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THE AMAZON MYTH IN WESTERN LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Interdepartmental Program
in Comparative Literature

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation identifies and evaluates the ways in which the Amazon myth has functioned. The Amazon myth functions within broader discourses about the Orient, Africa, and women. It has implications for the ways we define "self" and "other." Because they are often represented as a threat to the border from long ago and/or far away, Amazons can serve both as an excuse for fortifying the center against the margin, and as a way of projecting fantasies into the void. The Amazon myth has incited men to action as they have searched for adventure and Amazons abroad. Intended in part as a warning to women of what they could become and of what could happen to them if they rebelled against traditional roles, it has also provided an alluring model to women searching for more power and autonomy. The Amazon myth projects onto foreign soil tensions felt in the home society and provides a safe sphere for the expression and resolution of those tensions. As a breach of the Great Chain of Being, usurping Amazons can serve either as a critique of that idea or as a call to arms for heroic men to defend it.

The first chapter develops the theoretical framework for the dissertation. This framework is derived primarily from Michel Foucault,

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Edward Said, and Christopher Miller. Foucault devised what he termed the three axes of genealogy: the axes of truth, power, and ethics. The giuses of the Amazon myth reflect the interplay of these during different eras. Said and Miller have shown how Foucault's theory applies to discourses about the Orient and Africa, respectively. Interpretations of the Amazon myth have tended to reflect each era's thought about the "other," whether other-as-foreigner or other-as-woman or both.

The subsequent chapters follow a chronological order. The second chapter is an investigation of Amazon myths in Greek and Roman societies; the third, an analysis of medieval treatments of Amazon myths. The fourth is an examination of uses of Amazon myths during the Renaissance, and the fifth is an analysis of Amazons during the Romantic and Victorian eras.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Statement of the Problem

How has the Amazon myth functioned? In this dissertation, I seek to identify and evaluate the ways in which the Amazon myth has functioned within broader discourses about the Orient, Africa, and women. Amazon myths have implications for the ways we define "self" and "other." Because they are often represented as a threat to the border from long ago and/or far away, Amazons can serve both as an excuse for fortifying the center against the margin, and as a way of projecting fantasies into the void. The Amazon myth has incited men to action as they have searched for adventure and Amazons abroad. Intended in part as a warning to women of what they could become and of what could happen to them if they rebelled against traditional roles, it has also provided an alluring model to women searching for more power and autonomy. The Amazon myth projects onto foreign soil tensions felt in the home society and provides a safe sphere for the expression and resolution of those tensions. As a breach of the Great Chain of Being,

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usurping Amazons can serve either as a critique of that idea or as a call to arms for heroic men to defend it.

Known to Homer, Amazon myths have persisted to modern times. Myths presumably persist and flourish only when they serve some enduring purposes. The Amazon myth is important in the way it both reinforces and undermines gender and cultural stereotypes, and for its potential to denaturalize gender. According to Abby Kleinbaum, the Amazon myth has traditionally been a male fantasy in which the conquest of an Amazon is a transcendent act (1). A few women have appropriated the myth, but Kleinbaum warns that following this model is risky: "As surely as no spider's web was built for the glorification of flies, the Amazon idea was not designed to enhance women, but to serve the needs of its male creators" (3). Nevertheless, the Amazon myth can serve several functions, both for and against its "male creators."

The chapters of this dissertation follow a chronological order. The second chapter is an investigation of Amazon myths in Greek and Roman societies; the third, an analysis of medieval treatments of Amazon myths. The fourth is an examination of uses of Amazon myths during the Renaissance, and the fifth is an analysis of Amazons during the Romantic and Victorian eras.

The Delimitations

Several problems that impinge on the present study lie outside the scope of this investigation. I am limiting my analysis to Amazons

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specifically and not dealing with other myths of warrior women. The historicity of the Amazons has been questioned from ancient times; however, this dissertation does not address that particular debate. More precisely, it examines the debate itself rather than the historicity of the Amazons. Debates and stories about Amazons reveal more about the debaters and storytellers than they do about the Amazons. I shall principally analyze the literary tradition, only occasionally treating representations of Amazons in sculpture, pottery, and painting. Although I do not attempt to discuss all the literature involving the Amazons, the texts I have chosen to analyze should be sufficient to illustrate the basic functions of the Amazon myth. Authors have used the Amazon myth in fairly consistent ways, and an attempt to describe every mention of Amazons in literature would dilute the focus of my argument.

Methodology

I derive my critical approach primarily from the work of Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and Christopher Miller. Foucault's viewpoint allows us to analyze the Amazon myth's potential. Michel Foucault states about the modern applicability of Greek ethics, "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous" (*Reader* 343). James J. Liszka's theory of myth explains both why myths are dangerous, and why they are more dangerous to some than to others. Myths are dangerous because they reflect contradictions within and conflicts among the values of a society. They are the most dangerous to those who have

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the least authority and ability to interpret those myths. While several valuable approaches to studying myths exist, Liszka's seems most in tune with the theories of Foucault, for both root their social theory in conflict and violence. In turn, their agonistic point of view makes them applicable to studying Greek society in general and the Amazon myth in particular.

An unrepentant structuralist, Liszka uses Lévi-Strauss's theory of the generation of myth in preference to "diffusionist" theories and "archetype" theories (4, 210). Liszka differs from Lévi-Strauss, however, in that he does not believe that myths arise from logical contradictions tied to the "innate structure of the human unconscious" (210). While I do not herein adopt Liszka's structuralist analysis of myth, I find his insight into the etiology of myth that applicable to my approach. Liszka roots a myth in the values of the culture that produces it. More precisely, he believes that myths emerge from "axiological" contradictions within "actual cultural-valuative relations" (213). Myths enact the results of transgressing "value axioms" (213).

> The origin of the myth would be found in the tension between the violence imposed by an order and the violence of its possible transgression, something which is mirrored in the very structure of narration. (213)

The association of myths with violence explains their danger; they represent a rupture in the social order. Liszka's claims that his system covers all myths may not endure under closer scrutiny, but the Amazon myth does reflect both "the tension between the violence imposed by an order and the violence of its possible transgression" (Liszka 213). The

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process of interpretation explains why myths are more dangerous to some than to others. Interpretation often seeks to resolve the ambivalence inherent in myth (Liszka, 213). This is especially true of "directed interpretation," which occurs "when there is authoritative (nondialogic) control over how the story is told, when and where it is told, and how it should be understood" (163).

Within Liszka's theoretical framework, the Amazon myth is dangerous because of the social tensions it reflects and refracts. It has historically been more dangerous to women than to men because men have usually directed the interpretation of the myth, an interpretation that usually includes the belief that women themselves are dangerous and should be controlled.

> In general, interpretation becomes directed or ideological when, as Rossi-Landi argues, there is at least one of the following present: (1) control of the codification, (2) control of the channel of transmission, or (3) control of interpretation (1974: 1973). In other words, communication is directed when there is authoritative (nondialogic) control over how the story is told, when and where it is told, and how it should be understood. (163)

Foucault's three axes of genealogy help demonstrate how the Amazon myth fits into the broader structure of a society; the myth is not "just" a story, it is a story that is interrelated to ethics and to the exercise of power. Michel Foucault devised three axes of genealogy: "the truth axis," "the power axis," and "the ethical axis" (*Reader* 352).

> Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge;

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> second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. (Foucault, *Reader* 351)

In this dissertation, I treat Amazon myths themselves and theories about Amazons as part of the truth axis. The use of the Amazon myth in the regulation of the lives of women and in confrontations with outside cultures is part of the power axis. Judgments about the Amazons are part of the ethical axis, as are male attempts to construct themselves as heroes who defeat Amazons. The Amazon myth also justifies the act of conquest. By defining the new culture not only as "other" but also as transgressive Amazonian other, the conqueror is entitled to assault it. At this point, Foucault's ethical axis intersects the power axis. The term "ethics" in this case has a specialized meaning.

> And there is another side to the moral prescriptions, which most of the time is not isolated as such but is, I think, very important: the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport à soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions. (Foucault, *Reader* 352)

Since most historians do not believe that Amazons actually existed, it may seem strange for me to locate these myths on the truth axis. However, Foucault consistently treats knowledge as a human construct, the product of social relationships.

> Although he traced with great patience the discursive systems of the sciences of life, language, and labor, his aim was not to unveil the truths they had discovered or the falsities they had propounded. Rather, once again, it was the

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> effective operation of these disciplines——how and around what concepts they formed, how they were used, where they developed——that was Foucault's prey. (Rabinow 12)

People form beliefs that turn out to be false in the same ways they form beliefs that turn out to be true. The method of forming beliefs is what interests Foucault; therefore, the accuracy of "knowledge" is not of primary importance to his analysis (*Hist. Sex.* 1. 12).

Furthermore, both Said (1-5) and Christopher Miller (xi) focus primarily on the *discourse* about the Orient and Africa, not on the Orient and Africa in themselves. Christopher Miller points to "an unresolvable tension between a pseudo-object projected onto the void and a real object that bears the same name: Africa" (xi). Since Amazonia has proven more elusive, my task is simplified. I can simply focus on the stories regarding the Amazons without having to be too concerned about the referent of the stories.

We should examine one other aspect of the three axes before we leave the topic. Foucault uses these axes to take issue with the "repressive hypothesis" (*Hist. Sex.* 1. 10). This is the hypothesis that power and knowledge have combined to repress sexuality since the Enlightenment, especially during the Victorian era.

> We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age [seventeenth century], it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost. (*Hist. Sex.* 1. 5)

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Foucault's method is to search for patterns of production rather than of repression.

> In short, I would like . . . to search instead for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure), of the production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge (which often cause mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions to circulate); I would like to write the history of these instances and their transformations. (*Hist. Sex*. 1. 12)

One could view the Amazon myth in purely repressive terms, analyzing how it has been used oppressively. While the Amazon myth has functioned in repressive ways, it has also functioned in productive ones. I therefore analyze both general uses of Amazon myths.

Edward Said has adapted Foucault's theory of discursive systems to analyze a system of discourse he calls "Orientalism" (Said 3). Amazons have frequently been located in the Orient, contributing to the image of the Orient as exotic and barbaric. The term "discourse" is important to the knowledge axis; however, it is also "persistently ambiguous" as Christopher Miller notes (61). Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* is the basis of Miller's approach of studying "conditions of possibility rather than intended meanings" (Miller 61). This approach tends to focus on the *langue*, or the "grammar" that makes communication possible, and to take the focus away from the *parole*, or the individual utterance and its thought content.[1] However, both Miller

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[1]For a discussion of *langue* and *parole* as the constituent parts of *langage*, see Saussure 7-15.

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and Foucault (in his later writings) also focus on what has been said and the underlying thought.

According to Said, Orientalism "is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question" (3). The knowledge of Orientalism is interrelated to the project of colonialism, justifying and advancing the process of annexing the Orient (38-39, 85). Lowe has refined Said's theory somewhat by arguing that Orientalism is not "monolithic" (4).

> Rather, I argue for a conception of orientalism as heterogeneous and contradictory; to this end I observe, on the one hand, that orientalism consist [*sic*] of an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites, and on the other, that each of these orientalisms is internally complex and unstable. (5)

Africa has been another traditional location for Amazons. Christopher Miller has used Said's Orientalism in the development of his own theory of "Africanist discourse" (Miller 14-16). If the Orient is the negative of the positive image of Europe, then Africa is the nullity that is neither (15). Africanist discourse has professed ignorance of Africa as vehemently as Orientalism has professed knowledge about the Orient, although there has been no "real difference in European knowledge of the two places" (Miller 20). Africanist discourse swings between two polarities of representing Africa: "Other-as-dream" and "Other-as-night-mare" (25). Authors from the time of Homer have presented Africa as a locus for "delight," a place where dreams come true (24). But starting in

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antiquity, authors have also represented Africa as a locus for horror, a revolting site "of virtueless slaves, of speechless savages with illicit desires, sunk below the level of humanity, squeaking of heresy and sin" (25). The Amazon myth frequently evokes both the dream and the nightmare, the delight and the horror.

As noted above, Amazons have long been associated both with Africa and with the Orient. The earliest reference to Amazons is in *The Iliad*, wherein Priam told Helen of a previous encounter with the Amazons in Phrygia, located in Asia Minor (Homer 3. 184-190). Diodorus located Themiskyra, the capital of the Amazons, on the banks of the Thermodon River in Pontus, which is on the south shore of the Black Sea (Diodorus 4. 16), yet he also placed Amazons in Libya (3. 55. 3).

Amazons make appearances in Orientalist and Africanist discourses, but unlike Africa and the Orient, Amazons do not have a discourse of their own. Instead, the Amazon myth has been useful in several discursive systems, including those just mentioned. Despite the disparity of systems in which they have appeared, the Amazons have served a limited range of functions within those systems, for the Amazon myth lends itself to issues of gender identity, cultural identity, and even racial identity, these being the axiological contradictions that underlie the Amazon myth. It thus tends to be a *parole* with a circumscribed scope of meanings whatever the *langue* in which it appears, dealing as it does with the issue

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of what happens when women move out of prescribed roles and defy established hierarchies.

In 1936, Arthur O. Lovejoy wrote the influential *The Great Chain of Being* cataloguing the history of the hierarchical idea of the Great Chain of Being. Page duBois uses Lovejoy as a starting point for her *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being*. The main focus of duBois' work is on the analogical thinking of the Greeks before the fifth century B.C. She does deal some with the hierarchical thinking and the nascent chain of being that replaced analogy and polarity as the basis for communal identity in the fourth century B.C. (132-133). Within this hierarchy, free women were inferior to men but superior to slaves and animals (152). Although duBois does not extensively examine the ways the Amazon myth functioned in hierarchical analyses, later uses of the Amazon myth are frequently related to the chain of being, with the Amazons usually being seen as breaches of the proper hierarchy.

The foregoing approaches to analyzing the Amazon myth are not the only ones that I could enumerate, but they do allow me to address some major uses of the myth that I treat in the subsequent chapters. Chapter two is an analysis of the functions of the Amazon myth in ancient Greece. Because no ancient texts have very extensive treatments of the myth, the second chapter is organized thematically. In addition to narratives and depictions of conflicts with Amazons, the ancients produced "sociological" speculation about the social organization of the

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Amazons and linguistic speculation about the origin of their name. Popular etymologies deriving the term *Ἀμαζών* (*Amazon*) either from *ἀ-μαζός* ("lacking a breast") or from *ἀ-μᾶζα*, ("without barley cakes") demonstrate the ways in which ancient Greek men used their "knowledge" about the Amazons to construct their own identities, portraying the Amazon society as the negation their own.

Theories about the social organization of the Amazons emphasized the Amazons' status as the negation of Greek patriarchal institutions and mores. Greek antecedents to Orientalist and Africanist discourses already exhibited the tendency to define other cultures in terms of what they lacked in comparison to one's own culture. Nevertheless, the Amazon myth reveals anxieties Greeks had regarding their own culture. The Amazons' anonymous mating rituals led to the loss of any real father-son connection, but even the patrilineal Greeks, with all their safeguards meant to guarantee the father-son link, could not be completely sure about paternity. The Amazons were examples of what Greek society could become if women were allowed too much autonomy. In narratives of encounters with Amazons, inevitable Greek victories neutralized the Amazon threat. If the Amazons threatened a Greek male's physical safety and his patrilineal identity, they also provided him a safe path to heroic stature through his fantasy about conquering them. This focus on male heroism contrasted with a potential interpretation, one that would make the Amazons a positive example for women. Such subversive

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interpretations remained latent in the classic era. Even when the myth was used to elevate the female figure of Athena by means of the depiction of the Amazonomachy on the shield of Athena Parthenos, the effect of the shield did not identify Athena with the Amazons, but contrasted her to them. Athena, like men, proved her stature by opposing the Amazons. This "shield effect" also served to remove a taint that could adhere to Athena by projecting it onto the Amazons. This taint was the potential of seeing Athena as a challenge to patriarchy; her opposition to the Amazon demonstrated her loyalty to patriarchy. The interpretation of the Amazon myth as a positive model for women would not occur until a woman author took up the subject in the medieval era.

The third chapter analyzes the uses of the Amazon myth in the medieval era. This chapter is not organized around the functions of the myth; instead, the methodology is to examine a select number of texts that deal with the myth at some length. The first section of the chapter is a consideration of Boccaccio's *Teseida* and Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," a condensed version of the *Teseida*. Both Boccaccio and Chaucer applied the idea of the chain of being to the Amazon myth, with the understanding that Amazons represented a breach of a divinely ordained hierarchy encompassing the universe, society, and the individual. This analysis is based in part on Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*. Lovejoy's subtitle, *A Study of the History of an Idea*, reveals his focus on what Foucault would later label the truth axis. Nevertheless, the chain of

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being also had implications for the ethical axis and the power axis. The authors used the chain to justify Theseus' exercise of power in the conquest of the Amazons. The Amazons' rebellion against their proper status as secondary to men (a breach of the ethical axis) was reason enough for Theseus to attack. Furthermore, Theseus established his own heroic ethos through the conquest. However, even the chain of being was open to various interpretations.

Christine de Pizan offered a contradictory interpretation of the Amazon myth in view of the chain of being. The second section of the third chapter examines Christine's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Christine built her City of Ladies as a version of the great chain; she built from the foundation to the walls to the roof to the pinnacle, the Virgin Mary. Throughout the work, Christine celebrated the accomplishments of women, including Amazons. In Christine's work, Amazons did not defy the proper hierarchy; indeed, as a city of ladies themselves, they were a model Christine used in creating her City of Ladies. The first woman to leave extant writings about the Amazons, Christine was also the first author to make Amazons a positive model for women.

The fourth chapter is an examination of the use of the Amazon myth during the Renaissance. The first section examines a variety of documents centering around exploration and adventure. Some of the documents considered were written as accounts of exploration; others were composed as adventure fantasies. These two types of literature fed

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each other, as fantasy incited exploration and tales of exploration excited further fantasies. Explorers projected on the New World their "knowledge" of Amazons. Amazons served as a way of interpreting unfamiliar cultural phenomena the explorers encountered. Explorers implied that the Amazons in New World showed that it was barbaric, and also that it was feminine, in contrast to the civilized, masculine European culture that backed the exploration. If the New World was a feminine counterpart to masculine Europe, then it was naturally subordinate to Europe. Such beliefs justified European incursions into the New World. Such incursions garnered further support from the familiar ethical arguments that Amazons were rebelling against their proper place in the social hierarchy and that men could establish their heroic stature by conquering Amazons. Fantasies and supposedly serious accounts of the New World included tales about the Amazons' fabulous wealth and their dionysian mating rituals, fueling the desire of young men (and even the not-so-young Walter Raleigh) to join in the search for Amazons.

In addition to providing a way to think about outside cultures, the Amazon myth provided ways to think about developments closer to home. The second section of chapter four focuses on such uses of the myth in Elizabethan England. As a woman ruler, Queen Elizabeth could be viewed as an Amazon overturning proper patriarchal structures. Shortly before she came to power, John Knox made such an argument about the rule of women, especially Catholic women, in *The first blast of the*

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trumpet against the monstruous regiment of women. In it, he presents the rule of women (including Amazons) as being contrary to law, custom, nature, and providence. Elizabeth's response to Knox's blast was less than enthusiastic, and most other writers in English domains took other approaches. There were few contemporary comparisons of Elizabeth to Amazons; instead, she was usually contrasted to them. Like Athena in ancient Athens, Elizabeth (and her analogues) served patriarchal social structures and held the Amazons in check in works such as Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Elizabeth thus substituted for the conquering male rather than filling the role of the Amazon. The unsettling aspects of her position as a woman ruler could thereby be projected onto the "bad" Amazons, who would serve as scapegoats for Elizabeth. Elizabeth could prove her goodness by putting the Amazons in their place.

The fifth chapter is an examination of the Amazon myth in the Romantic and Victorian eras. The first section investigates Kleist's *Penthesilea*. In the play, Penthesilea and Achilles have a love-hate relationship that leads them to rebel against their own social mores and ultimately to destroy each other. Kleist changes the traditional story by having Penthesilea defeat and eat Achilles. He also changes the meaning of the story. In his hands, the Amazon state is just as rational in its structure as the Greek state. The primary contrast is not between the Greeks and the Amazons, although that is still present, but between the

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demands of their states and the needs of the individual, between the requirements of reason and the urges of passion. Neither Penthesilea nor Achilles can accommodate themselves to the requirements of the state; therefore, they become rebels against their states in the pursuit of their passions. Authors who wish to present a heroic Amazon usually first purge from them elements that might be objectionable. Kleist is the only author examined who preserved the objectionable elements of the Amazon myth yet made an Amazon the hero of the tale.

The second section of the fifth chapter focuses on the work of J. J. Bachofen and Richard F. Burton. Both of these men wrote of Amazons as representing primitive cultures: Bachofen in the remote past and Burton in remote Africa. The static, vertical hierarchy of the chain of being had been transformed in their time to a temporal, horizontal one, with the lower and more primitive developing into the higher and more evolved. Bachofen saw much to admire in the Amazons, for they were an advance over earlier social organizations; however, their traditional faults meant they must give way to higher social organizations in which patriarchy replaced matriarchy. Burton brought together the Amazon myth and nineteenth-century orientalism when he described the "Amazons" (quotation marks his; *Mission* 3: vii) he encountered in Dahomey. While he decided that these women troops were not true Amazons, they did serve as important symbols to him. Their barbarity, cruelty, and ugliness demonstrated that their culture was far down from his on the evolutionary

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scale. The Ugly Amazon was Burton's contribution to the myth; earlier Amazons had always been beautiful, and he did not hide his disappointment to find his expectations in this regard unmet. The masculinity of the women, the effeminacy of the men, and the general backwardness and brutality of the nation not only made it ethically inferior to Europeans; these characteristics provided justification for the European conquest of the country. Indeed, in the 1893 edition made twenty-nine years after the original book, such a conquest had taken place. Isabel Burton wrote a preface in which she approvingly noted the French occupation of the land and the opportunity they now had to make it a better place (3: xii).

