can manage due to the destruction normal vampires cause. The nymphs also suppress their natural urges when they avoid sexual relationships. All those characters are rebelling against the society they were born or reborn into. In both cases, readers admire the characters for their willpower and independent lifestyle and the message is one of abstinence and control.

A key part of a virgin’s control is the resistance of pleasure. In *Metamorphoses*, Diana chooses to disregard males and live a life of chastity so
respected that no man attempts to touch her. The Cullens resist the ultimate pleasure for a vampire—the taste of human blood—every day. Carlisle’s initial inner-conflict when trying to resist humans illustrates the depth of vampires’ desire for human blood. Edward explains, “I can’t adequately describe the struggle; it took Carlisle two centuries of torturous effort to perfect his self-control” (Meyer 339-40). Carlisle is the strongest vampire emblem of a Diana-like character because he has never drunk human blood and therefore, maintains the same type of unbroken virginity as Diana. His resistance is so controlled that he can work as a doctor in the emergency room, which relates to Diana being in vulnerable situations, like with Actaeon, and not being attacked sexually (Meyer 62, 340; Ovid 3.173-88). Carlisle works every day with severely-injured humans, many of whom are bleeding; few places exist that offer as much temptation to a vampire as an emergency room. Diana is often shown taking baths, which puts her in a sexually-inviting position if a male enters the scene. When that happens, temptation is presented in the form of Diana’s body instead of blood. Although Carlisle and Diana’s situations are not completely analogous, they do relate. Their ability to resist that temptation, in one way or another, suggests they function as the ideal, which is why others emulate them. Unfortunately, reaching the same status as the ideal is often impossible for others.

While Carlisle and Diana are presented as unblemished virgins, other characters that try to achieve the same status fall to temptation at some point or another. For the nymphs, that happens when they finally meet a man they desire, like Salmacis, or when they are attacked by a lustful male, like Callisto (Ovid 4.316,
When this happens, the nymphs are always apart from Diana's troop, a situation that increases their chances of coming in contact with a wayward male. With the Cullens, the issue is more complicated. They assert their figurative virginity through the decision to abstain from human blood, but, unlike the nymphs, the vampires are constantly faced with temptation due to their assimilation into human society. As a result, although it happens rarely, they do slip and drink from a human. For Meyer's vampires, that risk is greatest when the vampire faces a human whose "flavor" or scent is near impossible for him/her to resist. Bella has a scent that greatly entices Edward; to explain his temptation, he compares himself to a heroin addict and Bella to the heroin (Meyer 267).

Most of the Cullens have encountered at least one person as appealing to them as Bella is to Edward and lost control. When that rare moment of weakness is over, they recover from their mistake and once again abstain from human blood (Meyer 268). While Ovid gives no indication that his nymphs can regain their virginity, Meyer firmly asserts that her vampires' abstinent lifestyle is contingent on their resolve and will-power, which is realized through their choice not to bite humans. Unlike the authors' assertion of the ideal, the flexibility of virginity is one point where Ovid and Meyer separate. When Ovid's nymphs "fall," their entire existence is altered through the introduction of mortality and traditional female roles. If they could regain their virginity, there would be no reason to avoid sexual relationships because they could easily live the idealized virgin existence outside of society again. It would also undercut Diana's importance and power by lessening the desirability of
her perpetual virginity. For Meyer's vampires, the fall can either be ongoing, like the
nymphs who cannot return to Diana's lifestyle, or a temporary state. The Cullens'
ability to turn their backs again on their natural instinct is what separates them from
other vampires as well as what allows them to regain their figurative virginity.

