

First & Last Name

Eng. 2332

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Text: *Metamorphoses*

Passage: “These gifts, which Iphis pledged as girl, are paid by him as man. And when the first rays of the next day’s sun again revealed the wide world, Venus, Juno, and Hymen assembled: marriage flames were lit, and the boy Iphis made Ianthe his” (IX 193-198).

Question: In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Ovid allows the gods to change Iphis from a female into a male and then marry the long-awaited, Ianthe. What does the transforming of Iphis from woman to man indicate about Ovid’s feministic viewpoint and the suppression of women during this time period?

Issues: Issue of Historical and Cultural context. This is an issue of historical and cultural context because it reflects a circumstance of its creation. By that, women during this time period were fabricated to the likes of man and husband. They were not permitted to possess their own set of beliefs and aspirations because it could all change at the liking of man.

Critical Approach: The feminist criticism approach is best fit for this question because it contests the patriarchal point of view as the standard for all moral, aesthetic, political, and intellectual judgments. The transformation of Iphis from a woman into a man was done at the hands of a goddess, which is a mere contradiction to the story and another triumphant for man. It is a contradiction to the story because women have typically been at the mercy of man. I believe by choosing a woman to transform Iphis, Ovid sought emphasize the fact that feminism was not at all highly regarded.

Answer: Not only in the story of Iphis and Ianthe, but all throughout *Metamorphoses*, Ovid portrays women as fluid and they can be altered to fit the expectations of man. During Ovid’s time period, women were not treated as man’s equal. They were thought to be the homemakers

and child-bearers. Iphis' father told Telethusa, "So if by chance you bear a female...I shall have her put to death" (IX. 17-20). With this being said, Ovid proves that females were not highly regarded during this time and sought after by parents.

The ending to Iphis and Ianthe is the most critical for the passages of women. Iphis was transformed from a female into a male at the hands of a goddess so that she may marry Ianthe. A better ending to the story would have been Iphis revealing that she was indeed a girl and her family accepting her as a woman. However, during Ovid's time, this alternate ending would have been highly criticized. Ovid, like other men during his time, believed that women possessed loose morals and could be controlled and altered to the likes of man.