The final section of chapter five centers on an Amazonian culture that was already utopian when Western civilization arrived. *Herland*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a utopian novel about a land of women who have been separated from men for 2,000 years when discovered on a mountain plateau by three American explorers. It is also a satire of the adventure-novel genre, exposing the cultural and gender stereotypes of the adventurers and the shortcomings of their American culture. Gilman transformed the traditional Amazonian society into a utopia of the sort she envisioned for America: egalitarian, socialist, evolutionary. She believed evolution occurred through cooperation rather than through competition. In contrast to Bachofen's belief that matriarchy must give way to patriarchy in the advance of society, she believed that patriarchy

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must give way to a humanist society, one that valued men and women equally. In contrast to Burton's ugly, cruel, primitive Amazons, Gilman presented a society of women who were comely, kind, and culturally and scientifically advanced. Gilman undermined the traditional way of defining oneself as a hero through the military or sexual conquest of an Amazon. Nor did she simply move the woman into the role of the conquering hero or the defending heroine. Instead, she effected a shift from individual to corporate heroism. The Herlander women defeated the men easily, not through superlative individual effort, but through group cohesion. Thus Gilman used the Amazon myth, but altered it extensively to suit her own purposes. She satirized the use of the Amazon myth to convey stereotypes about culture and gender, a function of the myth that reached back to its earliest occurrences. It is to those early occurrences that I now turn my attention.

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CHAPTER 2

CLASSIC AMAZONS

Introduction

The Greeks did not have a single coherent form of the Amazon myth, nor did any Greek writer give a complete account of the Amazons, nor does any extant work from the period focus primarily on the myth. Since most of the material on the Amazons from the period occurs in scattered allusions and brief accounts, this chapter is arranged thematically around the various functions of the myth rather than being arranged according to the separate works of literature and art that touch on the myth. In the classic era, the myth functioned to establish the identity of a hero by providing him with a worthy opponent. It also helped establish the identity of the civilized Greek male by presenting the Amazon as his antipode. If the Amazon was the antithesis of the Greek, she became an analogue of Greek enemies such as the Persians. The ancients reinforced patriarchal precepts by exhibiting the Amazons' mating patterns as threats to the father-son relationship. The Amazons thereby became emblems of what women must not be allowed to become. They were also emblems of what Athena was not. As a

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female warrior, Athena could have been seen as a threat to patriarchal principles. Her opposition to women with matriarchal tendencies, such as the Amazons and Clytemnestra, helped confirm her status as a supporter of patriarchy. Despite such uses of the myth, the myth always had the latent potential that women would embrace it as a positive alternative to their roles in society. Quintus Smyrnaeus presented this option for the first time only to dismiss it, but it was an option that would resurface for more serious consideration in later eras.

Overview of the Myth

A detailed reconstruction of the Amazon myth lies beyond the scope of this paper. Roscher's *Ausführliches Lexikon* (1: 267-279) and Pauly and Wissowa's *Real-Encyclopädie* (1: 1753-1789) are the standard works describing the ancient references to the Amazons. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* contains an abbreviated account of the Amazons in English (Rose 50). Bothmer's *Amazons in Greek Art* is a pictorial examination of depictions of Amazons in ancient Greek vase painting and sculpture. The first chapter of Kleinbaum's *The War Against the Amazons* surveys ancient representations of the Amazons (5-38). Tyrrell and duBois analyze the Amazon myth, but neither attempts to survey and piece together all the ancient references to the myth. Sobol does put together a "consensus version" of the Amazon myth based on what most ancient authors believed (14). Constructed from the standard ancient sources, Sobol's account reads like a boy's adventure story, as one would

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expect from the author of the Encyclopedia Brown mystery series (ii). The following excerpts are typical of his narrative.

> The individual Amazon was an exquisite instrument of lethality, combining an inbred ridicule of male-oriented society with a craving for the exhilaration of battle. A pitiless slayer, she liked to kill from a distance with arrows that reached their mark before the victim saw them discharged, arrows that pinioned feet to ground and hands to shield, and impaled torso, neck, and limbs. Even better, she liked to kill at short range with sword, spear, or *bipennis*, the famed Amazonian double-edged ax. (36)

> Hippolyte received Heracles in private audience. To the explanation of his mission she listened abstractedly, for her attention was not in her ears but in her gaze, which roved over the hard wedge of his torso, his muscular limbs, and his curling black beard. Never had she beheld a man like him. Far from resisting his request, she offered her golden girdle freely, as a love gift. (43)

Sobol's prose may be prurient and his imagery redundantly phallic, but his writing does exhibit the violent sexuality that frequently attends the Amazon myth.

The *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* gives a more concise and sober account of the myth. The six expeditions that it catalogues form the core of the Amazon myth (Vinet 221). This section follows the order of Vinet's account; the reader should be aware that this is a simplified order and that several variations from this account exist in the primary sources. The *Dictionnaire* does not give the etiology of the Amazons, who were the offspring of Ares and the nymph Harmonia (Apollonius 2. 989-991). The Amazons received credit for founding several ancient cities such as Ephesus, Smyrna, Cyme, and Myrine

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(Strabo 11. 5. 4). Pausanias reports that Pindar believed the Amazons began the worship of Artemis in Ephesus, but Pausanias thinks that the Amazons simply worshiped at the temple of the Ephesian Artemis as they fled Heracles and Dionysus (7. 2. 7-9).[1] In either case, Amazons were associated with Artemis as her votaries and as her analogues. Thus Diodorus reports that Celaeno, Eurybia, and Phoebe, three Amazons whom Heracles defeated, were hunting companions (*συγκυνηγοί*) of Artemis (4. 16. 3).

Bellerophon had the first encounter with the Amazons, destroying the nation as his third feat for the king of Lycia (Homer 6. 186). He did this by shooting arrows at them from the back of Pegasus, the flying horse (Pindar, *Olympian* 13. 84-131). Although the accounts generally relate that a particular hero or army destroyed the Amazon nation, the Amazons are always available again for the next generation of heroes. Early sources were either unaware of or unconcerned with such inconsistencies. Thus when Priam was in Phrygia by the Sangarius River, he witnessed the second contact with the Amazons (Homer 3. 181-189). This encounter may possibly correspond with part of a larger campaign in which the Libyan Amazon queen Myrina led a force of Amazons through Greater Phrygia (part of modern Turkey) to the Mediterranean Sea

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[1]The Ephesian Artemis was a fertility goddess, but the Olympian Artemis was the virginal goddess of the hunt. The Amazons were associated with both Artemides, nor are the two versions of Artemis always clearly distinguished.

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(Diodorus 3. 55. 5). In an earlier campaign, Myrina had conquered Atlantis (3. 54).

Heracles made the third contact when he led a force to assault the Amazons' capital, Themiscyra, on the Thermodon River in an effort to capture the girdle of Hippolyta. According to Apollodorus, this was his ninth labor (Apollodorus 2. 5. 9). Hippolyta agreed to give Heracles her girdle, also known as the belt of Ares, but at the instigation of Hera the other Amazons attacked Heracles' ship. He killed Hippolyta, defeated the Amazons, gave Antiope as a war bride to Theseus, and sailed away (Apollodorus 2. 5. 9, Diodorus 4. 16). Diodorus locates another nation of Amazons in Libya; these Amazons had their ascendancy earlier than the Amazons of the Thermodon region. They lived in an integrated society of both women and men, with the genders reversing the roles they played in Greek society. Heracles had also destroyed the Libyan Amazons when he constructed his pillars there (Diodorus 3. 55. 3).

In the fourth encounter, the Amazons around the Thermodon retaliated against Theseus' enslavement of Antiope (or Hippolyta according to other sources) by raising an army and invading Attica. They pitched camp on the Areopagus of Athens at the place eponymously called "the Amazoneum." Antiope (or Hippolyta), who had by then given Theseus a son named Hippolytus, died by Theseus' side fighting the Amazons. Plutarch dismisses a conflicting version in which Theseus

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replaced Antiope with Phaedra, whereupon Antiope and the Amazons attacked Theseus and were defeated by Heracles (*Theseus* 28).

The fifth conflict with the Amazons occurred after the death of Hector when Penthesilea arrived to lift the siege at Troy. Achilles killed her in combat and then killed Thersites, who was mocking him for supposedly loving Penthesilea. Of the authors who treated this event, Arctinus apparently made this love a slander invented by Thersites (Proclus ii), but Quintus made Achilles' love real, starting a romance that could not live (1. 671-674). In the sixth encounter, the Amazons attacked the island of Leucas near the mouth of the Danube. The ghost of Achilles, whose ashes Thetis had deposited there, appeared menacingly, scaring the women and their horses (Philostratus 56. 11-57. 17).

There is a seventh incident not included in the *Dictionnaire* that enjoyed widespread circulation even though it did not involve a battle: the putative liaison between Alexander and the queen of the Amazons. Plutarch lists fourteen sources that mention this rumored incident (*Alexander* 46). According to Diodorus, the queen's name was Thalestris, and she came to Alexander in Hyrcania. When Alexander asked why she was there, she revealed that she had come so they could "make a baby" (*παιδοποιία*), for he was the greatest man of that day and she the most distinguished woman. Alexander was exceedingly pleased (*πέρας ἡσθεὶς*) at this suggestion, and he spent thirteen days having an affair

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(*συμπεριφέρω*[2]) with the queen (Diodorus 17. 77. 1-3). Plutarch dismisses this account as spurious, basing his judgment on the response of Alexander's general Lysimachus when he heard the story. According to Plutarch, when Lysimachus heard this story from Onesicritus, he smiled and asked, "And where was I then?" ("*Καὶ ποῦ,*" *φάναι,* "*τότε ἤμην ἐγώ;*" 46).

One final consideration for the overview is the domestic situation of the Amazons. The Greeks posited several ways that Amazons could interact with men (Mayor and Ober 73-74). A model that was very popular in later eras was the one wherein the Amazons lived separately from the Gargarians, an all-male tribe. For two months in the spring, the two tribes met in the mountain that separated them. During this time the men and women mated at random. The Amazons kept the female children, and they distributed the male children randomly among the Gargarians because no one knew who any boy's father was (Mayor and Ober 73; Strabo 11. 5. 1).

A second model negated the patriarchal model in a different way through simple role reversal; the women subjugated the men or killed them if necessary (Mayor and Ober 73). The Amazon nation consisted of both genders living together in a matriarchy. The women lived like "husbands," and the men lived like "wives." The queen declared herself

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[2]Literally *συμπεριφέρω* means "to carry about with." Cf. the English idiom "to carry on with."

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the Daughter of Ares (*θυγάτηρ Ἄρεος*), decreed laws, and led the all-female army into battle. Women remained celibate until their time of service was over, after which time they married. Men lived lives of humiliation (*ταπείνωσις*) and slavery (*δουλεία*); that is, their role in society was similar to that of women in Greek society. They spun wool, tended to the household duties that belonged to women, and obeyed orders their wives gave. Women did not permit men to hold office, to participate in affairs of state, or to exercise free speech (*παρρησία*) addressing political issues, lest men become insubordinate. Women further maintained their superiority over Amazon men by mutilating the arms and legs of male babies. They seared the right breast of infant girls so they would be better warriors when they matured (Mayor and Ober 73; Diodorus 2. 45. 1-4; 3. 53. 1-3). Diodorus also records an alternate version wherein the Amazons seared both breasts of infant girls; men took care of infants by giving them milk and specially prepared baby food (3. 53. 3). Either way, the mutilation of both men and women indicates how unnatural Diodorus considered this arrangement.

The third model was in some ways the most subversive due to its egalitarian alternative to the Greek agonistic expectation of dominate-or-be-dominated (Mayor and Ober 73). According to Herodotus, after the Greeks had defeated the Amazons at the Thermodon river, they sailed away with three ships loaded with as many of the Amazons they had captured as possible. The Amazons killed their captors but were unable

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to pilot the ships. Grounded in Scythia, the Amazons left the ships, acquired some horses, and skirmished with the Scythians. When the Scythians learned that their foes were women, they sent out an equivalent force of men with instructions just to shadow the Amazons, not to fight them. As the Scythians planned, fraternization followed, and the two camps soon merged. The Scythians asked the Amazons to return home with them, but the Amazons refused because they were unwilling to stay indoors and do "women's works" (*ἔργα γυναικήια*, Herodotus 4. 114) like Scythian women. The Scythian youths agreed to gather their possessions and leave Scythia with the Amazons. Together the two groups founded Sauromatia, and the women lived as equals to the men, hunting with their men or alone, going to war, and dressing like the men. No virgin could marry until she had killed one of the enemy. Sauromatians spoke an imperfect form of Scythian because the women never learned it well (Herodotus 4. 110-117).

A final model for relations between Amazons and men was the one the Greeks preferred: the subjugation of the Amazons by death or forcible integration into patriarchal society. Most of the incidents described above ultimately involve one or both of these outcomes. Herodotus shows the risk of attempting to enslave Amazons; the Amazons killed their Greek captors (4. 110). Kleinbaum explains men's motive for such a risky endeavor.

> If the Amazon excels in military prowess, then the skill of the hero who defeats her is even more extraordinary. If she is

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> beautiful and pledged to virginity, then the sexual power of the hero who wins her heart and her bed is without measure. (1)

The hero who killed an Amazon inherited the glory (*κῦδος*) and honor (*τιμή*) she had won in her victories, just as the Greeks claimed for themselves the glory and honor of Amazonia as a whole after they defeated the Amazons. The hero who defeated and captured an Amazon also had the opportunity to produce superlative offspring by her, as Theseus and Antiope (or Hippolyta) had Hippolytus. If the Greeks could define themselves as heroes through their conquest of an Amazon, they could also define themselves in contrast to Amazons; they were what Amazons were not. They had what the Amazons lacked.

"A" Is for "Other"

> *Je parlerai donc de la lettre* a. (Derrida 41)
>
> *ἔφασκε γάρ, φασί, τριῶν τούτων ἕνεκα χάριν ἔχειν τῇ Τύχῃ· πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐγενόμην καὶ οὐ θηρίον, εἶτα ὅτι ἀνὴρ καὶ οὐ γυνή, τρίτον ὅτι Ἕλλην καὶ οὐ βάρβαρος.*
>
> For it is said that he said he thanked Fortune for three things: "First, that I was born a human and not an animal, then, that I was born a man and not a woman, third, a Greek and not a barbarian." (Thales, qtd. in Diogenes Laertius 1. 33)[3]

---

[3]This saying was "current in different forms among the Persians, Greeks and Jews" (Oepke 777). In the Jewish version, the male Jew thanks God that he is a Jew, not a gentile; free, not a slave; and a man, not a women. Originating with Rabbi Jehuda ben Elaj (ca. A.D. 150), it is still found in some modern Jewish prayer-books (Oepke 777). Jesus satirizes this type of prayer in his parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18: 9-14).

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The alpha privitive prefix serves the same function in Greek that the prefix "in-" serves in Latin and "un-" serves in English; they all negate the meaning of the word to which they are attached. A scholium to the *Iliad* 3. 189 gives two possible etymologies based on the alpha privitive:

> *ὠνομάσθησιν δὲ ἢ παρὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν τὸν ἕτερον τῶν μαζῶν (ἐπυράκτουν γὰρ αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐμποδίζεσθαι ἐν τῇ τοξείᾳ) ἢ παρὰ τὸ μὴ χρῆσθαι μάζαις, χελώναις δὲ καὶ σαύροις καὶ ὄφεσιν.* (Erbse 1. 393-394)
>
> They are called [Amazons] either because they do not have one of the breasts (for they cauterize it so it will not impede them in archery) or because they do not use barley-cakes but tortoises and lizards and snakes.

Popular etymologies derived *Ἀμαζών* (*Amazon*) either from *ἀ-μαζός*, meaning "lacking a breast," or from *ἀ-μάζα*, meaning "without barley cakes" (Roscher 271). Such etymologies "represent the Amazons as women who are lacking in some essential" (Blok 24-25). The sense of privation serves an important function in Greek metonymic self-definition with regard to the Amazons.

> The metonymical model most frequently occurs in connection with naming. One group distinguishes itself from another by lifting up some cultural feature, expressed as the lack of some familiar cultural trait, the use of some unfamiliar cultural object (e.g. "fish-eaters," "garlic-eaters"), the presence of some marked physical feature (e.g. "whites," "blacks"), or the characterization of difference by naming the other as a non-human species. (Smith 2)

Page duBois bases her argument about Greek attitudes toward Amazons on the Greek oppositions "Greek/barbarian, Male/female, Human/animal" (4). We can think of the latter terms as the negation of the former ones: non-Greek, non-male, non-human. Page duBois accounts

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for this animalistic view of Amazons (and women in general) by what she labels the "analogical" (3) thinking of Greeks before the fifth century B.C. "in the fifth century, the earliest formulations about difference establish a series of polarities which are linked by analogy" (4). The Greek male defined his self-concept through a series of polarities: "not-animal, not-barbarian, not-female" (4). DuBois derives these polarities from Thales, who was thankful that he was not an animal, a woman, or a barbarian (6). Such thinking linked women to barbarians and animals by analogy. The links between Amazons and Centaurs in myth and art exemplify this analogical thinking. Amazons and Centaurs each refused to recognize the cultural endogamy by which Greek men defined themselves (41-42), and hence were "other."

Jonathan Smith has described the way that we define the "other." Smith postulates "three basic models of the 'other'" (2).

> (1) The 'other' represented metonymically in terms of the presence or absence of one or more cultural traits. (2) The 'other' represented topographically in terms of center and periphery. (3) The 'other' represented linguistically and/or intellectually in terms of intelligibility. (2)

The Greeks represented Amazons as other in all three of these ways. In metonymic terms, the Greeks defined the Amazons by their lack of barley-cakes *ἀ-μᾶζα* (*a-maza*) or by their lack of a breast *ἀ-μαζός* (*a-mazos*). The Amazons' lack in these areas distinguished them from the more civilized Greeks. The Greeks also used the linguistic model in defining the Amazons; when Amazons intermarried with the Scythians to

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form the Sauromatian nation, the new nation spoke an impure form of Scythian because the Amazons never properly learned the language (Herodotus 4. 117). The topographical model has to do with geographical otherness.

> Perhaps the most basic sense of the 'other' is generated by the opposition IN/OUT. That is to say, a preoccupation with boundary, with limit (in the primary sense of threshold) seems fundamental to our construction of ourselves and our relations to others. (1)

Smith follows Robert Redfield in finding two fundamental "binary oppositions" in the process of defining a culture's boundaries: "WE/THEY and HUMAN/NOT-HUMAN" (Smith 2). While all cultures may go through such a process of defining the self and the other, the ability to project one culture's view on another culture and enforce it reflects the relative power of those cultures. Said calls this the "configurations of power" that accompany "ideas, cultures, and histories" (5).

Additional polarities at work in the Greek attitude toward the Amazons are implicit in etymologies of the name. Popular etymology has traditionally derived the term *Ἀμαζών* (*Amazōn*) from *ἀ-μαζός* (*a-mazos*), meaning "without a breast." Women who removed a breast to be better fighters would be denying their maternal role (Roscher 1. 1. 270-271). The two major popular etymologies for the term *Ἀμαζών* are metonymic. Blok observes that neither ancient nor modern etymologies have successfully determined the origin of the word. Such etymologies have added new elements to the myth rather than uncovering previously-

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existing elements (Blok 24). For example, no ancient statues or vases depict Amazons lacking a breast. "It should be noted that these representations of the Amazons, for example as women lacking one or both breasts or with an unusual diet, are the result of the etymology, not vice versa" (24). What is important about the etymologies is that they were considered plausible based on what contemporary etymologists thought about the Amazons (Blok 24).

The popular etymology deriving *Ἀμαζών* from *ἀ-μαζός*, meaning "lacking a breast," focused on the absence of the "marked physical feature" of a breast (Apollonius 2. 5. 9; Diodorus 2. 45. 3; Smith 2). The etymology deriving the term from *ἀ-μᾶζα* (without barley cakes) distinguished the Greeks from the nomadic Amazons by stressing the Amazons' lack of agriculture in contrast to the agriculture of Greece. Aeschylus makes such a distinction in *The Suppliant Maidens* when he has King Pelasgus apply the epithet "meat eating" (*κρεοβόρος*) to the Amazons, as opposed to the bread eating Greeks (287; Tyrrell 21). In this context, Aeschylus implies that Amazons behave like carnivores. His implication relegates them to the negative term of all three of Thales' polarities: they are female barbarian animals. The scholium on the *Iliad* 3. 189 that has the Amazons eating *χελώναις δὲ καὶ σαύροις καὶ ὄφεσιν* (tortoises and lizards and snakes) rather than domesticated animals emphasizes the Amazons' ferality. Not only are they animals; they are carnivores. Diodorus follows the popular etymology of his day in

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asserting that the Amazons seared the right beast of infant girls to make them better warriors when they matured, but he lends some credence to the *ἀ-μάζα* theory when he records that the Libyan Amazons did not use grain (*σῖτος*) at all because they had not discovered it yet (2. 45. 3; 3. 53. 5).

Smith notes that such metonymies are neither as simple as they seem nor "merely exercises in domination by the power of naming" (3). They reveal points of anxiety within a culture. The Sumerians defined the Amorites as "people-who-know-not-grain" in contrast to themselves as "people-who-know-grain" (3). Yet this was not a simple assertion of Sumerian preeminence, for the Sumerians had at one time not known grain and were always in danger of losing grain to drought, flood, pestilence, fire, spoilage, or war (3). "The Sumerians are but a generation away from wildness; ferality is, therefore, an ever present possibility" (3-4). *The Epic of Gilgamesh* reveals the ambivalent status of the contrast between knowing grain and not knowing grain.

> [Enkidu] was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land.
>
> Enkidu ate grass in the hills with the gazelle and jostled with wild beasts at the water-holes; he had joy of the water with the herds of wild game. (Sandars 61)
>
> There all the shepherds crowded round to see him, they put down bread in front of him, but Enkidu could only suck the milk of wild animals. He fumbled and gaped, at a loss what to do or how he should eat the bread and drink the strong wine. (65)

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Enkidu is an ambiguous figure. He does not know grain, yet his hair "waved like the hair of Nisaba, the goddess of corn" (61). He appears to be completely wild, yet he gradually becomes civilized. Furthermore, Aruru created him at Anu's behest as a companion for the king, Gilgamesh. "'Let it be as like him as his own reflection, his second self, stormy heart for stormy heart'" (60). Not only is Enkidu tamed, he in turn tames Gilgamesh through their conflict and ensuing friendship (60, 67).