To further explain the renewable figurative virginity presented in Twilight, the
reader can look at Alice's story. In reference to Alice's life before the Cullens,
Edward says:

Alice and Jasper are two very rare creatures. They both developed a
conscience, as we refer to it, with no outside guidance...Alice doesn't
remember her human life at all. And she doesn't know who created her. She
awoke alone....If she hadn't had that other sense, if she hadn't seen Jasper and
Carlisle and known that she would someday become one of us, she probably
would have turned into a total savage” (Meyer 289, 291)

Edward's reference to a conscience holds the key to the Cullens' figurative virginity:
the purposeful decision to abstain from human blood. Even though most of them
have tasted human blood, at the moment, they are living off of animal blood and that
gives them figurative virgin status. Although Alice most likely drank from humans
before she met Jasper, especially because she had to provide for herself, she was able
to focus on the possibility of becoming a Cullen and keep herself from turning into
the stereotypical bloodthirsty vampire. Meyer's presentation of all the Cullens
indicates that their present efforts to avoid human blood cancel out any past mistakes
they have made; at this moment, they are figurative virgins. Because of that element
of forgiveness, Meyer’s characters have more relaxed constrictions on their lives than Ovid’s do. The nymphs are doomed for just one, often unintentional, mistake. They can never regain their virginity, even if they only have sex once, because of the societal role they are forced into or the transformation they endure once their virginity has been lost.

In *Metamorphoses* and *Twilight*, if a character is able to resist natural temptation, he/she is presented as having stronger morals than many, if not all, of the other characters. During Ovid’s time, if a woman committed adultery or lost her virginity before marriage, she was punishable by law (Hallett *The Role of Women*... 244; Blank 125). Diana’s ability to maintain her virginity without exception places her in a morally superior position to humans and other gods (Blank 125). Even though Ovid does not directly state Diana’s choice as a result of morality, his focus on portraying her as innocent and naïve suggests that losing her virginity would be an immoral corruption of an ideal being. Because of their choice to drink only animal blood, Meyer’s vampires can also be categorized as having higher morals, even if they do not see themselves that way. When Edward describes his “teenage rebellion” where he lived like a regular vampire, he states, “But as time went on, I began to see the monster in my eyes. I couldn’t escape the debt of so much human life taken, no matter how justified [because I was only hunting evil people]” (Meyer 343).

Edward’s sense of what is right and wrong, not his distaste for human blood, makes him return to the Cullens. Like Alice and Jasper developing consciences, Edward makes a choice that showcases his morality.
For the Cullens, the decision to resist human blood is a defining part of their lives that allows them to exist without feeling like soulless beings. In an interview with MTV, Jackson Rathbone, who plays Jasper in Twilight’s movie version, explains the role of morality within Edward and Bella’s relationship: “Edward and Bella have the greatest sadistic, masochistic relationship there probably is, because Edward is putting himself through hell by being around her, all he wants to do is eat her. But he can’t because of his morality” (Carroll). Meyer gives a powerful impression of morality throughout the text and the young couple’s relationship is one of the strongest examples. By exhibiting the kind of control that he does with Bella, Edward maintains his high morality and allows himself to have a relationship with a human. At the same time, the continual temptation he faces also connects him to Ovid’s text where the male gods are constantly succumbing to lust if they see a beautiful female, especially if she is nude.

Another way to evaluate Edward and Bella’s carefully controlled relationship using Metamorphoses is to contrast it with the pleasure-driven actions of Salmacis. While Edward is forced to suppress his bloodlust to be around Bella, Salmacis cannot contain her desire for Hermaphroditus’ body. Unlike Edward, who knows Bella will die if he gives in, Salmacis does not foresee the consequences of letting her desire dictate her actions. As a result, Edward is able to date Bella while Salmacis is melded together with Hermaphroditus into a being where neither gets to live his/her life (Ovid 4.373-4). Salmacis’ impulsive lustful action essentially takes her life while Edward’s choice allows him and Bella to maintain their lifestyles. While Ovid shows
the consequences of a non-god letting desire rule, Meyer demonstrates the benefits of a powerful being maintaining control.

Despite Edward suppressing his desire, the reader is always aware of the power the Cullens yield over humans; although the Cullens choose to hunt animals, they still have the ability to entice or kill a human in a matter of seconds. According to Dresser, that power to control others and take a life is one of the most fascinating aspects about vampires for young readers (qtd. in DeMarco 27). Meyer mirrors her reader’s awareness about that fact with the Cullens. They are very aware of the threat they offer to mortals, so they generally avoid getting close to them; that is, until Edward meets Bella. Prior to that relationship, the Cullens’ self-inflicted isolation was due to the fact that their entire being is designed to lure humans into feeling safe prior to an attack; they did not want to put themselves or humans in a potentially lethal situation.

