

Breasts Are Best? Translation and the Ovidian Female Body

1. Ovid, *Amores* 1.5.19-22

quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!  
forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!  
quam castigato planus sub pectore venter!  
quantum et quale latus! quam iuvenale femur!

What shoulders and what arms I looked upon and touched!  
The outline of her breasts—just right for clasping!  
How flat a stomach underneath her narrow chest!  
And what a flank, so long! Her thigh, so youthful! (McCarter)

What arms and shoulders did I touch and see,  
How apt her bosom to be pressed by me!  
Belly so smooth beneath the breasts so high,  
And waist so long, and what a fine young thigh. (A.D. Melville)

What perfect shoulders, what arms, what lovely breasts  
begging to be caressed! How smooth her body's skin,  
how long her flank and hip and beautiful thighs. (David Slavitt)

Shoulders and arms challenging eyes and fingers.  
Nipples firmly demanding attention.  
Breasts in high relief above the smooth belly.  
Long and slender waist. Thighs of a girl. (Guy Lee)

Smooth shoulders, delectable arms (I saw, I touched them),  
Nipples inviting caresses, the flat  
Belly outlined beneath that flawless bosom,  
Exquisite curve of a hip, firm youthful thighs. (Peter Green)

What shoulders she had! Arms ripe for caresses!  
Nipples the perfect shape for a little tweak.  
And God—that flat stomach beneath the compact breasts!  
That taut, muscled flank! Those girlish thighs! (Tom Bishop)

What shoulders, what kind of arms they were that I saw and touched!  
The curve of her breasts—how fit it was to caress!  
How flat and smooth her belly under her chiseled chest!  
How great, how fine her flank! What a youthful thigh!  
(Julia Dyson Hejduk)

Such shoulders I saw and touched—oh, such arms.  
The form of her breast firm in my palm,  
and below that firm fullness a belly so smooth—  
her long shapely sides, her young thighs! (Jane Alison)

2. Ovid, *Remedia* 337-338

omne papillae  
Pectus habent? vitium fascia nulla tegat.

Do papillae  
take up her whole pectus? Let no band conceal the fault. (McCarter)

3. Martial 14.134

Fascia, crescentes dominae compesce papillas,  
Ut sit quod capiat nostra tegatque manus.

Band, restrain my mistress' expanding breasts.  
My hand needs something it can grasp and cover. (McCarter)

4. Apollo and Daphne (*Met.* 1.548-552)

vix prece finita torpor gravis occupat artus,  
mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro,  
in frondem crines, in ramos brachia crescunt,  
pes modo tam velox pigris radicibus haeret,  
ora cacumen habet: remanet nitor unus in illa.

Her prayer just done, her limbs become dead weight,  
and slender bark enfolds her supple torso.  
Her hair grows out to leaves, her arms to branches;  
her foot, so swift, now clings to static roots;  
Her face is treetop. Just her gleam remains. (McCarter)

5. Apollo and Daphne (*Met.* 1.554-555)

...positaque in stipite dextra  
sentit adhuc trepidare novo sub cortice pectus...

6. Pygmalion's Statue (10.263-266)

ornat quoque vestibus artus,  
dat digitis gemmas, dat longa monilia collo,  
aure leves baccae, redimicula pectore pendent:  
cuncta decent; nec nuda minus formosa videtur.

He decks her limbs with clothes,  
puts gems upon her fingers and long pendants  
around her neck. Smooth beads hang from her ears  
and ribbons grace her chest. It all becomes her.  
And nude she's no less beautiful to see. (McCarter)

7. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.616-17

et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae.  
o vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges.

Her soft white bosom was ringed in a layer  
of bark... (David Raeburn)

A dragging languor spread, her tender bosom  
was wrapped in thin smooth bark, her slender arms  
were changed to branches and her hair to leaves... (A.D. Melville)

... her soft bosom is girdled with slender bark. (Z. Philip Ambrose)

...her limbs grew numb and heavy, her soft breasts  
were closed with delicate bark... (Rolfe Humphries)

...slowness seeps in her limbs,  
delicate bark nestles around her soft breasts... (Jane Alison)

He puts his hand  
upon the trunk and feels her chest still trembling  
beneath the bark. (McCarter)

He dressed her like a queen, rings on her fingers,  
or diamonds and gold or glancing rubies;  
a shining collar at her throat, pearls at her ears,  
and golden chains encircling her small breasts. (Horace Gregory)

He even dressed it  
in clothes, put rings on the fingers and necklaces round the throat,  
hung jewels from the ears and girdled the breasts with elegant  
bands. (David Raeburn)

He dresses it, too,  
slips gems on fingers, strands of beads upon the neck;  
a pearl is fixed to each ear, a corset to breast. (Jane Alison)

He dresses it up and puts diamond rings on its fingers,  
gives it a necklace, a lacy brassiere and pearl earrings. (Charles  
Martin)

He drapes  
robes around it, puts jeweled rings on its fingers  
and long necklaces around its décolletage. (Stanley Lombardo)

Your tunics have long sleeves, your turbans ribbons.  
You are not Phrygian men but Phrygian women. (McCarter)

<p>8. Pygmalion's Statue (10.281-284)</p> <p>admovet os iterum, manibus quoque <u>pectora temptat</u>: temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore subsedit digitis ceditque.</p> <p>He kisses her again and with his hands he also <u>feels her chest</u>. The ivory grows soft, its hardness gone, and sinks beneath his fingers' touch. (McCarter)</p> <p>9. Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i> 12.540-541</p> <p>dedit obvia ferro / <u>pectora</u></p>	<p>He kissed her again and <u>touched her breast</u> with his hand... (Stanley Lombardo)</p> <p>He leans again to kiss her; and he reaches with his hands <u>to touch her breasts</u>. The ivory had lost its hardness; now his <i>fingers probe</i>... (Allen Mandelbaum)</p> <p>He pressed his lips to hers once again; and then he <u>started to stroke her breasts</u>. The ivory gradually lost its hardness, softening, sinking, yielding beneath his <i>sensitive fingers</i>. (David Raeburn)</p> <p>He brushed her lips again and <u>touched a breast</u>. (Jane Alison)</p> <p>Then <u>touched her breasts</u> and cupped them in his hands... (Horace Gregory)</p> <p>kissing her lips and <u>exciting her breasts</u> with both hands. <i>Aroused</i>, the ivory softened... (Charles Martin)</p> <p>He offered up his chest to meet the sword... (McCarter)</p>
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