If we apply Smith's argument about the Sumerians to the Greeks, then the Amazons can contrast to the Greeks in a way similar to the way that the Amorites contrast with the Sumerians (Smith 3). The Amazons are not simply the opposite of Greek patriarchy; they are also emblems of what Greek patriarchy could become (Tyrrell 64-87).

Grain served a function in Greek (especially Athenian) self-definition similar to the function it served in Sumerian self-definition. The title *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* that Frazer gives to two volumes of *The Golden Bough* reflects his awareness of the importance of the contrast between wildness and agriculture in ancient thought. He discusses the importance of grain to Athens, which claimed grain as Demeter's gift to it and its gift to the world (1: 53-57, 72-73). Similarly, Athens claimed the olive tree as Athena's gift to Athens and thence to the world (Apollodorus 3. 14. 1).

The Homeric Hymn "To Demeter" gives an early account of Demeter's gift of grain. After Hades had taken her daughter Persephone

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to the underworld, Demeter wandered the earth searching for Persephone (1-55). After Helios told Demeter where Persephone was, Demeter abandoned Olympus in grief and wandered through the world as an old woman (60-105). Eventually she came to Eleusis, a small town just northwest of Athens (Shepherd, *Atlas* 15). There she stayed with King Celeus and Queen Metaneira and favored them because of their hospitality ("Demeter" 105-210). Due to her grief and anger over losing Persephone, she refused to return to Olympus or to allow grain to grow; instead she remained in the temple Celeus built to her (290-335). Finally the gods reached an arrangement whereby Persephone stayed with Hades one third of the year and with Demeter two thirds of the year (345-435). Demeter thereupon allowed fruit to grow again (470-475). According to this version, barley (*κρῖ*) was already in cultivation; Demeter only interrupted its production (305-310). She revealed her mystery cult to Triptolemus, but her gift was limited to establishing her cultus (470-489).

In later versions, grain was not yet in production when Demeter arrived. She rewarded Eleusis by also revealing the secrets of grain to Triptolemus, who traveled the ancient world spreading the knowledge (Diodorus 5. 68; Apollodorus 1. 5), an ancient counterpart to Johnny Appleseed. In the fourth century B.C., for instance, in a prosopopeia placed in the mouth of Callias, Xenophon represents Triptolemus as the spreader of grain, taking grain to Sparta first and then to the rest of Greece (Xenophon 6. 3. 6).

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Eleusis was the site of the dedication of the first-fruits of grain. In addition to the gifts of its own farmers, Athens received the first-fruits of grain from its allies and tributaries. Codified into law between 446 and 420 B.C., this offering was based on long-standing custom (Frazer 1: 55-56). Isocrates uses the custom to defend his claim that Demeter did come to Athens (*Panegyricus* 30-32). While there, she bestowed two gifts on it.

> . . . *τούς τε καρπούς, οἳ τοῦ μὴ θηριωδῶς ζῆν ἡμᾶς αἴτιοι γεγόνασι, καὶ τὴν τελετήν, ἧς οἱ μετασχόντες περί τε τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς καὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος αἰῶνος ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν*. . . . (*Panegyricus* 28-29)
>
> . . . both grain, which is the reason we do not live like beasts, and the mystic ritual, the partakers of which have sweet hopes about the end of life and all of eternity. . . .

According to Isocrates, agriculture is what distinguishes humans from animals. By implication the Amazons, who knew not barley, would be bestial (*θηριώδης*), for they did not share in the gift that, according to Isocrates, Athens gave to the world (28-29). Yet, as Smith notes, such distinctions are "highly ambivalent" (3).

> Domesticated grain is a fragile achievement, little distant from the wild grasses from which it was bred. It can be taken away, as the fragile cities can, whether by drought, or warfare, or sin, leaving the Sumerian indistinguishable from the Amorite. (3)

So too Demeter could withdraw her gift of grain as she had done once before, leaving the white barley to fall fruitless upon the earth (*πολλὸν δὲ κρὶ λευκὸν ἐτώσιον ἔμπεσε γαίῃ·* "To Demeter" 309). In that case the Greeks, like the Amazons, would be *ἀ-μᾶζα*, "without grain." Demeter is

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also ambiguous in her treatment of Demophon, the son of Celeus and Metaneira. According to the Homeric Hymn "To Demeter" (230-274) and to Apollodorus (1. 5. 1), Demeter tried to make her hosts' baby Demophon immortal by placing him in the fire at night to purge him of his mortal flesh. One night Demeter was interrupted when Demophon's mother Metanira (or a woman named Praxithea, Apollodorus 1. 5. 1) saw the baby in the fire. According to the Homeric hymn "To Demeter," Demeter cast the baby to the ground and prophesied for him a mortal life full of both honor and strife (256-291). According to Apollodorus, however, the baby burned up in the fire and died (1. 5. 2).

In like manner, Thetis tried to make Achilles immortal by placing him in fire at night and anointing him with ambrosia by day (Apollodorus 3. 13. 6). In another version of the myth, Thetis killed her first six sons by throwing them in the fire or into boiling water to see whether they were mortal; Peleus saved the seventh son, Achilles, from the same fate by grabbing him at the last second (Apollodorus 3. 13. 6. n. 4). Even Achilles proved to be "problematic" (J. Redfield 87).

> Homer presents the gods' gift of Thetis to Peleus as rather in a class with Aphrodite's gift of Helen to Paris; in both cases an apparent benefit turns out to be a disaster. Achilles is the only child of this misalliance between nymph and mortal, and he will not live to inherit. (J. Redfield 87)

Like Demeter and Thetis, Amazons both pose a threat to the male child and offer the potential to produce an extraordinary son. The potential arises from the heroic stature of the Amazons and their capacity

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for producing sons of similar stature. Yet even this potential is as problematic as the case of Thetis and Achilles. Hippolytus, the son of Theseus and Antiope, worshipped his mother's goddess, Artemis, rather than his father's patrons. Furthermore, his refusal to worship Aphrodite leads her to engineer his death (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1-28). She could not overlook his refusal to honor (*τιμάω*) her as well as Artemis (8-22). Had she done so, he would have shown that Aphrodite held no power over him and those like him.

One threat of the Amazons arises from their denial of their female, maternal nature (as Greek patriarchy defined that "nature"). The popular etymology deriving *'Αμαζών* from *ἀ-μαζός* focuses on the absence of one or both breasts in the Amazons (Apollonius 2. 5. 9, Diodorus 2. 45. 3; 3. 53. 2-3). Because the Greeks saw the breast as one of the traits that marked women as being distinct from men, the removal of the breast symbolically unmarked the Amazon. However, it simultaneously re-marked her as a virago, a manly woman, for it did not completely remove her female attributes or give her male attributes. The removal of a breast reflected a hierarchy in which military service took precedence over motherhood; fighting was more important than nursing. Details of the myth make this hierarchy explicit. According to Diodorus, Amazons were to maintain their virginity and to serve in the army for a set time before marriage. Furthermore, the men took care of their babies (Diodorus 3. 53. 1-2). Herodotus records that the female Sauromatian descendants of

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Amazon women and Scythian men could not marry until they had killed one of the enemy (Herodotus 4. 117). Both of these stories reveal that motherhood was at best secondary to Amazons. Amazons could deny the maternal role even more severely, mutilating the arms and legs of the boys and searing the breast of the girls (Diodorus 2. 45. 3).

The removal of the breast reflects a broad range of reversals that makes the Amazons a negation of Greek patriarchy. Thus the Amazon was not so much a matriarch as a negative patriarch. By removing a breast, she inscribed on her body a gender reversal that she also inscribed on the mutilated limbs of infant boys (Diodorus 2. 45. 3). The tools of Amazons were the bow, the javelin, and the horse, not the distaff or other "women's tools" (Herodotus 4. 114). However, this reversal was not complete, for Tyrrell notes that Greeks came to represent Amazons as fighting especially with the bow because it was "both beneath a Greek and terrifying to him" (51). The bow was a coward's weapon because it "could kill from a safe distance" (50).

Dress too was ambivalent. While clothes may not make the woman, they did help make the Amazon. Amazons not only wore male's clothing; they wore the clothing associated with that most masculine of activities, warfare. Yet rather than erase the gender of the women who wore it, this clothing frequently accentuated their femininity. For example, Amazons were normally portrayed as fighting with one breast exposed (statues never represent them as having a breast removed).

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Virgil finds in the Amazons an apt metaphor for Camilla and describes her in the familiar fashion.

> At medias inter caedes exsultat Amazon,
> unum exserta latus pugnae, pharetrata Camilla. (*Aeneid* 11. 648-649)
>
> But in the midst of the carnage rages an Amazon, one breast bared for battle, the quiver-wearing Camilla.

Even when fully clothed, Amazons do not lose their feminine appeal. Quintus Smyrnaeus gives a description of Penthesilea dressing in her bower (*μέγαρον*, 1. 157) wherein he juxtaposes her masculine clothing with her feminine allure. The image he evokes is both one of a woman adorning herself and of a warrior preparing for battle. Thus Penthesilea puts golden greaves (*κνημῖδας χρυσέας*) over her silver calves (*κνήμῃσιν ἀργυφέῃσιν*), which they fit well! Then she puts on her glittering breastplate (*παναίολον θώρηκα*), and straps on her sword in its scabbard of silver (*ἄργυρος*) and ivory (*ἐλέφας*). Then she takes up her Amazonian shield (*ἀσπίς*) with its famous crescent-moon shape. This divine (*δῖος*) shield gleams indescribably. Finally she puts on her helmet, which serves not only to protect but also to adorn her head, with a golden mane (*ἐθείρῃσι χρυσέῃσιν*) serving as plumage (1. 140-152). The splendor of armor, a frequent theme in ancient literature, here not only indicates her heroic stature as might be the case with a male hero; it also indicates her desirability as a woman.

We can demonstrate this additional element by comparing the passage under examination to the one from which Quintus ultimately

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derived it, the *Iliad's* description of Achilles as he puts on the armor made by Hephaestus in preparation for the battle with Hector.[4] The passages in the *Iliad* and in Quintus' *Fall of Troy* follow the same order as the two warriors dress: greaves, breastplate, sword, shield, and helmet. Quintus does add a description of the sword's sheath between his descriptions of the sword and of the shield. Most of his terminology is even the same. Quintus substitutes *ἀσπίς*, which is the usual word used to describe the Amazons' crescent shield, for Homer's *σάκος*. Their description of the armor is similar. Achilles has silver greaves, Penthesilea golden ones. Achilles has a silver-studded bronze sword, Penthesilea a scabbard of silver and ivory. Both shields look like the moon, hers in its shape and his in its brilliance. Both helmets have crests of blonde plumage. As they leave, he takes a spear (*ἔγχος*), while she takes two javelins (*ἄκων*) and a battle axe (*βουλήξ*; Quintus 1. 138-156, Homer 19. 367-390).

The differences in these two pictures come mainly in the settings. At dawn, Thetis arrives with the armor to find Achilles and the army mourning Patroclus. Dawn finds Penthesilea rising from her bed (*εὐνή* could refer to any bed, but it could also refer particularly to the marriage

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[4]There is not enough information available on Arctinus' epic, the *Aethiopis*, to know if Quintus relied on that description of Penthesilea, or if he relied directly on the *Iliad* or on some other source that in turn relied on the *Iliad*. Virgil had patterned Camilla after Hippolyta and Penthesilea (11. 661-662), and Quintus equips his Penthesilea with similar equipment: javelin, battle axe, and arrow (Virgil 11. 648-652; Quintus 1. 155-160, 335-341). Virgil, however, does not have a dressing scene for Camilla, and when she dies, she loses her color and her allure (11. 817-819), rather than gaining in her allure as with Quintus' Penthesilea.

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bed). Following the council in which he and Agamemnon reconcile, Achilles dresses along with the rest of the army, a man among men doing manly things. Penthesilea dresses in the intimacy and privacy of her boudoir (*μέγαρον*). Quintus also adds a slight emphasis on the body of Penthesilea that is absent in Homer's description of Achilles. Homer describes the armor of Achilles in great detail, but he does not adorn the body of Achilles with his famous epithets other than to preface the actual dressing by saying that Achilles' eyes blaze, his teeth gnash, and his heart aches (19. 365-367). Such a description adds nothing to Achilles' attractiveness as a mate. Homer mentions Achilles' legs, shoulders, and head, but gives no description of those body parts (19. 370-385). For the most part, Quintus follows Homer's description, but he does add that Penthesilea has silver calves (*κνήμησιν ἀργυφέῃσιν*; 1. 142).

Later, after Penthesilea has fallen in battle and Achilles has removed her helmet, Quintus returns our attention to her womanly appeal. The theme of the fallen hero whom the gods spare from the decay of death is familiar from the *Iliad*, where the gods give Sarpedon (16. 638-675), Patroclus (19. 25-40) and Hector (23. 184-191) special treatment to keep at bay flies, dogs, and scorching sunlight. Quintus alters this theme to focus on the beauty and sexual allure of the fallen heroine. He reveals what we might have surmised, that Aphrodite has added her own charms to Ares' martial gifts to Penthesilea (1. 665-670). Penthesilea's face, beautiful even in death, shines under lovely eyebrows (*ἐξεφάνη*

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ἐρατῆσιν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι καλὰ πρόσωπα / καίπερ ἀποκταμένος; 1. 660-661). The Argives gather round and, smitten by her beauty, wish that their wives might seem like that when they returned home. Achilles mourns most of all (1. 665-670). Thus Quintus explicitly makes his warrior queen feminine as well as masculine.

Finally, even the girdle of Hippolyta receives ambiguous treatment. As a *ζωστήρ*, it was a warrior's belt used to secure body armor (Liddell and Scott). As the belt of Ares (*ζωστὴρ Ἄρεος*), it was the emblem of supremacy among the Amazons, and its removal would connote the Amazons' military surrender (Apollodorus 2. 5. 9). Yet the belt was also portrayed it as a *ζώνη*, the girdle worn by women, the removal of which signified seduction (Roscher 271). In the Heracles-Hippolyta story, Heracles sometimes persuades her to give up the girdle and sometimes takes it by force. Apollodorus reports both versions; Hippolyta freely gives him the girdle, but Heracles then fights the Amazons when other Amazons oppose him (Apollodorus 2. 5. 9). He thus succeeds in the contest both on the level of warrior against warrior and on the level of man against woman.

This is not the case in Quintus' version of the battle between Achilles and Penthesilea. On the level of warrior against warrior, Achilles is able to defeat her and even revile her, but only until he sees her face. Then, on the level of man against woman, her beauty defeats him. Thersites the reviler accuses him of being woman crazy (*γυναιμανής*) and

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of losing his good sense and his heart for the battle (1. 722-740). He pertinently (and impertinently) points out that Penthesilea should have cast her spear through his heart in battle (1. 729-730); this defeat is more ignominious, since it robs him of his valor and wisdom. Achilles responds by hitting Thersites in the head, simultaneously knocking out his teeth and killing him (1. 741-754). This response reveals Achilles' sensitivity to Thersites' accusation. Achilles had lost something to Penthesilea; he had smitten her with his spear, but she had smitten him with her beauty.

According to Foucault's analysis of Greek sexuality, the sexual act is "a contest, as it were, where the male plays the role of instigator and where he should always have the final victory" (*History* 2. 128). Similarly, in the marriage relationship, "while the wife belonged to the husband, the husband belonged only to himself" (2. 147). In Amazonia, the role reversal did not extend just to the reversal of the Greek division of labor; it also reversed the exercise of power. The Amazon queen made men spin wool and undertake other domestic duties, reflecting her power to assign (*προσνέμω*) duties and roles to men as well as women (Diodorus 2. 45. 2). The individual household also reflected this dominance of women over men, where the men were like wives (*γαμέτις*) following the orders of their mates. Women barred men from affairs of state for fear that the men might become presumptuous and rebel (Diodorus 3. 53. 2).

Greek society exhibited a similar anxiety regarding the participation of women in public affairs. In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the Greek women

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go on strike and take over the Acropolis in Athens until the men make peace. For the women, the central issue is the Peloponnesian War. For the men, the central issue is that women would assert their will in the matter. The male chorus complains that if they give in to the women in the least, the women will soon be building and sailing fleets, riding in cavalries, and in general acting like the Amazons depicted on the Poecile Stoa and the Theseum (672-680).

Likewise in Sophocles' *Antigone*, the main issue to Antigone is providing her brother Polyneices with a proper burial (1-50). For Creon, the main issue is the impudence of Antigone in her rebellion against him. He interacts with her on several levels: man to woman, guardian to ward, king to subject, future father-in-law to future daughter-in-law. In any one of these relationships Creon could expect her obedience. With all of them combined, he can scarcely comprehend that she would disobey (390-410). When convinced, he believes that if he lets her go unpunished, she will be the man and not he (484-485). These myths provided outlets for anxieties over the relationship between men and women. "Such myths contrive and reveal again and again a solution to a problem inherent in the social system" (Tyrrell 113).

The invariable solution to the problem posed by the Amazon was the elimination of the Amazon. "[I]n classical Athens [the Amazons] existed expressly to die each time they were seen in paintings or their name was spoken" (Tyrrell 113). The myth always presents the Amazons

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as victorious to a point but always falling in the end before Greek hero(es). The Greek theory of *κῦδος* (kudos, fame, the glory of victory) was that in a contest (*ἀγῶν*), the winner not only got the glory of winning that contest, but also the accumulated kudos of the defeated opponent. Thus while Achilles sulks in his tent, Hector gains kudos throughout the *Iliad* for himself and the Trojans. However, when he defeats Hector, Achilles is able to regain the kudos from Hector and the Trojans (Nagy 63-64, 76-77, 334-336). The Amazons likewise collect victories in order to hand the glory over to the victorious Greek hero.[5]

Kleinbaum notes the ancient tendency to identify with the male hero who conquered the Amazon rather than with the Amazon herself (34-36). In other words, the male who embraced the myth did so at least partly as a way of constructing himself as a hero. It was a positive ethical stance to put down the unethical behavior of the Amazon. It is interesting to note that both explicit references to Amazons in the *Iliad* involve issues of identity. The first reference occurs while Helen and Priam stand on the city wall. At Priam's request, she starts identifying the various leaders of the Greek army. The first man she names is

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[5]Our culture has certain mythic parallels. As any fan of Westerns knows, a gunfighter who wants to make a reputation goes after the aging gunfighter who is already famous and has many notches on his pistol. For example, *My Name Is Nobody* is a tale wherein an unproven, hence nameless, gunfighter (Terence Hill) makes his reputation by staging a fake shootout with retired gunfighter Jack Beauregard (Henry Fonda). Hill makes his name, gets his picture in the paper, and inherits Fonda's kudos, while Fonda slips quietly away on a ship bound for a foreign destination, saving his life by losing his name.

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the various leaders of the Greek army. The first man she names is Agamemnon, leader of the invasion. Priam then addresses Agamemnon in an apostrophe declaring his fortune at leading such an army. He then compares Agamemnon's army favorably to the forces he saw long ago and far away when the Amazons invaded Phrygia (3. 161-190). His encounter with the Amazons has thus become part of his own identity.

In the second reference to the Amazons in the *Iliad*, Diomedes meets Glaucus on the battlefield and asks whether he is human or divine. Glaucus traces his lineage from Aeolus to Sisyphus to Glaucus to Bellerophon to Hippolochus to himself. Out of all these ancestors, Glaucus chooses to give the most information about his grandfather Bellerophon (6. 145-211). He thus uses his illustrious ancestor to construct his own identity. Among Bellerophon's other exploits was his defeat of the Amazons, who were *ἀντιάνειρα* (6. 186). According to the scholia on the *Iliad* 3. 189, *ἀντιάνειρα* meant either that Amazons were equal to men or that they were hostile to them (*αἱ ἴσαι ἢ ἐναντίαι τοῖς ἀνδράσιν*; Erbse 1. 392). Bellerophon's defeat of women who opposed and frequently defeated ordinary men helped establish his identity as a hero. Furthermore, he passed down this heroic heritage to his grandson.

The Romans also claimed an illustrious ancestry; they believed they were descended from Aeneas, a Trojan prince who escaped the city when it fell. Because of the Trojan alliance with the Amazons, Romans exhibited some gratitude to the Amazons for supporting Troy in the Trojan

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War (Virgil, *Aeneid* 1. 693-697, 871-874) and some identification with Amazons. However, for the most part even the Romans identified with the heroes who subdued the Amazons (Kleinbaum 34-36). Kleist later presents an extreme example of this tendency to identify against the Amazons by having Penthesilea and her troops attack both the Trojans and the Greeks when they arrive at Troy (*Penthesilea* Scene 1). Identifying with the heroes who crush the Amazons is an ethical act in that the men who make this identification are trying to view themselves as those heroes. Kleinbaum sees the widespread use of depictions of battles with Amazons, called Amazonomachies, on Roman sarcophagi as an example of such identification as Roman men sought a kind of transcendence through defeating Amazons (1, 34-36).