Ovid’s nymphs maintain the same type of isolation as the Cullens, but for a very different reason; they are avoiding men, the threat to their virginity, and staying away from the violence that dominates every other part of their world. When their isolation is broken, it is by force, not choice. Edward, on the other hand, voluntarily forms a relationship with Bella. However, his family is forcibly thrown into contact with Bella because of Edward’s decision, a choice has the potential to jeopardize the life they have made in Forks. To protect his family and Bella, Edward tries to keep Bella aware of the threat he presents for her. His attitude greatly contrasts with Ovid’s lustful gods who completely disregard the feelings and wants of their victims.
To showcase vampires’ superiority over humans as well as the extent of the Cullens’ self-control, Meyer uses a scene in a meadow between Edward and Bella where he demonstrates the danger he presents for her. Before Edward and Bella leave for the meadow, he asks her if she has told anyone that she is spending the day with him (Meyer 255). When she replies negatively, he demands, “Are you so depressed by Forks that it’s made you suicidal?” (Meyer 255). Edward knows that he must maintain the highest amount of control possible while alone with Bella, especially because, as a predatory creature, being in the middle of the woods with no humans aware of their whereabouts presents the perfect opportunity to quench his thirst for her blood. In an effort to avoid that and protect Bella, Edward slowly, very slowly, acclimates himself to her scent and touch so that he can better suppress his desire (Meyer 360-79).

Despite Edward’s precautions, his natural instincts are always testing his power over his own body. Bella complicates his self-control because she trusts Edward so completely that, at times, she forgets the danger he presents for her. During the meadow scene, Edward feels relaxed enough that he leans in towards Bella so that his face is only a few inches from hers; she instinctively reacts by leaning in further (Meyer 263). Bella describes his reaction is as follows:

And he was gone, his hand ripped from mine. In the time it took my eyes to focus, he was twenty feet away, standing at the edge of the small meadow, in the deep shade of a huge fir tree. He stared at me, his eyes dark in the shadows, his expression unreadable...After ten incredibly long seconds, he
walked back, slowly for him. He stopped, still several feet away, and sank gracefully to the ground, crossing his legs. (Meyer 263).

Because of Bella’s action, Edward comes very close to losing control. Meyer hints at that through Bella’s description of Edward’s eyes—“his eyes dark in the shadows”—since his eyes turn from gold to black when his hunger is at its greatest (263, 188).

His desire to regain his control is shown through the actions mentioned in the quote. When Bella gets too close, he immediately puts distance between them. As he approaches her again, he does so slowly, which allows him to readjust to her scent. Then he sits down several feet from her and crosses his legs, a sitting position that makes it difficult to move forward quickly. Although Edward did not completely lose control, his precautions show the effort it takes for him to regain power over his instincts.

Edward’s resolve to have a relationship with Bella constantly pits his natural vampiric impulses against his love for Bella. In essence, he must conquer his own body to keep from biting her, a feat that contrasts with the gods frequently following their bodies’ impulses, especially concerning lust. As shown through Edward’s reaction to Bella’s close proximity in the meadow, his control is always teetering on the edge of collapse because his base instinct is to drink human blood. In the same way, Ovid’s nymphs are forced to set aside the body’s natural instinct to procreate when faced with the breaking of their chastity vow. Callisto tries to fight off Jove—and her body—right up until he penetrates her (Ovid 2.436-7). Callisto’s resistance shows her commitment to her lifestyle and her reluctance to jeopardize it, just like
Edward’s does. If he gives in and bites Bella, he will put himself and his entire family in danger. His resistance protects his family just as much as Bella and himself.