In turn, some of the heroes who fight the Amazons are easier to identify with than are others. Bellerophon attacked the Amazons from atop Pegasus, a feat that the mere mortal man could not repeat. Heracles was the son of Zeus, was inordinately strong, and became a god himself following his incineration, again not a hero who could well be emulated. Achilles was also the offspring of a union between a mortal and an immortal, and his actions were beyond what the mortal man could hope to accomplish. As the son of Poseidon (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1166-1170), Theseus shared the heroic stature of Achilles and Heracles. However, as the leader of Athens, he accomplished his main defeat of the Amazons not by his prowess in individual battle but by leading the

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victory was not his victory alone, but the victory of an army of mortal soldiers. As a *pater patriae*, his victory was also the victory of Athens through him. Theseus' defeat of the Amazons was so popular partially because in it Everyman gets to defeat the Amazons, a match for the women who are a match for men.[6]

Indeed, the battle of Theseus against the Amazons became a major theme in Athenian art. The Theseum was the first depiction of the battle for the Acropolis. The Stoa Poikile and the Parthenon also depicted the Acropolis Amazonomachy (Tyrrell 10-21). These depictions fed the egos of the builders as well as those of the populace in general. Cimon led Athens to build the Theseum and to install there a set of bones which he took from the island of Scyros and identified as the remains of Theseus. The scenes depicted there stress the heroic stature of Theseus and strike a parallel between Theseus and Cimon (Tyrrell 11). The implication of this project is that Miltiades and Cimon (and their army) have defeated the oriental Persians in the same way that Theseus had mythically defeated the oriental Amazons. The increased interest in Amazons in the period helped Athenians both to celebrate their victories over the Persians and to allay their anxieties over possible future encounters.

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[6]I like to think of this as the Clark Kent effect. Superman wastes time playing Clark Kent while he could be out doing good. Kent is necessary because adolescents can identify with his bumbling and imagine themselves to have super powers under their average appearance (Jewett and Lawrence 59-60).

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Pheidias went a step beyond this as well as a step too far when he carved the shield of the statue of Athena for the Parthenon (figure 1). In the Amazonomachy on the shield, he carved the image of his patron Pericles fighting an Amazon. Pericles is standing at the top of the scene, just to the right of center. Pheidias also included his own image just to the left of "Pericles" on the shield; Pheidias was an old man holding up a stone in both hands. It is possible to over-identify with a myth. This fantasy of achieving immortality through battling Amazons had mortal consequences for Pheidias. He was thrown in jail, where he died soon after, possibly by poison (Plutarch, *Pericles* 31. 4-5).

Like Father, Like Son?

One way in which Amazons denied maternity was also a denial of a fundamental prerequisite of patriarchy, the link between father and son. As noted above (26), Strabo describes an annual mating ritual between the Amazons and the Gargarians. The women and men mated secretly (*ἀφανῶς*) and in darkness (*ἐν σκότει*). Furthermore, they mated randomly, the man who chanced by with the woman who chanced by (*ὁ τυχὼν τῇ τυχούσῃ*). Strabo does not dwell on the pleasures of such a system; instead, he focuses on the negative outcome. The Amazons kept the female children for themselves and brought the boys to the Gargarians. Each boy was distributed to a man who regarded him as his own son because of his ignorance regarding his true sons (*νομίζων υἱὸν διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν*; Strabo 11. 5. 1). Much of Tyrrell's argument focuses on the

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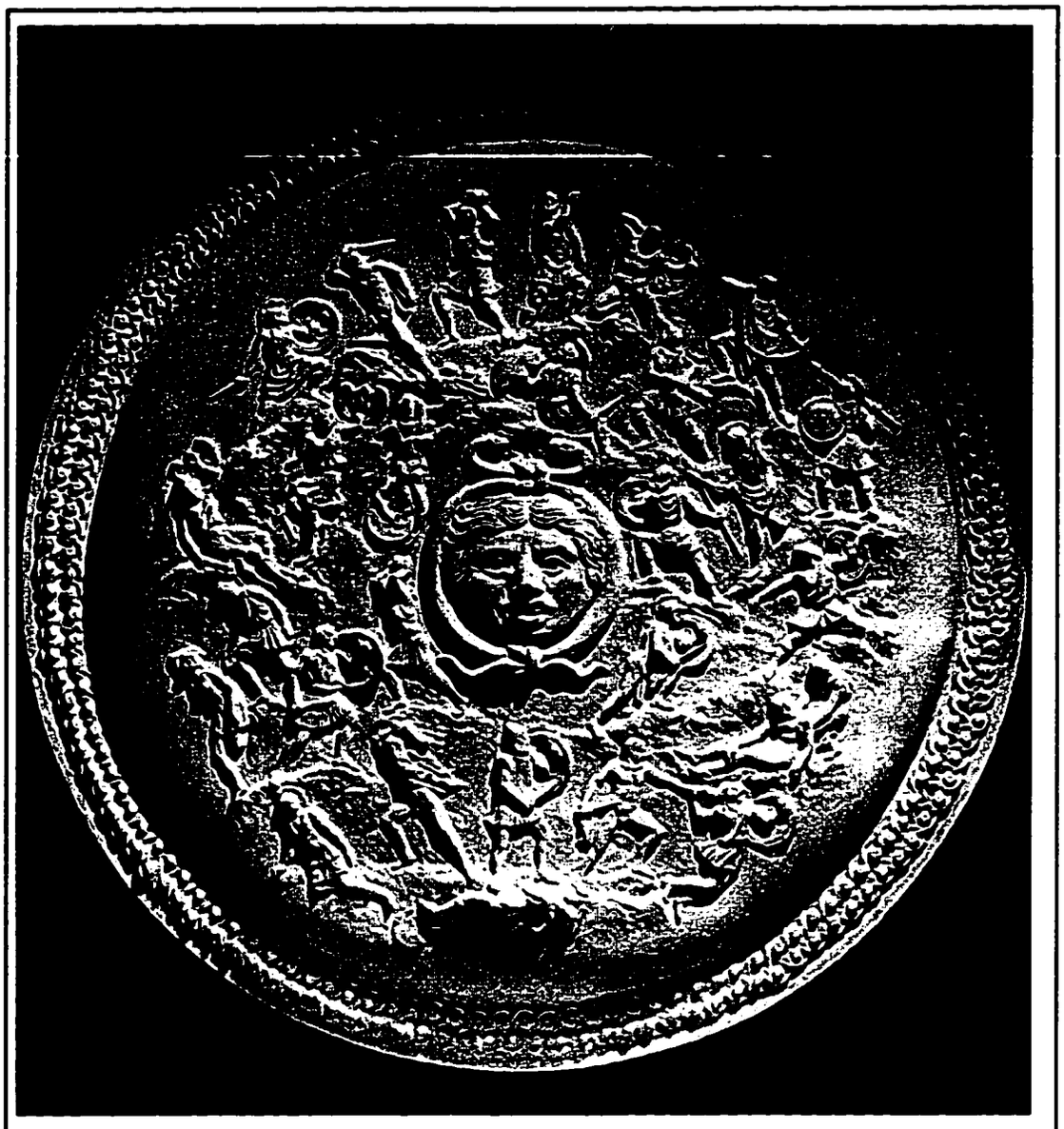

Figure 1. Reconstruction of the shield of Athena Parthenos, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. (Leipen 91)

breach of the link between father and son that occurs when women's sexuality is unregulated.

> Two imperatives of patriarchy underlie the commentary: through marriage men restrict a woman's sexuality to one man and ensure that the son she bears is that man's and no other's. The reverse situation--women in charge of their own bodies--makes it impossible to identify

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> the son with the father, a situation which in Greek polar thinking is deemed sexual abandon and bestiality. The rationale is that marriage acts to contain the sexual passion of women, thereby protecting society and the family from the pollution of bastardy. In the absence of marriage, sexual drives must run wild. (30-31)

Although this section could apply to the Amazons, Tyrrell is here describing the Athenians at the time that Cecrops established matrimony and patriarchy. Before Cecrops, the Athenians also mated randomly and were unaware of the identity of their fathers (28-30). Once again, the WE/THEY distinction becomes ambiguous upon closer examination; the Amazons are what the Athenians were and could be again, bestial. Greek theories of matriarchies, either in the past or abroad, had the potential to draw patriarchy into question by showing the potential for other ways of thinking; however, such theories tended to serve "as a tool for thinking, explaining, and validating patriarchal customs, institutions, and values by postulating the absurdities and horrors of its opposite" (Tyrrell 28). If the negation of patriarchy was terrible, then the defense of patriarchy was of prime importance.

Why was the negation of patriarchy so threatening and its reinforcement so imperative? What benefit did patriarchy provide that matriarchy could not provide? Among patriarchy's other benefits, it offered a patrilineal identity to those in its system. Patriarchy is an interesting example of the interrelation of power, knowledge, and ethics. Patriarchy is impossible until a society makes the discovery of the role men play in reproduction. Until the discovery of insemination, not only

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would individual identity come from the mother, but the mother's importance in the continuation of the community would likely elevate her status in the community.

> That societies in the past have arranged themselves on the principle that woman is the superior sex, we know well: in fact, it seems likely that until men found out their power of fertilisation, woman was always regarded as superior. . . . It was a natural state of affairs arising from a primitive ignorance of the part played in procreation by the fertilising male. Only women have children: that is obvious. (Branston 110)[7]

Once discovered, fatherhood would not automatically generate patriarchy; that would take power and ethics in conjunction with knowledge. Knowledge about paternity and reproduction took the form that patriarchy needed it to take; biological knowledge mixed with ideology. Patriarchy provided the interpretive grid through which filtered knowledge, the proper knowledge that reinforced patriarchy. J. J.

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[7]I must confess that I am uneasy with this argument, based as it is on Bachofen's paradigm, which traced social development as an evolution from tellurian to lunar to solar societies. The tellurian stage is marked by "motherhood without marriage, no agriculture, and apparently nothing resembling a state." In the lunar stage, "there is conjugal motherhood and authentic or legitimate birth . . . [and] agriculture is practiced in settled communities." "Conjugal father right, a division of labor, and individual ownership" are the traits of the solar stage" (Boas xix). Whatever its status as social theory, Bachofen's theory is applicable here because he developed it from mythology, including Greek mythology. Key myths include Cecrops' establishment of male rule at Athens and the displacement of *Mutterrecht* by *Vaterrecht* in the trial of Orestes (Bachofen 1: 171-240). Since the trial was Aeschylus' mythopoesis rather than part of the original myth, it tells us more about attitudes and issues in his era than about those of some more ancient society. While Bachofen's theory may not be universal, it does seem to reflect how elements of Greek patriarchy defined themselves vis-à-vis matriarchy.

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Bachofen argues that the *Eumenides* represents *Vaterrecht,* the primacy of the father over the mother, replacing *Mutterrecht,* the primacy of the mother over the father (1: 171-240). Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia so the Greeks could get their ships underway to the Trojan War. Upon Agamemnon's return after the war, his wife Clytemnestra avenged Iphigenia's death by stabbing him in the bathtub. Their son Orestes avenged Agamemnon's death by killing his mother. His mother's Furies[8] pursue Orestes to Athens, where they are the prosecution against him in a trial on the Hill of Ares, where the Amazons had launched an earlier attack against Athenian patriarchy only to be defeated by Theseus (Aeschylus 681-695).

Much of the trial hinges on the issue of whether it is worse to kill one's husband or one's mother. Theories of kinship and biology form the basis of the argument. The Furies argue that they did not pursue Clytemnestra because she was not of one blood (*ὅμαιμος*) with the man she killed. Whatever their relationship, it was not one of blood, and therefore she had not incurred blood-guilt (605). Orestes asks if he is related to his mother by blood (606), but the Furies indignantly remind him that she carried him in her womb and ask if he would wish away his mother's dearest blood (607-608). That is exactly what happens when Apollo absolves Orestes of bloodguilt by arguing that the mother is not

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[8]"Eumenides," meaning Gracious Ones, was a euphemism for the Furies.

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really related to the child, but is only the nurse of the seed the man implants. He panders to the presiding judge, Athena, using her as proof of his argument due to her birth directly from Zeus without an intervening mother (657-673). Thus Apollo's self-serving hypothesis regarding reproduction elevates the connection between father and child while devaluing the relationship between mother and child.[9]

Knowledge of the principle of paternity, however elevated, is in itself insufficient to establish a patrilineal identity. The Gargarian men who mated with the Amazons may have known the connection between insemination and birth, but they were ignorant of the identity of their own sons. Nor were they the only such group in Greek mythology. Herodotus mentions the Agathyrsi, who had promiscuous intercourse (*ἐπίκοινος μῖξις*) with women so that they might all be brothers (*κασίγνητοι*; 4. 104). Patriarchy required another step: the regulation of women's sexuality;

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[9]Apollo's views of reproduction were not the dominant ones in ancient Greece. The Hippocratic literature, for instance, sees both the man and the woman as contributing to the generation of children. If the contributions of both the man and the woman are "male bodies" (*ἄρσενα σώματα*; Hippocrates, *Regimen* 1. 28), these merge to form a boy, and likewise for a girl. These are the most desirable outcomes. When the parents contribute different genders, the two compete for dominance. If the man's contribution is male and the woman's is female, a boy or girl will be born depending on which side dominates. These offspring will not be as excellent as the former, but they will still be acceptable. In the final two possibilities, the man's contribution is female and the woman's is male. The issue of such a union will either be an "effeminate man" (*ἀνδρὸς θῆλυ*) (1. 28) or "manly": (*ἀνδρεῖαι*) women (1. 29), a trait reversal paralleling that of Amazon societies. Nevertheless, there was a general view that the man was or at least should be the dominant partner in the relationship (Foucault, *History* 2: 126-128).

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otherwise, women would remain a gap between father and son, not a link (Tyrrell 29-30). Regulation was accomplished through powerful norms (along the ethical axis) and sanctions (along the power axis) that restricted a woman to one man (Foucault, *History* 2. 147). A matriarchy would not need to place such restrictions on men, making Diodorus' vision of "househusbands" taking orders from their wives (3. 53. 2) simply a negative patriarchy.

The mother-child link can come into doubt. In the Oedipus myth, which Homer mentions, Oedipus was unaware of the identity of both his mother and his father, leading him to kill his father and marry his mother without realizing what he had done (*Odyssey* 11. 271-280). The Oedipal potential of the Odysseus myth would work itself out in the *Telegony*, wherein Odysseus' son by Circe, Telegonus, unknowingly kills his father while searching for him. He then takes Penelope and Telemachus to Circe's island, where Telemachus marries Circe and Telegonus marries Penelope. Circe makes them all immortal, and they live happily ever after (Proclus 530). From the Oedipus myth to the prostitutes who appealed their case to Solomon (1 Kings 3:16-28) to stories of changelings to hospital mix-ups, such stories circulate widely because of their unusual nature. The father-child link is much more tenuous. "'*Pater semper incertus est*', while the mother is '*certissima*'" (Freud 299). "Whereas paternity is frequently a matter of dispute, maternity is a matter of direct observation" (Boas xviii). In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus voices this doubt

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in his opening conversation with Athena (who is disguised as Mentes, an old friend of Odysseus). Athena asks Telemachus if he is the son of Odysseus, for he looks like Odysseus in his height, head, and eyes (1. 208-209). A child's looks were important in establishing paternity. In fact, the Greek suffix meaning "son of" (*-εἴδης* or *-ιάδης*) is related to the word *εἶδος* (form, shape) and literally means "the image of." Telemachus makes the following reply, which sounds rather churlish to the modern ear.

> *μήτηρ μέν τέ μέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγω γε*
> *οὐκ οἶδα· οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἑὸν γόνον αὐτος ἀνέγνω.* (1. 215-216)
>
> Mother says I am his [Odysseus'], but I myself do not know, for no one yet has ever known his own lineage.

The term *γόνος* (lineage, lit. begetting) is gender neutral, so Telemachus could be doubting both that Odysseus is his father and that Penelope is his mother, as was the case with the Oedipus myth. However, Telemachus does not say that Penelope claims that she is his mother and Odysseus his father. Instead, he says that "Mother" (Penelope is otherwise unnamed thus far in the conversation) claims that Odysseus is his father. The patrilineal descent is the more important one to society and the one Athena inquires about, but it is also more tenuous than the matrilineal descent. Odysseus' absence throughout Telemachus' life attenuates the father-son relationship even more. It is therefore the locus of Telemachus' anxiety, although his remark seems to displace onto his mother an anger that results from decisions made by his father.

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The SELF/OTHER distinction shows further signs of strain; like the Amazons and the Gargarians, Penelope can present Odysseus and Telemachus to each other as father and son, but she could be lying. Only she (and the gods; 1. 221-223) can be sure if she is telling the truth. She looks faithful as she publicly resists the suitors, but is she really an Amazon in disguise, secretly cavorting in the darkness (as Strabo says about the Amazons. 11. 5. 1)? The ignorance (*ἄγνοια*, Strabo 11. 5. 1) of the Gargarians regarding their offspring is not a simple example of barbaric difference; it also matches Telemachus' ignorance of the identity of his father. Fatherhood is remote in a way that motherhood is not. Telemachus' use of the gnomic aorist[10] *ἀνέγνω* coupled with "no one ever" (*οὐ πώ τις*) denotes a universal condition that patriarchy cannot overcome. Even Penelope, who was the Greek icon of fidelity (*Odyssey* 24. 196-198), could not escape the cloud of doubt, for the necessity of motherhood was a structural flaw of patriarchy. The *Odyssey* stretches the father-son link, but Penelope ultimately preserves it through her integrity. Because of her, Odysseus can be gone for twenty years and return to find his son like him in both looks and disposition. Even then, however, Athena must intervene to establish the link between Odysseus and Telemachus; she transforms Odysseus into such a splendid shape that Telemachus thinks him a god. Using this sign, Odysseus is able,

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[10]"Not infrequently the past-aorist indicative is used as a *present* to denote a fact of experience or a general truth (*gnomic* aorist)" (Allen 308).

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with some persuasion, to convince Telemachus of their father-son relationship (16. 172-224), after which they form an effective team.

Telemachus' problems with identity arose in part from the absence of his father, but such a separation was not necessary for such problems to arise in the father-son relationship. In some ways, the character of Euripides' Hippolytus is the inversion of Telemachus. Hippolytus' mother is absent, while his father is present. Even so, the father-son relationship is problematic because of the relationship between the father and the mother. As the illegitimate (*νόθος*) son of Theseus and the Amazon Antiope and as the object of his step-mother Phaedra's lust, Hippolytus experiences the breakdown of the father-son relationship when Theseus judges and exiles him and has Poseidon kill him (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 309, 350-352, 880-900). While Aphrodite has fostered this breakdown in their relationship, she does so by taking advantage of tensions that were already latent in that relationship, of flaws already present in their characters. Hippolytus yearns for a system of reproduction in which women (and Aphrodite) would not be necessary and in which the father-son link would be more direct.

> *ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δὴ κίβδηλον ἀνθρώποις κακὸν*
> *γυναῖκας εἰς φῶς ἡλίου κατῴκισας;*
> *εἰ γὰρ βρότειον ἤθελες σπεῖραι γένος,*
> *οὐκ ἐκ γυναικῶν χρὴν παρασχέσθαι τόδε.*
> *ἀλλ' ἀντιθέντας σοῖσιν ἐν ναοῖς βροτοὺς*
> *ἢ χρυσὸν ἢ σίδηρον ἢ χαλκοῦ βάρος*
> *παίδων πρίασθαι σπέρμα, τοῦ τιμήματος*
> *τῆς ἀξίας ἕκαστον· ἐν δὲ δώμασι*
> *ναίειν ἐλευθέροισι θηλειῶν ἄτερ·* (616-624)

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> Oh Zeus, why have you let women, who are a base evil
> To men, dwell in the light of the sun?
> For if you wished to sow a mortal race,
> It was not necessary to produce it from women,
> But mortal men should place in your temple
> Gold, iron, or a weight of bronze
> To buy the seed of children, each according to
> The value of his offering, and in his home
> To dwell free without women.

Hippolytus voices an ancient yearning to by-pass women in the process of reproduction in order to boost the link between father and son. Yet, as the nurse points out to Phaedra, all things are born out of the work of Aphrodite (440-450). Hippolytus' desire to buy seed in the temple to take home and sow (perhaps in the cabbage patch) was nothing but a grim fantasy. We might call Hippolytus' attitude misogynistic, and Hippolytus would agree. He practically coins the term when he ends his diatribe by exclaiming that his hatred of women (*μισῶν γυναῖκας*) will never be satiated (664-665) and that he wishes to trample on (*ἐπεμβαίνω*) them forever (668).[11]

Despite Hippolytus' attempt to identify with his father against women in general, his mother and Phaedra are the occasion for a breach in the relationship. As Theseus' concubine rather than his wife, Hippolytus' mother could not provide a legitimate (*γνήσιος*) link between father and son. Hippolytus therefore cannot enjoy the same relationship with Theseus as do Theseus' legitimate children by Phaedra (305-310,

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[11]The Greek vocabulary in this area was actually fully developed and included *μισογυνία* (misogyny), *μισογύνης* (misogynist), and *μισογύναιος* and *μισογύνος* (misogynistic) (Liddell and Scott 1137).

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961-963). Instead, he inherits from his mother the wretched condition (*δυστάλαινα μήτερ*) of a marginal relationship to Theseus (1082). The women are to some degree simply handy scapegoats; it was Theseus after all who decided not to trust his son's word but instead to condemn his son to death rashly. Theseus had earlier chosen which of his women would be his legitimate wife, thereby deciding which of his children would be gold and which iron. The "wretched condition" of Hippolytus' mother was one that Theseus conferred on her (and Hippolytus). Hippolytus is frustrated over the status he inherited from his mother. While he often is designated as the son of Theseus (10, 305, 1288, 1299, 1312, etc.), he is also frequently called the son of the Amazon (10, 305, 352, 581). While the text does not attribute his devotion to Artemis to his mother, Artemis was a patron of the Amazons. Hippolytus certainly did not get his disdain of Aphrodite from his father, who travelled the world in his younger days honoring Aphrodite prolifically. Aphrodite's plot sets these two men at odds with each other over Theseus' wife, Phaedra.

Women's sexuality threatened not only the father-son relationship, but also everything that flowed from that. Greek culture centered on the house (*οἶκος, δόμος*) and later the city (*πόλις*). In the Homeric world, the world outside of the household was loosely organized; order was found in the household (Nagler 59). A disorderly wife could unleash chaos on the house. Thus when Phaedra reveals that she is pining away for "the Amazon's [son]" (*ὁ τῆς Ἀμαζόνος*; 351), the nurse responds that Cypris

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(Aphrodite) has destroyed (*ἀπώλεσεν*) Phaedra, the nurse herself, and the house (*δόμος*; 361). The chorus concurs, predicting the end of the house (370). Unhappy with this ending, Virgil has Diana and Aesculpius restore the dead Hippolytus to life and send him to Italy with the alias of Virbius. Diana even arranges a match between Hippolytus and the nymph Egeria, and the couple become the parents of a son, also named Virbius. The younger Virbius joins the campaign against Aeneas, who is after all the child of his father's nemesis, Venus (Virgil, *Aeneid* 7. 761-782). Virgil thus not only restores Hippolytus to life, but also restores the house.

In *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, Lysias argues that seducing a woman is worse than raping her, for the seducer not only violates the woman's body; he also creates doubts about the identity of the children and acquires the husband's whole house (33) by acquiring the goods that the wife was supposed to manage. Phaedra's nurse recommends a discreet affair with Hippolytus, noting that many men have overlooked their wives' affairs (462-463), going by the proverb "Do not notice what is not good" (*λανθάνειν τὰ μὴ καλά*; 466). Thus the proud Greek patriarch had to rely on the legal fiction of regarding (*νομίζων*) his wife's children as his children, even as Strabo's Gargarians regarded the babies the Amazons presented to them as their sons (Strabo 11. 5. 1), again blurring the distinction between self and other.

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The Shield Effect

William B. Tyrrell has identified one early function of the Amazon myth that is important in other eras also. I call this the shield effect because an early occurrence of this function was on the shield of Athena in the Parthenon. The Parthenon had two Amazonomachies; one on the west metope, another on the outside of the shield of the Athena Parthenos (Tyrrell 19). The Amazons' "defeat in the west metope contrasts with Athena's victory in the pediment. One warrior-maiden successfully gives her name to the city, while the annihilation of the others affirms that it is under male control" (20). Periclean Athens assuaged its anxiety about worshiping its matronymic goddess by a nearby representation of the victory of Athens over unruly women.

Tyrrell makes the following observation about the shield of Athena in the Parthenon:

> The Amazon myth explained Athena as a warrior-virgin who was not threatening; the violence and chaos of her liminality——that is, the notion that the daughter would use her own productivity, protected by her own military might, to found her own household and city——had been excised in the death of her surrogates, the Amazons. (125-126)

In similar fashion, Clytemnestra diffused the danger Athena presented as the matronymic goddess of patriarchal Athens by giving Athena the opportunity to demonstrate her loyalty to her father and to the principle of patriarchy (Tyrrell 120-124; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 734-743). Such was the identification between Athena and her parthenogenic father that she alone of his children was permitted to wield his aegis. The only exception

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was when Apollo used Zeus' aegis to protect the body of Hector from the depredations of Achilles (*Iliad* 24. 20).

Even with this strong traditional connection between Athena and patriarchy, others could still interpret her differently. Augustine reports that Varro gave an account of the naming of Athens wherein the citizens voted on whether to name the city for Poseidon or Athena. The vote was split according to gender, with the women voting for Athena and the men for Poseidon. Because the women outnumbered the men by one, Athena won the vote. Athens appeased the angry Poseidon by disenfranchising the women (*City* 18. 9). Diodorus even relates that Athena *led* an army of Amazons in alliance with Dionysus and a male army of Libyans against the Titans (3. 70-71). Thus the shield effect vouched for Athena's identification with patriarchy and neutralized her potential to call it into question. In subsequent chapters, I shall generalize Tyrrell's thesis by examining the effectiveness of the myth in displacing the anxieties of later eras over strong women. The shield effect also served to project uneasiness over male-female relations into a void where they could be resolved.

> As a foundation myth, the myth of the Amazons aided in dissipating those anxieties by supporting the sexual dichotomy institutionalized in Athenian marriage. The message of the myth had to be repeated and heard again and again because the problems of women and marriage could never be solved once and for all. (Tyrrell 113)

Finally, the shield effect served to present "barbarians" in such a light as to justify the imperial actions of Athens (Tyrrell 13-16). In each

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aspect of the shield function, some problem relation to the "center" of society is projected beyond the border, where it can be handled safely.

Treatments of Amazons in Athenian art in the fifth century B.C. provide an interesting example of the interaction of power, knowledge, and ethics during that period. The fifth century was politically turbulent as the Greeks desperately fought and eventually defeated the Persians. The wars with Persia changed the relationship among Greek cities. Athens formed and led the Delian League. The cities of the League joined with Athens to defend against their common enemy, the Persians (Tyrrell 14). Athens came to treat the other cities of the league as subjects rather than as allies. Tyrrell sees two main factors at work in this transformation. First, the constitution of the league was such that the individual cities allied with Athens and not with one another, with the result that "Athens alone formulated policy and benefited from success" (14). Second, most cities contributed money rather than ships to the fleet, with the result that they subsidized an Athenian navy instead of sailing in a common navy. Athens revealed its imperial nature when it forced Naxos back into the league about 468 B.C. and later around 454 when it moved the treasury from Delos to Athens (14). Around 450, Pericles led Athens to use some league funds in building projects in Athens, including the Parthenon. As the importance of the navy increased, the military importance of the Acropolis decreased, and other

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priorities emerged. "The architectural and artistic embellishment of the city became a matter of political importance" (Bruno 65).

Athens' internal politics were also significant during this time. During Cimon's absences due to war and banishment, Pericles slowly displaced him as the most powerful figure in Athens. After Cimon's death in 449 B.C., Pericles was preeminent. Although from an aristocratic background himself, Pericles went against Cimon and his aristocratic, oligarchic "Right and Good" (*καλός κἀγαθός*) party (Plutarch, *Pericles* 7. 1-3; 11. 3-4). Instead, he sought power by currying the favor (*ὑπέρχομαι*) of the "hoi polloi" (*οἱ πολλοί*) and running as an advocate of democracy (Plutarch, *Pericles* 7. 3). He kept their favor through land grants, festivals, and public works projects (9. 1). Because he did not have enough personal wealth to match Cimon's generosity to the poor, Pericles financed his generosity with public funds (9. 2). By using Delian League funds to finance the Parthenon, Pericles made it his most controversial as well as his most glorious accomplishment (Plutarch 12. 1).

Plutarch emphasizes the sociological and economic consequences of Pericles' building program. Athens had to purchase building materials such as stone, bronze, ivory, gold, ebony, and cypress. It directly employed carpenters, molders, bronze-smiths, stone-cutters, dyers, gold-smiths, ivory carvers, painters, embroiderers, and embossers. It also gave work to suppliers, such as sailors, wagon-makers, draft-animal trainers, drivers, rope-makers, weavers, leather-workers, road-builders, and miners

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(12. 5-7). Thus one of the effects of the Periclean WPA was to transfer funds from people who were not his political constituents to those who were. Pericles' enemies accused him of making the people extravagant and intemperate instead of self-controlled and self-sufficient (9. 1); that is, the workers became dependent on the government for their jobs and lifestyle.

The Athenians began a temple on the Parthenon site after the Greek victory at Marathon in 490 B.C., but the Persians destroyed whatever had been built when they sacked and razed the citadel in 480-479 (Carpenter 35). Scholars debate whether the rebuilding of the Acropolis began shortly after the Athenians returned or whether it lay in ruins until Pericles succeeded Cimon in 449 B.C. (Carpenter 36-41). This debate does not affect my argument because even those who argue for an early beginning to the reconstruction concede that Pericles and his architects Ictinus and Pheidias redesigned the Cimonian Parthenon to give it its final form (Cook 14, Carpenter 67).

Whenever the work on the Parthenon began, it was part of a larger rebuilding program that followed the Persian sack of Athens. Out of these new buildings, the Theseum, the Stoa Poikile, and the Parthenon all had Amazonomachies (Tyrrell 10-22). Only the Parthenon survives, so we know more about it than about the other two. Cimon built the Theseum as a final resting place for Theseus, who had supposedly been murdered and buried on the island of Scyros. "In a move combining

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religious piety with mythic propaganda and naked imperialism, the Athenians obtained a Delphic oracle charging them with returning Theseus's bones to a place of honor in Athens" (Tyrrell 10). Accordingly Cimon led a naval force against the island in 476/475, sold the non-Greeks into slavery, left Athenian colonists on the island, and triumphantly returned to Athens with a set of bones suitable for burial in the Theseum, Theseus' tomb (Tyrrell 10).

The Theseum was decorated with "painted scenes from Theseus's life: the recovery of Minos' ring from the bottom of the sea, the fighting with the Lapiths against the Centaurs at Pirithous's wedding feast, an Amazonomachy, and, probably, the rescue from Hades after the failure to abduct Persephone" (Tyrrell 10). The Amazonomachy is significant for being the first depiction of the Amazons' assault on the Acropolis (10). The Greeks could do mythically what they had not been able to do militarily: keep the Acropolis out of the hands of their enemies.[12] Thus began the identification of the Amazons with the Persians, with the effects of making the Amazons oriental and the Persians effeminate. This identification reached such a level that it is now impossible to tell whether

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[12]This is a common function of myths. Jewett and Lawrence point out a similar mythic victory following an actual defeat in the movie *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*. Upon being sent back into Vietnam on a secret mission, Rambo asks, "Sir, do we get to win this time?" Trautman responds, "This time, it's up to you" (Jewett and Lawrence 268). It is no surprise when Rambo does win this time.

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the damaged West Metope of the Parthenon depicts Persians or Amazons as the opponents of the Greeks (Brommer 21-22, plates 3-6).

In conjunction with his analysis of fifth century buildings, Tyrrell also analyzes speeches of the era. According to him, buildings and speeches combined to recreate the myth. The orators fit the Amazon myth into the larger myth of Athens.

> Funeral oratory distorted and falsified mythical and historical events; it created a myth, a reality of words, which explained aggression as assistance and altruism and which transformed isolation from that of a tyrannical city into the desertion of Athenians by other Greeks, a desertion which left them the solitary defenders of the common cause. (15)

Athenians felt the "contradiction between their claim to be defenders of Greek freedom and their actual suppression of it" (Tyrrell 15). Athens changed the Amazon myth (and other myths) in ways that supported "the righteousness of its violence" (Tyrrell 15). Tyrrell notes the Greek identification of the Amazons with the Persians and designates the Greek foes as the "Persian-Amazons" (6). Athenians of the period never mentioned the traditional reason for the Amazon invasion of Athens, which was Theseus' rape of Antiope. "The rape had to be forgotten because it attributed responsibility for the invasion to Theseus and Athens" (15). Having eliminated the usual reason for the invasion, the Athenians projected the Persians' motive on the Amazons: imperialism. "Now [the Amazons] invaded Attica in order to spread their empire over Greeks" (15). The desire for gold, glory, and women might be appropriate motives in a war of conquest fought on foreign soil, but even there a

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blantant injustice can overrule such desires. Thus in the *Iliad*, Agamemnon appealed to these desires in his attempt to lure Achilles back into the fray, but was unsuccessful because Achilles was still stinging from Agamemnon's injustice in taking Briseïs from him (*Iliad* 9. 114-161, 260-429). As the Greeks reworked the Amazon myth to align it with the defense of the homeland against the Persian peril, the emphasis shifted from the glorious expedition against the Amazons and the beautiful women they captured to Greek innocence in the face of foreign aggression.

> The defeat of the Amazons was praised as the rescue of all Greeks from slavery at the hands of foreign conquerors. Theseus and the rape of the Amazon were forgotten, and the exploit was turned into one belonging to all Athenians. (Tyrrell 13)

According to Herodotus, the Persians viewed the *causa belli* as the Greek response to the taking of Helen; according to them, the Greeks had themselves abducted various eastern women. To go to war over such an incident was an overreaction (Herodotus 1. 1-4). If Herodotus was correct, it would not be in the Greeks' interest to draw attention to one of those abductions.

Paintings and sculpture could not reveal motives, but they could reveal methods. These methods of warfare also stressed the superior righteousness and bravery of Athenian soldiers. The West Metope of the Parthenon shows Greeks in battle with orientals, either Persians or Amazons (Brommer 21). This metope had fourteen slabs. The first slab

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has a sole figure on horseback. After that, the slabs alternate between two soldiers fighting each other on foot and a Greek foot soldier fighting a mounted opponent. "The Greeks are losing in the equestrian metopes 3, 5, 9, 11 and 13, but have the upper hand in nos. 4, 10 and 14" (Brommer 21). The Athenian method of combat was spiritually superior to the methods of the enemy. Amazons rode horses and shot arrows, so they could strike from afar and flee when threatened. The heavily armored hoplite had to stand in formation and could not run away since victory and safety "depends upon the cohesiveness of the formation" (Tyrrell 17). Furthermore, his manner of battle bravely exposes himself to his enemy, whereas the Amazon, refusing to "fight fair," avoided direct confrontation with the Greek soldier.

The victory of barbarian over Greek and woman over man would result in chaos. According to Tyrrell, Athena in the Parthenon "symbolizes the triumph of civilization over wanton violence" (20). The Gigantomachy, the Centauromachy, the Amazonomachy, and the scene from the Trojan War all carry this message in one form or another. The Gigantomachy established the supremacy of the Olympian gods over chthonic ones. The victory over the centaurs demonstrated human superiority over the bestial. The Trojan battle showed the victory of Greek over oriental, and the Amazonomachy signified the victory of men over women as well as the victory of Greek over barbarian (Tyrrell 20). Such depictions function to purify the motives of Athenian aggression in

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this period. Athens was not fighting merely for power; it was fighting for civilization and order against anomie and chaos.

The victory over the Amazons had implications at home as well as abroad. According to Tyrrell, the myth served to relieve chronic tensions over the relationship between men and women in general and the tension over the figure of Athena in particular. Because she was the patron goddess of the patriarchy of Athens, and because she was a virgin-warrior in a culture that defined women as submissive mothers, Athena was a liminal figure (Tyrrell 125-127). Since the shield of Athena Parthenos had the image of the gorgon Medusa in the center surrounded by scenes from an Amazonomachy, Tyrrell examines at length the Medusa myth (104-110). Tyrrell concludes that because Medusa was a female figure whose head was circled with serpents, it was a symbol of "gross animality" (109). It was the kind of analogical identification of the female with the animal that duBois analyzes (4). The gorgon on Athena's shield excises its nature from her body, symbolizing her freedom from and superiority to its bestiality (Tyrrell 109). Athena transcends and tames the gorgon's animality. "Restored within her and combined with her military attributes, the gorgon would make of Athena an Amazon" (Tyrrell 110). Athena presides over the Amazons' defeat as part of her support of civilization, order, and the prerogative of the father.

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The Great Chain

Page duBois primarily studies the prehistory of the chain of being in her book *Centaurs and Amazons*. She thus focuses on the analogical reasoning that I examined earlier in this chapter. During the fourth century B.C., analogical reasoning gave way to hierarchical reasoning. While this shift represented a rupture in the way that knowledge was constructed, it nevertheless grew out of the previous era. The Amazon developed a slightly different function in the hierarchical universe.

DuBois relies on A. O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* for her analysis of the intellectual history of the idea. Lovejoy asserts that the chain of being is a cluster of three ideas, ideas that are in the end self-contradictory (Lovejoy 20). The first idea is the doctrine of plenitude. The "otherworldly Absolute" transcends this existence yet cannot be full in itself without producing everything that could possibly exist (Lovejoy 49-50). The second idea is that this plenitude exists in a continuity. No "gaps in the universe" exist; "if there is between two given natural species a theoretically possible intermediate type, that type must be realized" (Lovejoy 58). Possibly the most famous example of the principle of continuity in action is the search for the "Missing Link" between human and animal. The third idea is "the principle of unilinear gradation" (Lovejoy 59). This is the belief that everything is arranged on a single scale ranging from the Absolute down. Each thing is related to the

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Absolute and to other things on the continuum based on its relative distance from the Absolute, or its relative "privation" (Lovejoy 59).

In this hierarchy, women were below men but above animals. Highborn women were above male slaves, but the lack of correlation between economics and gender made the relationship more problematic than that between male master and female slave. One of duBois's criticisms of Lovejoy is that he does not give adequate attention to the social implications of the idea of the chain of being. "The idea of the chain could be used to justify a hierarchicized world, a world of unchanging inequality" (duBois 10). Ideas do not exist in a vacuum; knowledge, power, and ethics interact to support or undermine one another. The knowledge of the chain of being has wide consequences in the distribution of power, naturalizing the social hierarchy and making it part of the divine order of the universe. The chain of being also has ethical implications. Since the chain of being *is* the order of the universe (in this system), any gap breaks the whole chain and destroys the order of the universe (Lovejoy 60). By extension, any attempt to break out of one's position on the chain threatens to plunge the whole universe into chaos. Any reformation is revolution, and revolution is anarchy and anomie.

Amazons make an ideal enemy in a system based on the chain of being. Unlike contemporary enemies, they are comfortably removed. As Tyrrell notes, "there was little likelihood that Athenian women would

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replace men as heads of families and state" (113), although Aristophanes toyed with the idea of female usurpation of male power in the *Lysistrata* and the *Ecclesiazusae*. In Greek myths, Amazons either had been put down in the past as part of the establishment of order, or they resided in the general disorder that existed beyond the known world. Writing in the first century A.D., Strabo dismisses the possibility that Amazons ever existed, much less spread an empire or invaded Attica.

> *τοῦτο γὰρ ὅμοιον, ὡς ἂν εἴ τις λέγοι, τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας γυναῖκας γεγονέναι τοὺς τότε, τὰς γυναῖκας ἄνδρας.*
>
> For this is the same as if someone should say that the men then were women and the women men. (11. 5. 3).

Strabo starts with a widely recognized principle of historiography; the historian should distinguish between the mythical (*μυθώδης*) from the historical (*ἱστορικός*; Strabo 11. 5. 3). Strabo dismisses the Amazons *a priori* on the grounds of implausibility rather than on any actual evidence against their existence. The roles men and women played were as natural to Strabo as their genders. To exchange roles, one would have to exchange genders; the whole notion struck Strabo as monstrous (*τερατώδης*; Strabo 11. 5. 3).

For Strabo, discussing the ethics of Amazons ruling men was as pointless as discussing the ethics of animals ruling humans; both were patent impossibilities. For others, Amazons represented the potential end result if ever society started on the "slippery slope" of granting women privileges. In the *Lysistrata*, women of Greece unite to end the

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Peloponnesian War. Presented with this call to peace, the male chorus responds that if they give in to the women on this point, the women will be building navies and forming cavalries like the Amazons (Aristophanes 672-680). Thus in this early example of doublethink, peace becomes war and any attempt by women to change the situation of the world around them produces the monstrous specter of the Amazon.

The Amazon by her very existence was an affront to the natural hierarchy whereby men ruled over women. It was the mission of the Greek male to restore this hierarchy wherever he found it out of balance. In Diodorus' account of the labors of Heracles, Heracles makes a trip to North Africa. While there, he destroys both the gorgons and the Amazons (juxtaposed here as well as on the shield of Athena) because it would ill befit his role as the benefactor of the "whole race of mankind" (*τὸ γένος κοινῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων*) for him to let nations be ruled by women (*γυναικρατέω*; 3. 55. 3). Yet latent within the myth was the potential for women to receive the Amazon as a positive role model rather than a monstrosity to be eschewed.

The Amazon Example

The certified interpretations of the Amazon myth have seldom challenged women to emulate the Amazons. On the contrary, Amazons have generally been a negative model for women to shun, not follow. If Amazons lived outside, women were to live inside. If Amazons were independent, women were to be submissive. Each vice of the Amazon

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negated a corresponding virtue of the good Greek wife. Yet from late antiquity comes one version of the story that for the first time taps the potential of the myth to provide women a positive role model. For the most part, Quintus Smyrnaeus sticks to tried-and-true themes in his late epic from the middle of the fourth century A.D., *The Fall of Troy* (Way vi). However, interspersed with the traditional greaves, chariots, dogs, and dust, Quintus inserts something apparently new into the myth. The Trojan women are in their traditional position, wringing their hands in the city as they look out at the battle in progress. But as they watch the Amazons routing the Greeks, Tisiphone has a new idea; the Trojan women could take the field with their men and the Amazons in the fight against the Greeks. Quintus is quite explicit that the Amazons' "Martial works" (*Ἀρήια ἔργα*) make this "lust for horse-taming war seize Tisiphone" (*πολέμοιο δ' ἔρως λάβεν ἱπποδάμοιο / . . . Τισιφόνην*; 1. 403-404).

Although Tisiphone wants to join the men in the defense of the city, for the Trojan women to do so would destroy what they would be trying to protect: Trojan society. Quintus originally identifies Tisiphone by patriarchal relationships; she is the daughter of Antimachus and the wife of Meneptolemus. The precise order of the identification is "of Antimachus the daughter and of Meneptolemus the wife, Tisiphone" (*Ἀντιμάχοιο θύγατρα Μενεπτολέμοιο δ' ἄκοιτιν / Τισιφόνην*; 1. 405-406). After she has convinced the other women to join her in going forth to

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battle, this traditional identity is lost. They put on mail, cast away their wool and distaffs, and take up tools of war. They buzz around the city like swarming bees, losing their individual identities in the fabric of patriarchal relationships to the anonymous matriarchy of the hive (1. 436-446).

Tisiphone bases her argument on the denial of a fundamental tenet of the great chain of being: the relative privation that makes unilinear gradation possible. Things are different from each other because they have a greater or lesser degree of privation from the Absolute (Lovejoy 59). The standard view of women was that they differed from men because they suffered from greater privation, or lesser perfection, than the men. Watching Penthesilea and her Amazons cut through the Greek lines like a cow trampling grass in a pasture (1. 395-400), Tisiphone concludes that the standard view of women as less perfect than men is incorrect. She tells the Trojan women to be "like our men" (*ἀνδάσιν ἡμετέροισιν ὁμοίιον*; 1. 410) in fighting the war because they are alike in their natures. Men and women have the same life force (*μένος*), eyes, and knees. They see the same light, breathe the same air, and eat the same food (1. 415-418).

> *τί δ' ἐπ' ἀνδράσι λώιον ἄλλο*
> *θῆκε θεός*; (1. 418-419)
>
> What did the god give to men that is superior?