Even though Edward parallels Callisto concerning efforts to protect their lifestyles, a stronger link actually exists between Edward and Jove in the Callisto myth. Both of them hold the power in their respective relationships. When Jove rapes Callisto, he establishes his power by taking her virginity. In just a few moments, he changes her entire life. Edward also holds the power in his relationship with Bella since he can kill her in an instant if he chooses to do so. Like Jove, Edward could attack Bella thereby destroying her figurative virginity as well as his own. Both males are naturally in the superior position of their relationships because they are a dominant species. While Jove chooses to showcase his power through rape, Edward strives to keep Bella aware of his abilities without using them against her. That difference between the two males once again casts Edward as morally superior and much more controlled than many of Ovid’s impulsive gods.

Edward’s commitment to maintaining Bella’s and his figurative virginity is essential to maintaining the image Meyer presents of the Cullens. Even though their lifestyle is unusual, their basic abilities are the same; they still can kill a human in an instant. During the meadow scene, when Bella still does not grasp why Edward is afraid he will hurt her, he decides to demonstrate his abilities. Meyer writes:

[Edward says,] “I’m the world’s best predator, aren’t I? Everything about me invites you in—my voice, my face, even my smell. As if I need any of that!”
Unexpectedly, he was on his feet, bounding away, instantly out of sight, only to appear beneath the same tree as before, having circled the meadow in half a second. "As if you could outrun me," he laughed bitterly. He reached up with one hand and, with a deafening crack, effortlessly ripped a two-foot-thick branch from the trunk of the spruce. He balanced it in that hand for a moment, and then threw it...against another huge tree, which shook and trembled at the blow..."As if you could fight me off." (Meyer 263-4)

Edward verbalizes and illustrates the extent of his power over humans; any mortal would find it difficult to resist a vampire’s appearance or defeat a vampire in physical combat. As with traditional vampire myth, Meyer’s vampires are genetically-designed to be superior over humans, just like Ovid’s gods who can transform, rape or kill a human on a whim. However, the fact that Edward barely hints to Bella the amount of strength and speed he possesses until that moment shows how hesitant he is to unleash his vampire nature around her. While the normal vampires in the novel never hide those abilities, Edward and his family must take care with every action around mortals not to reveal their true identities.

In the context of power, the nymphs, like Callisto, hold a greater connection to Bella. They are all subject to the whims of others, especially those who are physically superior (gods and vampires). If those powerful beings choose to take advantage of Bella and the nymphs, the girls will lose their type of virginity through penetration. And, once the weaker characters are victimized in that manner, they lose their lifestyle. At the end of *Twilight*, the precarious nature of a human's figurative
virginity is specifically alluded to. Once James catches Bella, he manages to bite her on the wrist before the Cullens arrive (Meyer 450). His penetration of her is the result of an irrepressible desire; in Bella’s voice, Meyer states, “[James’] eyes, merely intent before, now burned with an uncontrollable need. The blood—spreading crimson across my white shirt, pooling rapidly on the floor—was driving him mad with thirst” (450). Meyer clearly demonstrates the extent of James’ need to drink Bella’s blood; as much as he wants to continue torturing her, he cannot resist the lure of his obsession. Just like Ovid’s gods use rape as a means to show power and garner pleasure, James’ actions before and during biting Bella have the same twofold purpose.

The events that unfold after James penetrates Bella demonstrate further Meyer’s concept of renewable figurative virginity, as was discussed earlier. James’ fangs infect Bella with his venom, which will slowly turn her into a vampire: the only alternative to death once a human loses his/her figurative virginity. To combat Bella’s change, Edward follows Carlisle’s suggestion and sucks out James’ venom (Meyer 454-5). Bella describes her experience as follows:

Then [Edward’s] head bent over [the bite] and his cold lips pressed against my skin. At first the pain was worse. I screamed and thrashed against the cool hands that held me back...Then, slowly, my writhing calmed as my hand grew more and more numb. The fire was dulling, focusing into an ever-smaller point...“Her blood tastes clean,” Edward said quietly. (Meyer 456)
Even though Bella’s vampire bite virginity is taken when James penetrates her with his fangs, Edward is able to reverse the effects with his own penetration. Much like rape causing pregnancy, James’ bite was slowly turning Bella into a vampire. By extracting the venom, Edward makes Bella’s body regain its humanness. It is like the bite never happened, and Bella’s figurative virginity was never taken. As previously discussed, despite the other parallels between *Twilight* and *Metamorphoses*, none of Ovid’s characters can regain their virginity. But a similarity does exist with the effect of the penetration. When the nymphs are raped, they leave their old lifestyle and enter traditional society as women. If the venom had fully infected Bella, she would have had to abandon her human life and start living as an immortal vampire. In both cases, being penetrated comes with a greater consequence than normal sexual relationships.