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In this way, Tisiphone contradicts the doctrine that women have greater privation than men and undermines the hierarchical patriarchy based on that doctrine.

As the women prepare for war, Theano calls them back to their senses. Quintus does not identify her by her male kinfolks, perhaps indicating the breakdown of the patriarchal order at this point. Nevertheless, she calls them back to that patriarchal order by her argument. She does not dispute Tisiphone's argument, for the Amazons show what women can do. She argues that the Trojan women have not trained for war as have the Amazons and the male soldiers; therefore, the Trojan women could not hope to fight well. Since the Trojan women and men have followed a division of labor in their society, the women should stick to the labors they have mastered (1. 451-474). She recommends that the women hide and hope, staying within their dear houses at their loom while there is yet hope for victory (1. 467-470). The outside was the man's sphere of activity; the inside was the woman's (Tyrrell 45-47). Theano thus calls on the women to perform their traditional tasks in their traditional sphere as delimited by patriarchal society.

Quintus has put the Trojan women back in their place, and he soon puts the Amazons in their place. The term "Amazon" has often been an epithet, providing yet another scarlet "A" to use against the woman who has dared to transgress her traditional roles. Furthermore, once women had been identified by this label, men were released from whatever

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obligations they otherwise owed them. Soon Penthesilea meets her match in Achilles, who impales both her and her horse with one thrust of his spear (1. 610-625). Before removing Penthesilea's helmet, Achilles reviles her. Quintus borrows some of this harangue from Achilles' deprecation of the defeated Hector in the *Iliad*; we find the usual elements of dust, dogs, and carrion birds (Homer 22. 331-354, Quintus 1. 643-646). Quintus adds one important point to these elements when he declares that Penthesilea is dead because she dared to leave women's work (*γυναικῶν ἔργα*) and to go to war, which terrifies even men (1. 650-653).

The narrative as a whole thus restores the superiority of men over women and the propriety of men and women attending to their respective labors. However, Quintus does consider for the first time the possibility that women might consider the Amazons a positive role model. Until now, the myth had been told by men who considered the Amazon a negative role mode, one of Hippocrates' "manly" (*ἀνδρεῖαι*) women (*Regimen* 1. 29). While Quintus quickly backs away from the idea that women could emulate the Amazons, later writers would not be so timid. Especially when considered by women authors, Amazons could indeed become examples for others to follow.

Conclusion

The Amazon myth in ancient usage was a cautionary tale, a warning against what could happen to civilization if women ruled society.

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The predominant interpretation of the myth justified the continued domination of men over women. Attitudes toward and knowledge about the Amazons arose from broader patterns of thinking about others, particularly thinking about women and about foreigners. Whether the thought structure was analogical and metonymic or hierarchical, the Amazon remained a foreign woman in opposition to the Greek (and later Roman) man. In addition to being what the civilized male was not, the Amazon represented what could happen to civilization were women allowed to prevail over men. While such a revolt was highly unlikely, the Amazon existed to assuage any anxiety over the inferior status of women. From the ethical side, the myth as generally presented called upon men to restore order and establish themselves as heroes by defeating the Amazons. It conversely was a warning to women regarding what they should not become, an epithet ever ready to brand any woman who breached her position in society.

In addition to being a mythical avenue to establishing one's identity, the Amazon myth reflects apprehension regarding patrilineal identity. Analogical reasoning in the myth linked woman and foreign, resulting in the "orientalizing" of Greek women. If woman was the perennial "weak link" between father and son, then the Amazon dissolved the link, elevating daughters above sons and distributing her sons randomly for men to raise as their own. All women were potential Amazons, at least to the extent that they could cuckold their husbands

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given the opportunity and draw into question the Greek identity as father or son.

If analogical reasoning symbolically made women foreigners, it also feminized foreigners. Especially in visual representations, Amazons came to wear clothing similar to that of Persian soldiers and to carry similar weapons. In Amazonomachies, Amazons became analogues for the Persian army; their defeat represented the Persian defeat. Thus the Amazons belong to the start of the tradition of the victory of the West over the threat of the East.

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CHAPTER 3

MEDIEVAL AMAZONS

Introduction

According to Kleinbaum, the medieval shift from the heroic to the Christian ethos led to a corresponding decline in the Amazon myth. Heroes of the ancient world could achieve glory through defeating the Amazon. Now, "authors reinterpreted the classical ideal of excellence according to a Christian sensibility" (Kleinbaum 39). Seeking transcendence through salvation, heroes no longer needed to test themselves against the Amazons (39). In addition to belonging to geographically remote regions, Amazons tended to belong to the remote past as a mark of pre-Christian barbarism or to the future as a sign of the imminent end of the world (DiMarco 76-80). The more remote they became, the less of a target for heroic activity they became.

Despite its decline, the Amazon myth did not disappear during the Middle Ages. Kleinbaum's second chapter is a review of the writings about Amazons during this period. For the sake of continuity, she includes patristic writers from the second century forward in the medieval period. I do not completely follow Kleinbaum's scheme for dividing the ancient

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from the medieval period. She places Quintus of Smyrna in the medieval period (45-46). Because he wrote in the latter half of the fourth century (Hammond and Scullard, *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 908), he could be legitimately identified with either era. However, he lived in Asia Minor, wrote in Greek, and was more influenced by the past than influential upon the future. His work was lost until the fifteenth century, when Cardinal Bessarion discovered the *Codex Hydruntinus* in a convent in Calabria (Way xi). Since Europe did not have real access to Quintus until Aldus published the first printed edition in 1504, I dealt with *The Fall of Troy* in the second chapter.

Knight Makes Right

The knight is Theseus. Theseus in medieval thought came to be emblematic of the ruler who governs himself and his nation by reason, who establishes the social order in accordance with the cosmic order of the chain of being. The metamorphosis of the rapacious Theseus into the rational Theseus had its roots in the Athens of the fifth century B.C., which had patriotic reasons to improve Theseus' image (Tyrrell 8-9). As the hero of Boccaccio's *Teseida* and Chaucer's derivative *Knight's Tale*, Theseus was the embodiment of the equestrian virtues of the rational knight. It would fall to Christine de Pizan to "quit," or repay, the knight by presenting him in a still noble but somewhat diminished light in her *Livre de la Cité des Dames*.

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Lovejoy has observed that the idea of the "Great Chain of Being" developed during the ancient world but achieved the status of unquestioned assumption during the Middle Ages (58-60). Lovejoy's account of the chain of being during the Middle Ages tries to focus on the idea of the chain of being in isolation from any social or ethical aspects of the doctrine. Yet this idea was not limited to the knowledge axis; it had far-reaching implications along the axes of power and ethics as well. Furthermore, medieval institutions and values exerted their own influence on the production of knowledge. Even Lovejoy notes that Abelard "indiscreetly made manifest both the deterministic and the antinomian implications of" the chain of being. This revelation was one of the actions that led Bernard of Clairvaux to bring charges of heresy against him (72-73). In other words, Abelard's theology had legal and political implications, and thus got him into legal and political trouble. Institutions, values, and knowledge were not independent of one another, as Lovejoy generally thinks. He assesses the ongoing attempt to resolve the tensions between the implications of the chain of being and the demands of church dogma as "an inner opposition of tendencies in the minds of individual thinkers" (73). The medieval application of the chain of being to the Amazon myth reveals some of its social and ethical aspects as well as its "purely" mental and individual ones.

Boethius is one of the medieval authorities that Lovejoy quotes in his analysis (84-85). Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* served as "a

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cornerstone of medieval humanism, its style a model of much important philosophical poetry in the late Middle Ages" (Green ix). Some of those late medieval philosophical works also deal with the Amazon myth, such as Boccaccio's *Teseida* and *De Mulieribus Claris*, Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, and Christine's *Cité des Dames*. One of Boethius' stylistic contributions was to popularize the mutation of the Socratic dialogue into a fictive dialogue with an allegorical figure. For example, the three virtues in Christine's *Cité des Dames*, especially Reason, bear a strong resemblance to Boethius' interlocutor, Philosophia (Boethius 1. 3).

One important aspect of Boethius' system is the distinction he draws between reason (*ratio*) and passion (*affectus*). When Philosophia first appears in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, she bids the poetic muses to leave, basing her command on the antithesis between reason and passion.

> Hae sunt enim quae infructuosis affectuum spinis uberem fructibus rationis segetem necant. (1. 32-33)
>
> For these are the ones who kill the rich harvest of the fruits of reason with the fruitless thorns of the passions.

The well-balanced man governs his passions with reason (passion being inferior to reason in the chain of being) and thus reflects God's rational rule in the cosmos. In this system, nature exhibits God's order, making the natural order the equivalent of the rational one (Miller, *Chaucer* 400). The antithesis between nature and reason was an innovation of the Romantic era (Kleinbaum 169). The social hierarchy was also to reflect

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the divine order, with the ruler properly governing his subjects. In the relationship between men and women, the husband was the head of the wife as Christ was the head of man and God the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). Popular medieval interpretation of this passage held that the man was to rule the wife because she was lower on the chain of being than the man (Bartholomaeus 6. 13). Furthermore, humans were higher on the great chain than, and therefore exercised dominion over, animals (Gen. 1:26-31).

In theory, each thing occupies its own unique place on the chain of being. In practice, the kind of analogical thinking discussed above (29-35) continued in the medieval period. The use of allegory gave impetus to such thinking. Thus the submission of Adam to Eve was literally the submission of man to woman and was allegorically the submission of reason to the flesh, making the fall a double inversion of the natural hierarchy (Miller, *Chaucer* 400-401). Women were not only equated with the flesh; they were also equated with the animal. The popular equestrian trope of the knight controlling his horse as an emblem of reason controlling the flesh (Miller, *Chaucer* 400) also served as an emblem for a man controlling his woman. Figure 2 is the Renaissance painting "*La Virtù che frena il Vizio*" ("Virtue Restrains Vice"; Robertson pl. 6) by Paolo Veronese, the painter who worked in Venice in the late sixteenth century (Rosand xv). It shows the triple identifications of male = human = reason and female = animal = flesh. The man as rider tames the woman as horse.

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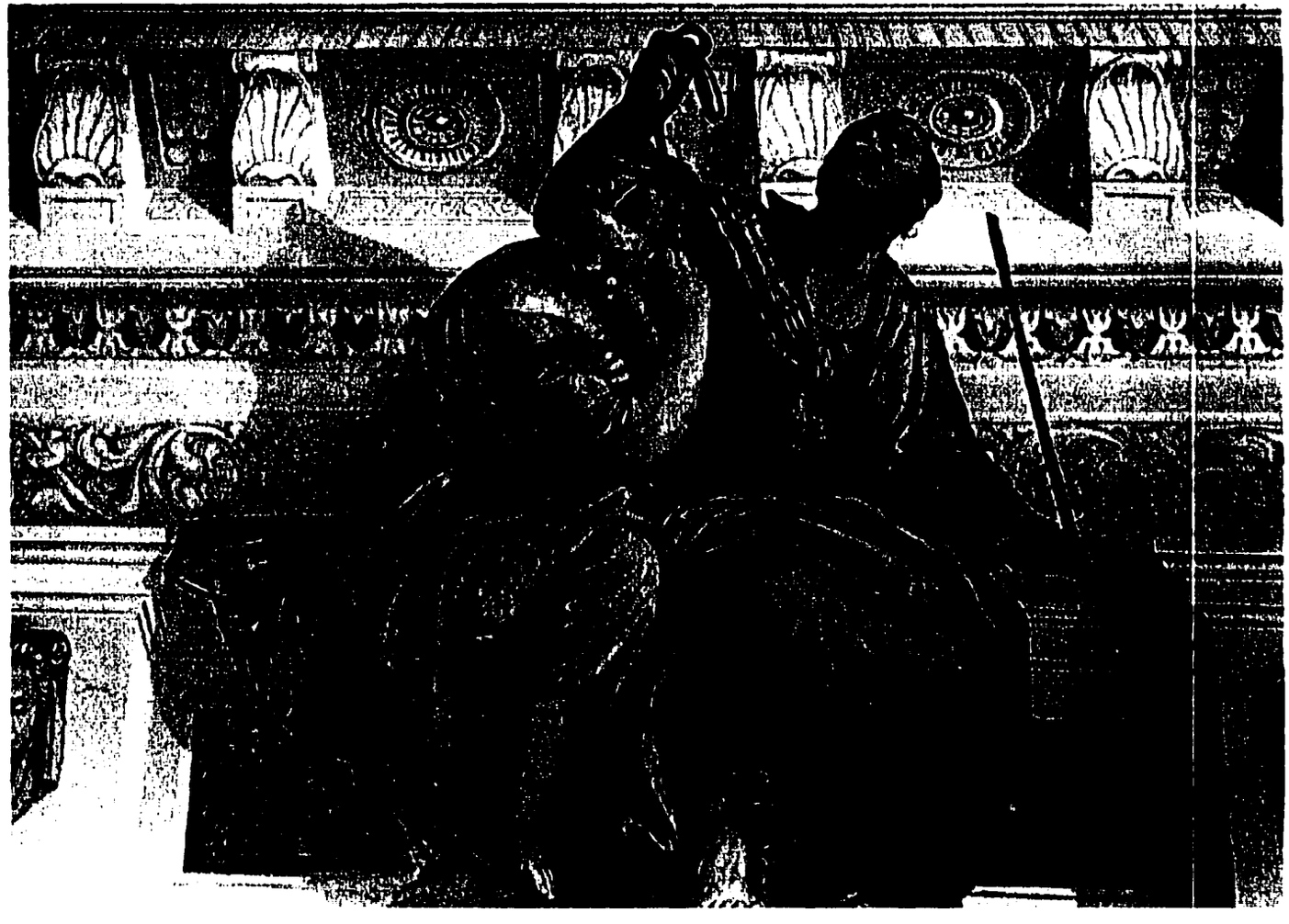

Figure 2. Veronese. "La Virtù che frena il Vizio." (Robertson plate 6. Photo Alinari-Giraudon)

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This trope goes back at least as far as Anacreon, a Greek lyric poet of the sixth century B.C. (Hammond and Scullard 57). Anacreon addressed one woman as a "Thracian filly" (*Πῶλε Θρῃκίη*) and playfully lamented that she would not allow him to tame her.

> *νῦν δὲ λειμῶνάς τε βόσκῃ κοῦφά τε σκιρτῶσα παίζεις,*
> *δεξιὸν γὰρ ἱπποπείρην οὐκ ἔχεις ἐπεμβάτην.* (*Iambics* fr. 84)
>
> But now you graze in the meadows and play, leaping lightly, for you have no skilled horse trainer as your rider.

In the picture by Veronese, the ascetic man, who is much more sober about his role as rider than Anacreon had been, identifies with reason and virtue by looking up, reins in the sensual woman, who identifies with passion and vice by looking down. If the man is unsuccessful using the reins, he can always fall back on the rod of correction in his left hand. "Aristotle and Phyllis" (figure 3), produced by the Dutch engraver Lucas van Leyden in the early fifteenth century (Lavalleye 7-9), reverses the roles, with the woman riding the man. In this engraving, the fun is back, at least for the rider. The *fabula* of Aristotle and Phyllis dates back at to the thirteenth century or perhaps earlier (Tatum 1). Thomas Wright includes this story in his book of Latin stories. He takes the story from the *Promptuarium Exemplorum*, which quoted from Jacobus de Vitriaco (Wright 232 n. LXXIII). According to the legend, Aristotle warned his student Alexander the Great to restrain himself from frequently approaching his woman, who was very beautiful. In retaliation, Phyllis schemed to seduce the old philosopher. She

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Figure 3. Lucas van Leyden. "Phyllis and Aristotle." (Lavalleye 194)

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arranged to cross his path often, alone, and "with bare feet and disheveled hair" (*cum pedibus nudis et dissoluto crine*). Enticed, Aristotle "began to solicit her carnally" (*cœpit eam sollicitare carnaliter*). She demands a sign of his love before submitting (Wright 74).

> "[E]rgo veni ad meam cameram, reptando manibus et pedibus, sicut equus me portando, tunc scio quod non illudes mihi." (Wright 74)
>
> "Therefore come to my chamber crawling on your hands and feet, and carry me like a horse. Then I'll know you aren't deluding me."

Of course, it was the queen who was deluding Aristotle.

> Cui conditioni cum consensisset, illa intimavit hoc Alexandro; qui expectans apprehendit eum reginam portantem. (Wright 74)
>
> When Aristotle consented to the condition, she secertly told this to Alexander, who, waiting, apprehended Aristotle carrying the queen.

Alexander was angry at Aristotle's hypocrisy and duplicity and "wished to kill him" ("*Quem . . . vellet occidere*"; Wright 74). Aristotle, however, gave his defense, which serves as the punch line to the story.

> [A]it Aristotles sic se excusando, "Si sic accidit seni sapientissimo, ut a muliere deciperar, potes videre quod bene docueram te, quid accidere potest tibi juveni." Quod audiens rex, ei pepercit, et in doctrina ejus profecit. (Wright 74)
>
> Thus Aristotle spoke, excusing himself: "If it so happened that I, a most wise old man, was deceived by a woman, you are able to see I well taught you that it could happen to you, a young man." Hearing that, the king spared Aristotle and progessed in his teachings.

Although the picture does not show us Phyllis' bare feet, it does depict her disheveled hair and Aristotle's equine demeanor. The engraving does

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not represent woman-as-reason ruling man-as-passion, but woman-as-passion unseating and dehumanizing reason. Even Aristotle, the "*sapientissimus*" master of reason, was subject to having his reason overturned by the lust awakened by a deceitful woman, providing a "spectacle of love's power over reason" (Tatum 1). Phyllis controlled him because he did not control himself.

The Theseus of Boccaccio's epic *Teseida* and Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" has his emotions under the control of reason as he supervises the struggle between Palamon and Arcites for the hand of the fair Emilia/Emelye, sister to Hippolyta and sister-in-law to Theseus. Theseus must especially balance the demands of Mars and Venus, the primary deities of the works (Boccaccio 1. 3; Chaucer I. 2581-2585). He feels emotions, but he governs them with reason. Because he governs himself, Theseus is able to govern others. His own life is in tune with the cosmic order, so he is able to establish that order in the social realm also. Thus Chaucer has Theseus use the chain of being as the ground for his "sermonyng" (I. 3091) that his sister-in-law Emelye, formerly an Amazon, should marry the young knight Palamon.

> "The Firste Moevere of the cause above,
> Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
> Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
> Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,
> For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
> The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
> In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee." (I. 2987-2993)

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"The Firste Moevere," Jupiter (l. 3035), creates and maintains Theseus's world through the "faire cheyne of love." This same principle also governs the human cycle of life and death (l. 3027-3034). Emelye should submit to this fact and accept the death of Arcites. By defeating Palamon in a tournament, Arcites had won Emelye, but his victory had been short-lived. His horse had fallen on him, mortally injuring him (l. 2636-2699). But for Emelye to accept Arcites' fate, she would need to accept that it is her own fate to marry, despite her aversion to marriage as an Amazon and an acolyte of Diana (l. 2296-2330).

> "Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
> With al th'avys heere of my parlement,
> That gentil Palamon, youre owene knyght,
> That serweth yow with wille, herte and myght,
> And ever hath doon syn ye first hym knewe,
> That ye shul of youre grace upon hym rewe,
> And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.
> Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.
> Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee." (l. 3075-3083)

A proper marriage reflects the cosmic order; Emelye should marry so that she can relate to her lord and husband as the cosmos relates to the First Mover. Here we can see the ethical implications of the chain of being as it supports a social chain of command.

The first book of the *Teseida* tells how Theseus brings the "faire cheyne of love" to the Amazons. "The Knight's Tale" of Chaucer is in many ways a summary of the *Teseida*. Because "The Knight's Tale" is part of the larger *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer has to compress the epic

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Teseida considerably. The knight lets his auditors know that he is leaving out large parts of the story.

> And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
> I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
> How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
> By Theseus and by his chivalrye. (l. 875-878)
>
> But al that thyng I moot as now forbere.
> I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
> And wayke been the oxen in my plough.
> The remenant of the tale is long ynough
> I wol nat letten eek noon of this route. (l. 885-889)

One of the things Chaucer's knight must pass over in his abbreviated tale is the fierce resistance that Theseus encountered from the Amazons.

The Amazons came into being when Scythian women refused to submit to their husbands' rule. They found a way to realize their foolish (*follia*, 1. 6) desire for freedom: each woman killed her own man (1. 6-8). Their act of rebellion was not only a victory of women over men but also of flesh over reason and of the bestial over the human. Such an affront to order would in itself constitute a sufficient *causa belli* to provoke Theseus into action, but the women did not stop there. They banned any men from entering their territory, and any trespasser was ordered to leave on pain of death (1. 10). Furthermore, they provided asylum to women arriving from other realms, replenishing their own number (apparently they forewent the annual mating revelry with nearby men) and by implication destabilizing the surrounding societies (1. 11). Last, they forced arriving ships to pay tribute before driving them out again (1. 13).

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Theseus responds to the Amazons because Greek sailors complain to him and because Mars, the god of war, appears to him in an epiphany, urging him on by inspiring a "fierce heat" (*fier caldo*) in him (1. 13-15). Boccaccio's use of the gods in this gender war reverses ancient allegiances. Mars is no longer the progenitor and patron of the Amazons; he is loyal to the men. On the other hand, Theseus accuses Minerva (Athena) of abandoning her matronymic Athenian men in favor of the Amazons because she shares their gender (1. 60n).

Boccaccio holds up Theseus as a model of chivalry, yet in Theseus' attack on the Amazons, Hippolyta accuses him of breaching the ethos of chivalrous war in three ways, and her reasoning and rhetoric are strong. First she accuses him of not acting like a knight involved in a just war with an equal (*Tu non hai fatto come cavaliere / che contro a par piglia debita guerra*. 1. 104), for without warning he attacked a nation that had not given him cause to attack (1. 102-104). Next, he attacks and kills women (1. 74), which Hippolyta notes is more of a shame than a glory to the victor (*del vincitore è più biasmo che gloria*. 1. 104).[1] Finally, excruciatingly upset (*assai crucciato*) that he could not take the city despite a siege lasting several months, Theseus orders his men to undermine its walls. Hippolyta responds that "to fight in dark places is not part of a good warrior's art or craft" (*e di combattere in oscura parte /*

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[1]Indeed, Creon would later taunt that Theseus had now found a free people (*franco popol*) and not women (*donne*) as he had elsewhere (2. 52).