Although Edward saves Bella from James’ venom, his choice was not easy, especially because it risks his own figurative virginity. When faced with the choice to let Bella change or try and reverse it, Edward says, “Carlisle, I...I don’t know if I can do that” (Meyer 455). He knows that if he tastes Bella’s blood—and he will, if he tries to save her—his resolve to not pleasurably drink from a human may be shattered. But, since he does not want to condemn Bella to life as a vampire, he makes the choice and penetrates her (Meyer 456). At that moment, the status of Edward’s figurative virginity is the most precarious because he will be tasting the blood he so greatly desires. However, Edward controls his bloodlust and only drinks Bella’s tainted blood. Since he stops drinking and never tastes pure blood, his
figurative virginity is not completely lost. What happens to Edward in those moments parallels a principle he explains earlier in the novel: his family only turns humans into vampires when the humans are at the point of death. In that case, the vampires also only take as much blood as is needed for the change (Meyer 341). Although Edward technically penetrates Bella, he exhibits the utmost self-control and does not do it for his own gain—unlike the gods who rape nymphs in Ovid’s poem—so his virginity is only threatened, not lost.

As shown through the Cullens’ defeat of James, the Cullens retain power over others in their race because of their lifestyle choice. Whereas most vampires hunt relentlessly for human prey, the Cullens live a life of practiced control with minimal competition for food. They form a unit, much like a family, that can survive within human society without suspicion for a number of years. Their unity makes them stronger than other groups of vampires and allows the Cullens to work together seamlessly where others would falter. When James is tracking Bella, the Cullens present a challenge to him because they are “a large clan of strong fighters”; unfortunately for James, the same element that fascinates him eventually defeats him (Meyer 397, 452-7). The benefits of the Cullen family unit parallel Diana’s troop. They are also a close-knit group who share a common bond of virginity. As shown through the lack of sexual attacks on nymphs who are physically with the troop, being part of that type of unit encourages the maintenance of virginity. The same concept contributes to why the Cullens, especially those newer to the lifestyle, can succeed in resisting human blood.
The untraditional Cullen lifestyle also gives them power over other vampires because stereotypical vampires struggle to understand the Cullens’ choice. By merely mentioning that the Cullens have a home, Carlisle entices Laurent to stop hunting humans for a few days and explore morally-conscious vampirism with the Denali clan who lives like the Cullens in Alaska (Meyer 378, 400). Laurent’s choice to change his lifestyle may seem sudden, but it again follows an Ovidian trend. Several of Ovid’s nymphs emulate Diana and some make the decision to do so in an instant. With Daphne, as soon as Cupid’s arrow fills her with hate for Apollo, she begins to idolize Diana. The change literally happens in three lines (Ovid 1.474-6).

That element of power functions in a similar way to how Ovid’s Olympian gods can thwart the actions of lesser gods. While the Cullens dominate other vampires by banding together and watching over each other, the Olympians use their power to keep the lesser gods in check, like Diana does with Alpheus and Arethusa (5.619-42). When a lesser god displeases an Olympian, the more powerful god always finds a way to turn events how he/she wants. If a normal vampire encounters the Cullens, he/she is either waylaid by the unfamiliar lifestyle or forced to face a group with a stronger bond than any other type of vampire clan. Although the Olympians and Cullens have different types of power, both have the ability to turn events in their favor.