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non è di buon guerrier mestier né arte. 1. 106). Theseus replies that he is fighting war because his people were being killed and driven from their lands, an apparent early example of the *grosse Lüge*. He adds that he is undermining the walls to save the lives of his men and to vanquish the Amazons more easily (1. 110-111).

Accustomed as our era is to viewing war as a means to an end wherein the tools of war are chosen on the basis of utility, Theseus' response does not seem to present a problem. Yet his response does not seem to belong to a chivalrous *Kriegethik*, wherein "ritual propriety" must be observed (Aho 32).

> [The chivalrous warrior], in being asked to recognize himself in the enemy and the enemy in himself, is thus bound to deal with him within the limits of ritual propriety, using only a restricted inventory of relatively harmless weapons and strategies. (Aho 33)

Aho gives a detailed account of the ritual proprieties of war as it was practiced in the era of Boccaccio. The purpose of such rules was to align "the mesocosm, the public affairs of society" and "the microcosm, the life and psyche of each individual" with "the macrocosm, the planets and stars" (Aho 34). This was Theseus' mission.

> It is as though Theseus, by according supremacy to human reason over passion, sought to round out the life of man into a perfect sphere; and by championing the submission of human reason to the larger sphere of God's Providence, sought to create a harmony of movement and thought between man and God akin to the music flowing from the consonant motion of the cosmic spheres. (Gioia 1)

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To break the rules of war was to lose one's manhood, to plunge the society into chaos, and to undermine the cosmic order (Aho 22, 34). If Theseus were to break the rules of war, he would threaten the very order that he is supposed to represent in the *Teseida*. Furthermore, he would vitiate his status as a hero, lose his *ethos*, and negate the glory he had gone there to seek.

This is precisely the fate of Theseus' rival, Creon. As the new ruler of Thebes, he has denied burial to his fallen enemies, a clear violation of the chivalric code (2. 12-13, 31). Because of this breach, Creon and Thebes must fall to Theseus and the Athenian army. During a man-to-man confrontation on the battlefield, Theseus threatens to leave Creon unburied after his death (2. 62). Even in this case, however, Theseus shows his chivalrous nature by giving a decent burial to Creon (2. 74-75). In the case of the Amazons therefore, Boccaccio is not trying to indict Theseus but is instead showing Theseus' estimate of his Amazonian opponents as being unworthy of chivalrous conduct. "If he [the enemy] exists beyond the pale of the civilized world, either as an alleged demon or mere animal, he can be treated accordingly" (Aho 33).

Aho uses Edward, Prince of Wales (The Black Prince) as an illustration of the different treatments accorded different enemies. When Edward captured the French Bertrand du Guesclin, they negotiated over the amount of ransom. Guesclin suggested a ransom of 100,000 florins be set. Edward, knowing Guesclin's financial circumstances, said that the

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ransom was too high. Guesclin insisted that the ransom be at least 70,000 florins, whereupon he was released for a year to collect the money (Aho 87-88). Edward's wife, Joan of Kent, helped Guesclin start raising the ransom by giving him 30,000 florins (89). The siege of Limoges in A.D. 1370 stands in stark contrast to this elaborate courtesy; at the siege, the same chivalrous Edward "ordered the extermination of 3,000 unarmed men, women, and children" (90).

Creon's crime consists of denying burial to *Greek* corpses (*greci corpi*, 2. 31), inhabitants of the civilized world who have a legitimate claim to chivalrous conduct. Amazons live beyond the pale of civilization both geographically and socially. Geographically Scythia had from ancient times been considered the epitome of barbarity, and medieval writers continued the tradition (DiMarco 76). Socially the Amazons rebelled against the divine, natural, and social hierarchy that made men superior to women. Rebelling against that hierarchy and claiming equality with men reveals their pride. Theseus states that by abandoning the chivalric code he not only wants to defeat them militarily but also to abase their pride.

> né viltà nulla i nostri cori impaccia,
> se sottotera cerchiam di far via,
> per tuo orgoglio volere abassare. (1. 110)

> It does not distress our hearts
> To make a way past your walls underground,
> For we wish to abase your pride.

The Amazons are not the kind of enemy who deserve chivalrous treatment.

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> Chivalry was a code of behavior practiced between social equals. The fact that fair play was no longer a necessary consideration in the battling of the Amazon queen shows that she is outside the rules. War is a man's game that women, even Amazons, are not permitted to play, and any female who stumbles into this masculine sphere may be exterminated without the slightest regard to justice and fairness. (Kleinbaum 60)

Chivalry applies to the other-as-self, not to the other-as-demon. However, as soon as the women submit to Theseus as women should, they can appeal to his *noblesse oblige*. He literally welcomes them back into civilization with open arms, taking Hippolyta as his bride (1. 124). In addition to his personal construction of himself as a hero, Theseus restructures the society as a whole. The women regain their lost modesty, break out their jewelry, and reopen the temple of Venus (1. 133-134). They worship Venus and try to make up for the time they lost while they were without men by marrying Theseus' men (1. 138). The message to women in general is that they must submit to their prescribed roles or face the consequences. The English drove home this point in 1431 when they demonstrated medieval chivalry toward women warriors by burning Joan of Arc at the stake.

Theseus himself exhibits rational control of his emotions in the balance he achieves. Governed by the wrath of Mars while the women oppose him, he lays aside that wrath when they surrender. Mars then gives way to Venus; that is, wrath and the struggle for glory give way to love. Yet Theseus must not give love more than its due. He spends a two year honeymoon with Hippolyta in the utopia that he has created in

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Scythia (2. 1-2). Then, while in a garden thinking of his beloved, he has a vision of a scowling Peirithous accusing him of losing his glory by being too devoted to love.

> Che fai tu ozioso
> con Ipolita in Scizia dimornado,
> sotto amore offuscando il tuo famoso
> nome? Perché in Grecia oramai
> non torni, ove più gloria avrai assai? (2. 4)

> What are you doing
> Living idly with Hippolyta in Scythia,
> Obscuring your famous name under the spell of love?
> Why do you not return to Greece now
> Where you will have much more glory?

The model for this scene is perhaps the scene in the *Aeneid* wherein Mercury appears to Aeneas and tells him that he is wasting his time in his affair with Queen Dido in Carthage. He is building Dido's kingdom at the expense of the glory for himself and future for his son that he can find only in Italy (Virgil 4. 259-278).

Theseus is in danger of losing himself to enjoyment instead of use. This distinction goes back to Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, wherein God is the only legitimate object of enjoyment (I. 22). Objects of enjoyment make us happy, while objects of use help us attain the objects of enjoyment (I. 3-4). The things of this world properly used lead us beyond themselves up the chain of being to God. Enjoyment of worldly objects mires us in exile in this world and prevents us from reaching our real home with God (I. 4). Theseus in the garden has his mind on his beloved, whom he presently loves for her own sake and not for the sake

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of attaining a higher reality as Augustine advocated (*Christian Doctrine* I. 27). He is mired in effeminate concerns, and only manly action can save him.

Theseus quickly recovers his balance and returns to Athens and to martial (Mars') values. He also returns to the worship of Minerva (2. 23) despite his threat when the Amazons were winning to abandon that worship (1. 60). Part of Theseus' balance is recognizing when he is about to go too far and bringing himself under control. Furthermore, his self-control extends to the control of others. Thus when it is time to return to Greece and turn his thoughts from Hippolyta to achieving further glory, she readily agrees with him.

> la qual rispose ad ogni suo piacere
> essere apparecchiata e anche a questo. (2. 8)
>
> She responded that she was ready to do
> whatever pleased him, including this.

Here Theseus and Hippolyta contrast with Aeneas and Dido. Dido dismisses the idea of abandoning her city and going with Aeneas (4. 543). Instead she chooses to kill herself (4. 663-665).

Theseus immediately (*presto*) prepares his fleet to leave, but even in his haste, he does not neglect his duties as conqueror.

> e poi dispose del regno lo stato,
> per modo che alle donne fu a grato. (2. 8)
>
> And then he arranged for the regime of the state
> In a manner that was pleasing to the ladies.

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One of the enduring tenets of orientalism is the belief that the nations of the "East" need somebody to rule them and actually welcome that rule. "[E]very [nineteenth-century] writer on the Orient . . . saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption" (Said 206). What Said writes about the early twentieth century relationship between England and Egypt would apply to Athens and Amazonia: "Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation" (34). The Amazons who had fought so tenaciously against Theseus now find that they actually needed Theseus to come, impart civilization, and set up a government pleasing to them. They are happiest when they submit to their given role in the hierarchy; once they have done so, they find the ensuing government pleasing (*grato*). In contrast to ancient accounts where Amazonia was destroyed militarily, the Amazons here have the opportunity to assimilate, to be saved individually by submitting to the dissolution of their culture.

Hippolyta offers to return to her former military role and help her "dear lord" ("*Caro signor*") when his next opportunity for glory arises, avenging Creon's crime of not allowing proper burial to those who had attacked Thebes. However, she is quick to say she will fight "only if I thought that it pleased you for me to bear arms" ("*sol ch' io credesse / che 'n ciò il mio portare arme ti piacesse*"; 2. 41). Her concern is for his honor (*onore*; 2. 42); she exhibits no current desire to establish her own glory in battle. Nor does Theseus invite her to fight beside him, as she

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had done in some earlier versions of the myth. Instead he tells her to await him at his father's house (1. 40). She will henceforth comfortably occupy her subordinate slot in the social chain of being and experience the glory of battle vicariously through the exploits of Theseus and other men. Theseus, meanwhile, deposits her on the ground with the other women (2. 42) and "turns himself around in his chariot to face his esteemed troops" ("*sopra 'l carro si volse a le pregiate / schiere*"; 2. 43). After he turns from the women to the troops, he addresses his men; his voice is filled with wrath (*e con voce alta, di furore acceso*), indicating that he has turned from Venus to Mars, from love to war, from effeminate to masculine concerns (2. 43).

Chaucer makes only a brief summary of Theseus' conquest of the Amazons (I. 866-892). Even when Chaucer does deal with the Amazons in his version of the story, he tends to reduce their stature from even that which Boccaccio accords them. Boccaccio at least allows the Amazons to act and speak effectively before Theseus reins them in; Chaucer includes no such scenes. Both Boccaccio and Chaucer allow Emilia/Emelye to be a votary of Diana (Artemis), a traditional goddess of the Amazons (Boccaccio 7. 70-93. Chaucer I. 2273-2364). Chaucer, however, alters a scene wherein the Boccaccian Emilia, decked out with horn, bow, quiver, and arrows, hunts on horseback with the aid of a falcon and dogs (5. 77). In Boccaccio her horse is only a saddle horse (*pallafreno*), not a war horse, but otherwise she could still pass for an

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Amazon. In this regalia, she comes upon the two knights Arcites and Palamon, who are fighting a duel over her. She summons Theseus, who quickly arranges a tournament in which each man will assemble one hundred knights and finish the fight for Emilia. Chaucer only mentions that Emelye was "clothed al in grene" (l. 1686) on the hunt. He further reduces her role by having Theseus find Arcites and Palamon (l. 1698). Arcites had been banished and Palamon was supposed to be in prison. Boccaccio saves them from Theseus' wrath and judgment by having Theseus promise amnesty before they tell him who they are and what they are doing (5. 85-88). Chaucer gains a reprieve for the knights through the intercession of the women.

> The queen anon, for verray wommanhede,
> Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,
> And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.
> Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
> That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle,
> For gentil men they were of greet estaat,
> And no thyng but for love was this debaat;
> And saugh hir blody woundes wyde and soore,
> And alle crieden, bothe lasse and moore,
> "Have mercy, Lord, upon us wommen alle!"
> And on hir bare knees adoun they falle
> And wolde have kist his feet there as he stood;
> Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,
> For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte. (l. 1748-1761)

For all that he has to compress his account, Chaucer can find enough space to dwell on the former Amazons' groveling at Theseus' feet. Indeed, Chaucer's Emelye could use a lachrymatory for all the tears she cries; after Arcites dies, she shrieks and swoons, and she later surpasses all the others in crying at Arcites' funeral (l. 2817-2826, 2885-2886).

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Both authors have her start the fire for Arcites' pyre and then faint from grief (Boccaccio 11. 44. Chaucer I. 2941-2943), forgetting perhaps that dispatching husbands was an Amazonian specialty.

Emelye does prefer to remain unmarried, as is befitting to a devotee of Diana.

> Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I
> Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
> Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
> I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,
> A mayde, and love huntynge and velerye,
> And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
> And noght to ben a wyf and be with childe.
> Noght wol I knowe compaignye of man. (Chaucer
> I. 2304-2312)

However, she recognizes that since she is subjugated (*suggiugata*) to Theseus, it would be "convenient" (*convien*) (if not necessary) to do whatever pleases Theseus, even if that meant marrying (Boccaccio 7. 83). Emilia does not sharpen her dagger in preparation for her nuptials. Instead she recognizes that she belongs to a family network that Foucault calls a "*deployment of alliance*: a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (*Hist. Sex.* 1. 106). As the head of the family and the state, Theseus has the right to determine if, when, and whom Emilia will marry in the service of state and family alliances. Emilia's position in the hierarchy obliges her to submit to being deployed as Theseus wants. This is the antithesis of the untamed Amazon, who was always in control of her own sexuality

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and alliances, whether the particular form of the myth involved strict chastity or orgiastic frenzy. Emilia has learned her place.

Quiting the Knyght[2], or
A City of Their Own

One woman who created a place for herself was Christine de Pizan. For much of her life, she made her living as a writer in the French court, and one of the topics she liked to write about was the Amazon myth.

> Christine de Pisan [*sic*] (1363-1431) was probably the first woman ever to write about Amazons, and almost certainly the first person ever to understand Amazons as a symbol not just of transcendence, but transcendence for women. Pisan clearly understood *Amazon* as a superlative, and used the term to signify women as superb, wonderful, and glorious. (Kleinbaum 64)

Christine was a marginal figure in several ways: an Italian in France, a middle-class person amid nobles, a woman working in a male profession. Born in Venice in 1365, she spent most of her life in France, where her father moved to be a municipal counselor. His connections to the French court enabled her to receive a good education despite contemporary class and gender restrictions (Richards xix). Ironically, it was Christine's father who encouraged her to get an education; her mother's feminine opinion (*l'oppinion femenine*) was that the young Christine should engage in practices common to women (*l'usaige commun des femmes*; 2. 36. 4). Sometime after the death of Charles V in 1380, Christine's father lost

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[2]See Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* I. 3118-3119.
"Now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne,
Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale."

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favor at court; he died when she was about twenty. When she was about fifteen, Christine married Estienne de Castel, a twenty-five year old court notary. He too encouraged her scholarly pursuits. Estienne died in 1389, leaving her a widow with three children at the age of twenty-five (Richards xix-xx). Thereafter Christine supported herself and her children by writing for patronage.

Much of Christine's writing was programmatic in character as she "quited," or answered, the misogynistic tradition in literature and society. Early in her writing career (1401-1403), she was involved in the sometimes acrimonious "*querelle de la Rose*." She attacked the *Romance of the Rose* on the grounds that it encouraged immorality and denigrated women (Richards xxiv, Quilligan, *Allegory* 20). Quilligan argues that she was also trying to establish a place for herself in the world of letters.

> First, it is important to recognize that——like any other writer who was attempting to enter the canon——she would necessarily undertake a rewriting of that canon, one that might *allow* her entry. Her attack on the *Rose*——indeed her engagement in the "querelle de la *Rose*" (which subsequently developed into the Renaissance "querelle des femmes")——seems to have been quite self-consciously aimed at establishing the specific possibility of female authority. (Quilligan, *Allegory* 26)

Christine's interlocutors rounded up the usual epithets in their responses to her. Jean de Montreuil compared her to Leontium, the Greek whore who criticized Theophrastus. Others accused her of reading like a woman, to which she responded that Jean de Meun wrote like a man (Schibanoff 94-95).

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Late in her life (July 31, 1429), Christine broke the silence of her retirement in a convent to write the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, an encomium for Joan of Arc, who was then at the height of her success (Brownlee 131). Between these literary brackets, Christine wrote the *Livre de la Cité des Dames* in 1404-1407 (Curnow 1. iii). It continues her attempt to establish a place for herself among the *'auctores'*, authors. The work achieves this by providing Christine a matrilineal genealogy filled with women of honor and accomplishment (Delany 86). In this and other works, she uses the Amazon myth to provide a positive role model for women.

The *Cité des Dames* follows the form of the Boethian vision. Christine had already displayed her familiarity with Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* in *La Chemin de Long Estude* (The Long Road of Study), written in 1402 and 1403 (Richards xxiii). In that work, the main character falls asleep while reading Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and has her own dream-vision (Quilligan, *Allegory* 47-48, *Chemin* 49). The *Cité des Dames* begins as does the *Consolation of Philosophy*, with a lament over the speaker's fate. While Boethius laments his misfortunes in imperial politics (Prose 4), Christine laments her misfortune in sexual politics, her misfortune in being born a woman. Seeking diversion from her studies, she turns to a borrowed book composed by Mathéolus that she has heard discusses respect for women (*reverence des femmes*; I. 1. 1). She was referring to an actual book by Mathéolus, the *Lamentations*,

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which was a thirteenth-century satiric attack on women wherein the speaker bemoaned the fact that he was an older man who could not keep his younger wife sexually satisfied (Schibanoff 86, Quilligan, *Allegory* 149). While she can dismiss this self-proclaimed straw man as lacking, among other things, authority (*auttorité*), she finds the weight of misogynistic tradition so overwhelming and uniform that she concludes it must be right. God must have created an abominable work (*abominable ouvrage*) when he made woman (I. 1. 1).

> Adonc moy estant en ceste penssee, me sourdi une grant desplaisance et tristesce de couraige en desprisant moy meismes et tout le sexe feminin, si comme ce ce [*sic*] fust monstre en nature. (I. 1. 1)
>
> As I was pondering these things, great grief and sorrow sprang up in my soul, for I despised myself and the whole female sex, as if we were some monstrosity of nature.

Just as Boethius receives consolation from Lady Philosophia, so Christine receives encouragement from three figures who appear to her in a waking (Quilligan, *Allegory* 55) vision: Lady Reason (*dame Raison*), Lady Rectitude (*dame Droitture*), and Lady Justice (*dame Justice*; I. 4. 3-I. 6. 1). Allegorical personifications were usually female, primarily for linguistic reasons (Quilligan, "Comedy" 161). In Latin and other languages where nouns and pronouns are gendered, abstract nouns were frequently feminine to distinguish them from the masculine nouns that denoted the people who engaged in activities involving those abstractions. Thus the philosopher was a *philosophus*, while his discipline was *philosophia*.

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"Because of the generic linguistic interests of allegory, with its parades of personifications and its need to animate nouns, we are given landscapes filled with important female speakers" (Quilligan, "Comedy" 161). Even when writers wanted to make their personifications masculine, they met with difficulty. Jean Gerson, in joining with Christine in the *Querelle de la Rose*, created a male personification, Theological Eloquence, for which he used masculine pronouns. However, Christine and others who responded to him applied feminine pronouns to his figure because *eloquentia* was a feminine noun (Quilligan, "Comedy" 161).

While the personification of virtue traditionally took female form, Christine is unusual in making her personifications identify with their gender. Since supposedly chivalrous men have done little to defend women, the three figures enlist Christine's help in building a city for ladies where they can be safe from the attacks of men. No one may dwell in the city except renowned ladies and worthy women (*dames de renommee et femmes dignes*; I. 3. 7). Men, and those women who lack virtue, need not apply (I. 3. 7).

The *Cité des Dames* has a tripartite structure. In Book One, Reason supervises the laying of the city's foundation by telling stories about "warriors, queens and inventors" (Delany 83). In Book Two, Rectitude builds the walls of the city with stories of "chaste, loving and prudent women" (Delany 83). In Book Three, Justice completes the city's roofs with stories "of holy women" (Delany 83).

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Christine used Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* (1360) as one of her main sources. Like Boccaccio, Christine euhemerized pagan deities and was skeptical of tradition, preferring to rely on nature and experience (Delany 88). "Boccaccio too undertook to rewrite woman better, if not entirely good, and to redress the imbalance produced by misogynistic literature" (Delany 88). As Delany notes, Boccaccio was not entirely positive in his treatment of women, and Christine differed from him significantly. For example, she differed in her assessment of the nature of women.

> For Boccaccio, womanly fame is to be construed as a function of the individual woman's *overcoming* her "nature." He compliments these women who "surpass the endowments of womankind" (33): he attributes their accomplishments to "manly courage" (*virilem animum*, 37). (Stecopoulos 49)

Christine did not challenge the essentialism underlying Boccaccio's approach. Rather than deny that there is a female nature, she re-evaluated it, arguing that the accomplishments of women arose from their nature (Quilligan, *Allegory* 45).

> Exceptionality for Christine thus resides not in a woman's denial of her nature, but rather——despite the obstacles placed in her path——in the intensity and purity of her fidelity to it. (Stecopoulos 50)

This difference from Boccaccio implies a second difference, one involving the scope of their projects. *De Claris Mulieribus* covers only women from the pre-Christian era, with the implication that those women were not viable models for women of Boccaccio's time. Indeed, the Latin

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language of the work largely limited the audience to men. Christine's use of the vernacular French extended her audience to women. The third book of *Cité des Dames* focuses on Christian martyrs, and all three books juxtapose historic and contemporary figures. "She places all her characters within a continuum that, quite purposefully, does not distinguish between ancient and contemporary, 'real' and fictitious" (Stecopoulos 48). The effect of this structure was to present models to women who were Christine's contemporaries. Christine even levels the social chain of being and achieves universality by allowing all virtuous women to be ladies (*dames*), in contrast to the women (*mulieres*) who populate *De Claris Mulieribus*.[3]

Since Christine presents the ladies in her work as exemplars, her use of the Amazon myth radically departs from everything that precedes her. Amazons were previously challenges to men, not challenges for women. Only Quintus represents ordinary women as responding positively to the example of the Amazons, making the Trojan women arm themselves to join their men in the fight. However, he has the Trojan women return to their sewing as soon as they realize that they are not the

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[3]This last strategy separates Christine from modern feminists who reject the label "lady" as restrictive. For example, Barbara Hodgdon states, "It was, I believe, at some point during the eighteenth century that 'lady' slipped from class to gender, becoming a term that could be used to contain women" (119). The term did not just slip; Christine gave it an early push in that direction in the fifteenth century. Modern critic Susan Schibanoff updates Christine by changing Christine's ladies back to women, even changing the title of the book to "*Book of the City of Women*" (103 n10).