Certain vampires that Meyer writes of also possess extra power in the form of a special ability that adds to their superiority over humans and other vampires. Three of the Cullens fit into that position: Edward, who can read minds; Alice, who can
envision the future; and Jasper, who can control the emotions of those around him (Meyer 290, 308). They predominantly use their abilities to keep their family safe from human suspicion and to defeat other vampires. Some stereotypical vampires, like James, also possess an extra ability. James has an uncanny ability to track, which is characterized by his “brilliant mind and unparalleled senses” (Meyer 400). Meyer describes why some vampires have those extra powers through Edward’s voice: “Carlisle has a theory...he believes that we all bring something of our strongest human traits with us into the next life, where they are intensified—like our minds, and our senses. He thinks that I must have already been very sensitive to the thoughts of those around me” (307). When those intensified traits result in a supernatural ability, they mark their bearers as superior and allow them some extra power over those around them, especially if they can directly control someone, like Jasper, or if they can gain an advantage without physically confronting a person, like Edward and Alice. Just like Ovid’s power structure allows the Olympians to at least partially influence any lesser being, the superior vampires have a distinct advantage in either a physical or mental way.

Whether or not they possess extra abilities, the Cullens clearly occupy a powerful position in Meyer’s text. Like Ovid’s virgins, they live an atypical lifestyle, one that gives them independence from their desires as well as the opportunity to be part of a family. The virgins and vampires both defy tradition and focus on the control of their bodies and the maintenance of their lifestyle. When the Cullens, especially Carlisle, intersect specifically with Diana, their superiority becomes clear. Both the
vampires and the goddess wield power that gives them a distinct advantage over others in their world. They are more than supernatural beings; at times, they border on the ideal.

That ability to have so much power and be perceived as essentially good, despite inherent dangerous qualities, makes characters like the Cullens and Diana appeal to teenagers. That holds especially true with the Cullens because they constantly struggling against their nature so they can fit into human society; a struggle that echoes young adults’ efforts to explore their own natures and find an identity that gives them a place in society. Chase M. Will explains, “Let’s face a straight fact: No teenager likes listening to a guidance counselor talk about puberty and maturity, but when they read about a kid with a wand or blood-stained teeth going through these things while fighting vicious battles in alternate realities, they’re more than willing to listen” (17). Of the Cullens, Edward will specifically resonate with young adults as he tries to navigate his feelings for Bella. Jasper may also attract them since he has the hardest time finding his place within his new lifestyle (Meyer 327). The rest of the Cullens are also relevant as they all struggle with their choice of diet and try to blend in with mortals. While Ovid gives readers a way to interpret Meyer’s novel, Meyer also provides a link back to Ovid’s classic poem.

With that two-way link in mind, consider this quote from Wendy L. Rodabaugh: “Walk into any bookstore on any given day and ask the clerk to show you the bestsellers in young adult literature. Chances are good that most of these titles will contain elements of either horror or romance...or both” (68). Imagine if the
book a teenager picked up was *Twilight*; now picture that reader coming back weeks later for *Metamorphoses*. Not likely, but, as this study has shown, possible. Both texts share strong themes centered on just a few characters. Especially considering the length of Ovid’s poem, many more exist, like those within the connections between Victoria and Juno or Edward and Bella and Pyramus and Thisbe. The possibilities are almost endless.

Returning to virginity, a concept undercut by many parts of today’s world, the complexity of the Cullen’s figurative virginity and Diana’s perpetual virginity as well as the fragility of the nymphs’ virgin state offer less often considered concepts for contemporary teenage minds. The consequences of virginity’s loss as well as the traditions, stereotypes, control, and power involved with it are ideas that Ovid and Meyer show transcend centuries. While many young adults have already read *Twilight*, its connections to *Metamorphoses* show the poem can also be a worthwhile read for teenagers as well as adults. Although it is not as recognized as works like Virgil’s *Aeneid*, clearly a place still exists for Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Within its pages, young readers will discover a world of desire, scandal, violence, and mysticism, a world containing powerful gods, larger than life heroes, and identity-seeking adolescents. As shown through the poem’s parallels with *Twilight*, *Metamorphoses* addresses many of the issues and triumphs young adults experience everyday.
Works Cited


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