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exceptions that the Amazons are (Quintus I. 403-476). Long training had accustomed the Amazons to "tend work as men" (*ὅσ' ἀνέρες ἔργα μέλονται*; Quintus I. 457). Christine includes no such caveats in her work. On the contrary, for the first time the textually authorized interpretation of the myth makes Amazons positive role models for women readers. Christine must contradict her sources, which uniformly portray Amazons as negative examples to avoid or as exceptions who cannot be copied. Christine was possibly not the first woman to find the Amazons an attractive model, but she was the first woman we know about to make that re-evaluation public.

While Christine does not call upon women to emulate the combativeness of the Amazons, she embraces the Amazons as heroic ancestors who enhance the status of later women. Traditionally, men had enhanced their status by laying claim to the exploits of their illustrious ancestors who fought the Amazons (see discussion above, p. 48). By constructing the Amazons as the heroes of their own history instead of the enemy in somebody else's history, Christine establishes the potential for women to be heroes and actors on the stage of history. Christine's is an ethical construct in both the Foucaultian and the Aristotelian senses. In the Foucaultian sense, she is engaged in the process of defining herself and making a place for herself and other women that is safe from misogyny. In the Aristotelian sense, this identity she has established for herself gives her the *ἦθος*, the moral character, to speak (Aristotle,

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Rhetoric I. 2. 4). If the Amazons could successfully participate in history, then Christine could write that history. While the soldier's work seems the antithesis of the clerk's, both were thought to be men's work. If women could succeed in one field, then why not in the other?

While Christine discusses the accomplishments of individual Amazons in several places, the most important function of the Amazons may be in providing a model for the city of ladies itself. Indeed, the idea for the city seems to be an amalgamation of the Amazons and Augustine's City of God. Early in Book One, Reason develops a typological comparison between the Amazons and the city Christine is to help build.[1] Established by ladies who despised servitude (to men, apparently), the Amazonian nation spread far enough and lasted long enough to demonstrate the viability of an all-woman society. The term "ladies" (*dames*) implies a degree of civilization far removed from the wild barbarians of the original Greek myths. Nevertheless, the Amazons declined, as do all earthly principalities (*mondaines seigneuries*).

Christine's city would belong to a different realm that would not decay (I. 4. 1-3), the realm of the Augustinian City of God (*civitas Dei*;

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[1]Typology developed as a method of interpreting the Old Testament in light of the New. "Types" were "persons, actions and events" from the Old Testament that were historically real but that also prefigured "antitypes," persons, actions, and events in the New Testament that resembled them. Old Testament promises found New Testament fulfillments (Abrams 89).

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Christine III. 18. 9). In Book Two, Rectitude reiterates the typological connection.

> Et ores est un nouvel royaume de Femenie encommencié; mais trop plus est digne que celluy de jadis. (II. 12. 1)
>
> And from now on a new realm of Femenie has commenced, which is worthier by far to the old realm.

"Femenie" is an alternate term for Amazonia. Christine thus differs from Augustine in the secular model for her version of the *civitas Dei*. Whereas Augustine relied on Rome as the model for his city, Christine turned to Femenie as the model for hers. The result for the new Femenie is that it, like the old, is composed solely of women. By contrast, Augustine, responding to a contemporary belief that women will be resurrected as men, assures his readers that the City of God will include women who are both "conformed to the image of the Son of God" (*conformes imaginis filii Dei*) and yet still "in the female sex" (*in sexu femineo*; *Civ. D.* 22. 17). The new Femenie will have a new Queen (II. 12. 2), a Queen who turns out to be none other than Mary, mother of Jesus (III. 1. 1). Thus Christine turns Mary into the last Queen of the Amazons. Against the Amazon Mary, not only would Theseus be completely outclassed, but so would Heracles, Bellerophon, and indeed the whole pagan pantheon. Christine also makes Mary the head of a female chain of being, the empress of all the female sex (*empereris de tout leur sexe*; II. 12. 2). In Christine's chain of being, Amazonia is not a breach of the proper hierarchy, but an image of that hierarchy. Christine's independent

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hierarchy does in fact subvert her era's chain of being, which was unilineal and in which women were inferior to men. Christine preserves the need for women to submit to their husbands (III. 19. 2), but she provides women with a chain of being of their own wherein they can relate to one another independently of men. Christine has played her trump card, and it is the Queen.

Christine does not neglect the original Amazons. Her extended treatment of the Amazons' history is in Book One, associating them with Wisdom and the foundation of the city. They logically belong among the queens and warriors who form the foundation (Delany 83). Christine places them immediately after Semiramis, who was the first stone of the city of ladies. Semiramis had ruled Nineveh and re-established the city of Babylon (I. 15. 1-2).

The scope and organization of *Cité des Dames* is closer to Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris* than to any other source. Nevertheless, Christine does not follow Boccaccio's arrangement of the material on Amazons; instead, she follows the order of the *Histoire ancienne* (Curnow 1062). Boccaccio deals with Marteia and Lampedo in chapter eleven, Orithyia and Antiope in chapter eighteen, Penthesilea in chapter thirty, and Thamyris in chapter forty-seven. Christine mostly follows this order in her account of the Amazons (I. 16. 1 - I. 19. 3), but she treats the stories together in one narrative and positions the story of Thamyris and Cyrus after the story of Marpasia and Lampheto. The story of Thamyris

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was one of Christine's favorites; she had previously included it in the *Mutacion de Fortune* (ll. 9535-9602) and the *Epistre Othea* (LVII). Thamyris was the queen of Scythia in Boccaccio's writings (47). In the ultimate source of the story, Herodotus, she was the queen of the Massagetae, a Scythian tribe (Herodotus I. 201). Thamyris' shift from Massagetean queen to Scythian queen to Amazon queen is understandable given the shifts in geographical understanding that occurred over time. Herodotus viewed the Scythians as a distinct set of tribes, but most later sources "grouped many of the northern tribes under this designation" (DiMarco 76). Thus Thamyris shifted from Massagetean to Scythian, and the close association between Scythians and Amazons provided Christine the opportunity to complete the metamorphosis.

Several of Christine's divergences from Boccaccio fit into her broader pattern of affirming the worth and potential of women. Boccaccio states that the Amazons were able to fight despite the fact that they were "only women" or "women alone" (*feminas solas*; 11/12. 4). Christine has no such reference, since for her the Amazons were examples of what women could do given the chance, not exceptions to female nature. Furthermore, the Amazons of both Boccaccio (11) and the *Histoire ancienne* (Curnow 1062) kill their male babies, while Christine's return their male babies to the fathering tribes (I. 16. 1). This change humanizes Christine's Amazons.

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Figure 4. Thamyris decapitates Cyrus. (Miélot pl. 57)

Christine's arrangement of the Amazon material enables her to present a unified history of the country, while simultaneously preserving Boccaccio's focus on a few outstanding queens. She uses her *auctoritates* freely, reconstructing them into the image she desired even as they had tried to construct her as they wished (I. 1. 1). Knowledge from these sources was not fixed; ironic statements and disagreements among the scholars gave Christine room to construct her city of good

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knowledge about women (I. 2. 2). Christine gives much of the usual information about the Amazons: they were based in Scythia; they arose when most of their men died in war; they expelled the remaining men; and they mated annually with men in surrounding areas, keeping their daughters and sending the sons to the men (I. 16. 1). She gives the standard popular etymology for 'Amazons' as breastless ones (*desmamellees*), but she has a new twist that is based on the medieval class system. She states that daughters of nobles had the left breast seared so they could carry shields, while commoners had the right breast seared so they could draw the bow more effectively. Christine thus allows the noble Amazons to fight in the nobler hand-to-hand combat. Fairly early in accounts of the myth, the way Amazons fought was distinguished from the way men fought as part of the emphasis on Amazon as other. Here Christine makes the Amazons fight like the men they face (I. 16. 1).

The nascent Amazon nation crowned Lampheto and Marpasia as joint queens. They led a series of campaigns that extended their realm into Europe and Asia. Christine includes the ancient belief that the Amazons founded Ephesus. This tradition provides Christine with a model for her own city-building. Boccaccio has Marpasia die as a victim of her overconfidence (*Marpesia nimium sui fidens*), ending his chapter with a defeat for the Amazons (11/12. 10). In fact, since his Thamyris is a

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Scythian rather than an Amazon, Boccaccio is able to end all his Amazon stories with a defeat for the Amazons. Like most of the writers who had previously dealt with the myth, Boccaccio seeks a happy ending to the Amazon story: happy for the men, that is. Seeking happy endings for women in general, Christine supplies such endings to the Amazons where she can. Following the death of Marpasia, Marpasia's daughter Synoppe arose and killed the inhabitants of the country that had defeated her mother. Christine ends the section with the Amazons spreading triumphantly (I. 16. 1).

Christine next shows the Amazons at their zenith during the war between Thamyris and Cyrus. Had she followed the normal chronology, Christine would have placed her account of Penthesilea at this point, since the Persian wars followed the Trojan War. Apparently Christine wanted to present the rise and decline of the Amazons as a smooth curve. The Greeks had emphasized parallels between the Amazons and the Persians, orientalizing the Amazons. Christine picks a story where the Amazons fight and even defeat the Persians, with the effect of "de-orientalizing" the Amazons and of making Amazons and the Greeks share a common enemy.

Despite Christine's changing of Thamyris from a Scythian to an Amazon, she preserves Thamyris' motive for seeking revenge against Cyrus: Cyrus' army has killed her son when he attacked the Persians (I. 17. 2). Since Amazons were not supposed to keep sons, much less let

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men bear arms, Christine's version lacks some consistency. She has an overriding need to provide Thamyris with a motive strong enough to explain her actions, which otherwise would seem excessive. Thamyris acts not only as a ruler defending her territory but also as a mother avenging her son (Quilligan, *Allegory* 88). Some versions of the myth had the Amazons destroying their sons, and, as noted, even Christine has the Amazons sending their sons to live with the fathers (I. 16. 1). Here, however, Christine has the Amazon keep her son and deploy her violence, not against him, but in his behalf (Quilligan, *Allegory* 88). Christine's account both explains Thamyris' vengeance and transforms the Amazon into a good mother, where before Amazons had been "notorious for killing off all their male children in order to maintain their single-sex kingdom" (Quilligan, *Allegory* 87).

While Cyrus advances through her territory, Thamyris launches an ambush that destroys his army and results in his capture. Christine has Cyrus brought to her and pronounces the following judgment on him.

> "Cirus, qui par cruauté oncques ne fus saoulé de sanc d'ommes, or en puez boire a ta voulenté." (I. 17. 2)
>
> "Cyrus, due to your cruelty, you were never able to drink your fill of the blood of men. Now then, drink as much as you want."

Here the tradition Christine uses is remarkably close to the ultimate source, Herodotus.

> "*σὲ δ' ἐγώ, κατά περ ἠπείλησα, αἵματος κορέσω.*" (I. 214)
>
> "Just as I boasted, I shall glut you on blood."

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Christine then has Cyrus decapitated and his head thrown into a tub (*tine*) filled with the blood of his barons. This scene was compelling enough to warrant illustrating (figure 4). Despite the somewhat incongruous male executioner, it casts women as heroic enough to defeat even the most powerful of men, subverting the standard versions of the myth that showed men heroic enough to overcome even the most powerful of women.

The rest of the stories that Christine tells about the Amazons do not show the same amount of success as Thamyris' defeat of Cyrus, but Christine does manage to mitigate the defeats the Amazons do suffer. She next tells about the expedition of Hercules and Theseus against the Amazons. Christine does not deny the success of the men in their enterprise, for the tradition of their success is too integral to the story. She does, however, reduce their triumph. The heading of the section even seems to give the Amazons the victory, proclaiming that Menalippe and Hippolyta knock Hercules and Theseus, horses and all, into a pile (*les abatirent, chevaulx et tout, en un mont*; I. 18. 1). Only later does the reader learn that this was but a temporary setback for the men and that they were able to capture their female opponents (I. 18. 4).

In the story itself, Christine calls the Greeks' heroism into question in her portrayal of their motives. In Boccaccio, Theseus had the usual heroic motives for fighting the Amazons: the desire for glory, anger at the arrogance of the Amazons, and the desire to restore order. The Greeks in

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Christine's works fight from a pure motive: pure fear. Christine refers to the Greeks' fear of the Amazons five times in this short tale. The Greeks are so afraid that they send their champion Hercules against them in a pre-emptive strike. Christine drops any reference to Hercules being there to perform the labor of obtaining the girdle of Hippolyta. Even Hercules is afraid of the Amazons' great power and daring, and he accordingly attacks by surprise and at night. It enhances the heroic stature of the Amazons in particular and women in general that Hercules, who could defeat any creature, fears the might of women (*redoubtast force de femmes*; I. 18. 2).

During the sneak attack, the Greeks attack and kill the unarmed women they meet, greatly reducing their chivalrous stature and making them like the other men depicted in the *Cité des Dames* who attack women unprovoked. In contrast to the fearful Greek attitude, Orithyia, the queen of the Amazons, does not fear the Greeks at all (*qui de riens elle ne craint*; I. 18. 2). She immediately begins to gather her forces. The Greeks are fortunate that Menalippe and Hippolyta attack by themselves before Orithyia can marshal her forces. Learning that the Greeks have her champions, Orithyia agrees to a parley. Such is the Greek fear of the Amazons that they only request the armor of Menalippe and Hippolyta and that the Amazons agree not to attack Greece but to be their good friends (*bonnes amies*). When the expedition returns to Greece with the news that the Amazons have agreed not to attack, the Greeks rejoice as

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they never have before, "for there was nothing which they feared as much" (*car riens n'estoit que tant redeubtassent*) as the Amazons (I. 18. 6).

Theseus was the central figure of the *Teseida*; in Christine's version, he is only the second to "Hercules" (her spelling). Furthermore, the story is told from the perspective of the Amazons. He may no longer represent reason and order, but Theseus is still valiant and courageous (*le vaillant et le preux)*, and his motives are noble. He joins Hercules so that Hercules will not have to go without him (I. 18. 2); at no point in the story does Theseus fear. Furthermore, his relationship to Hippolyta is honorable. He does not forcibly take her back to Greece and make her his concubine, as in the original myth. Instead, Theseus has Hercules ask the queen for Hippolyta's hand. When the Amazons did marry, they apparently did so conventionally. In the patriarchal model, the father arranges for the daughter's marriage. In most Amazon stories, women arranged their own liaisons. Christine has Orithyia marry off Hippolyta in the patriarchal manner, making the Amazons more like Christine's audience and thus less exotic. Theseus and Hippolyta marry in a "majestic wedding ceremony" (*grandes . . . faittes les noces*) and return to Greece (I. 18. 6). Their son Hippolytus would later be very renowned (*moult renommé*); Christine does not refer to his tragic fate, nor does she limit him to the full but anonymous life that Virgil gave him (*Aeneid* 7.

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761-782). Not only does her Amazon enter normal society in a standard way, but she is integrated into that society smoothly.

The *Teseida* also allows the Amazons to be integrated into Greek society, but at the cost of their own culture. Boccaccio's Theseus re-establishes patriarchy in Amazonia (1. 34-38); Christine's Hercules and Theseus leave the matriarchy intact. The *Teseida*, which covers a long span of time following the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, does not mention any children. Most earlier treatments of the Hippolyta myth implied that mating with an Amazon was perilous due to the potential attenuation of the father-child link among their offspring (see discussion above, p. 51). This is a nominal problem in *Cité des Dames* (Hippolytus is named for his mother, not his father), but it is only a nominal one. Again, Christine's design was to stress the normality of female excellence and the potential for any woman to achieve great things. Her emphasis in the myth differed from that of earlier versions which portrayed the Amazons as dangerous and exotic.

The last extended story Christine tells about the Amazons is that of Penthesilea. Penthesilea went to Troy toward the close of the Trojan War to try to lift the siege and to see Hector, whom she loved "honorably" (*honourablement*). Christine is perhaps responding to Boccaccio's account in *De Mulieribus Claris*, where Penthesilea arrives with the hope of becoming pregnant by Hector (xxx). Christine's Penthesilea is so high-minded (*hault courage*) that she remains a virgin all her life (*et vierge fu*

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toute sa vie; I. 19. 1). If women were to break social standards by assuming leadership roles, they had to be all the more careful to meet social norms in other areas. Boccaccio has Penthesilea arriving in time to meet Hector. Christine has her arrive after the deaths of both Hector and (apparently) Achilles. Her main Greek opponent is Pyrrhus, Achilles' son. In their first skirmish, Penthesilea gives Pyrrhus an almost mortal wound; the Greeks must quickly save him lest he die (I. 19. 2). After this Pyrrhic defeat, Penthesilea then leads her forces against the beleaguered Greeks while Pyrrhus slowly recovers. Christine thus grants Penthesilea a degree of success that she had not usually had in the accounts of her exploits. Nevertheless, Penthesilea's fate was firmly fixed in tradition. Upon his recovery, Pyrrhus returns to do battle with Penthesilea. He waits until several of his men separate her from her forces, wear her down with fighting, smash her armor, and knock off one quarter of her helmet. Pyrrhus, no model of chivalry, steps in to split her head and kill her (I. 19. 2). Penthesilea dies as she must, but Christine does not allow the Greeks much glory from their victory. Furthermore, Christine emphasizes that Penthesilea's defeat was not the end of Amazonia. This contrasts with earlier treatments that killed off the Amazons after their defeats. Diodorus went so far as to have Heracles exterminate the Amazons entirely (4. 16. 4) only to revive them shortly thereafter so Theseus could also defeat them (4. 28. 2). Diodorus' approach emphasizes the success of the Greek men in defeating the Amazons; Christine emphasizes the

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Amazons' perseverance in the face of male opposition, using them as precursors of her own perseverance.

As evidence of the Amazons' perseverance, Christine refers to the tradition from Pseudo-Callisthenes that Alexander visited Amazonia and extorted tribute from them without a battle (Curnow 1965, Pseudo-Callisthenes 25. 1-28. 1). In Christine's account, the Amazons receive Alexander, but she does not mention tribute (I. 19. 3). Like all secular kingdoms, the Amazon nation declined (I. 4. 3). However, since the Amazons had existed at the time of the Trojan War, their continued existence in the time of Alexander demonstrates their own longevity and the viability of women's endeavors (I. 19. 3).

Christine's conclusion to *Cité des Dames* seems surprisingly conventional by modern examples. She calls upon the inhabitants of the city (her female readers) to be virtuous (*vertueuses*) and humble (*humbles*). Her married ladies should be subject (*subiettes*) to their husbands, even if the husbands were abusive (III. 19. 1-2). Yet this advice is part of her strategy: women of integrity will silence their male critics.

> Voyez, mes dames, comment ses [*sic*] hommes vous accusent de tant de vices de toutes pars. Faittes les tous menteurs par monstrer vestre vertu et prouvés mençongeurs ceulx qui vous blasment lar bien faire. (III. 19. 6)
>
> See, my ladies, how these men accuse you of so many vices of so many kinds. Make them liars by demonstrating your virtue and prove those who criticize you perjurers by acting well.

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By leading lives of integrity, Christine's readers would provide an ostensive refutation of the misogynistic tradition to support Christine's textual refutation. Christine's defense of women in the opening scene centered on the disparity between the claims of the misogynists and the conduct of actual women (I. 1. 1). Unvirtuous women would lend credence to those claims, so Christine exhorts her readers to be virtuous. This virtue would break the link between women and animality, sensuality, and vice; women were as capable of spirituality as men.[5] That is why the third book of *Cité des Dames* is a martyrology showing the faithfulness and spirituality of women *in extremis*. Christine does not directly address the question of whether virtue might not itself be a kind of trap that would overly limit a woman's scope of action. From her own career, however, it is clear that Christine did not simply equate virtue with conformity to social mores.

Quilligan notes that virtue could serve a strategic purpose. She considers whether "Christine's rhetoric is a collapse into conventionality, a recourse to Machiavellian modes of deception, or if it contains some savvy *Realpolitik* hints at how to maximize power when given limited room for maneuver" (*Allegory* 245). Quilligan's phrasing of the question implies her answer. She notes that Christine dedicated the *Cité des Dames* to Isabeau of Bavaria, queen of France. The frontispiece to the

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[5]Veronese's "La Virtù che frena il Vizio" (93 above) illustrates this identification of woman with sensuality and man with spirituality.

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presentation volume was a picture of Christine presenting the *Cité des Dames* to Isabeau (Quilligan, *Allegory* 248-249). Isabeau was married to the insane King Charles VI, and she had been named as the legal ruler of France in 1402. When Christine wrote in 1405, Isabeau's popularity was beginning to decline due to accusations of adultery, to her profligate spending and to her failure to care for her husband, who "wandered castle halls ill-kempt, unwashed, and vermin-infested" (Quilligan, *Allegory* 247).

Christine was aware of the problems associated with a woman who wielded power: chronic anxieties about gender could quickly become acute. According to Quilligan, Christine in the conclusion to the *Cité des Dames* was anticipating the argument of the sequel, the *Trésor de la cité des dames*. In the latter book, "Christine outlines a program of scrupulous and publicly displayed adherence to the strictest rules of moral virtue whereby a woman of authority may establish and maintain an excellent reputation" (*Allegory* 251). A solid reputation would constitute the *ethos* Isabeau needed to reign. As a revisionist history of women, the *Cité des Dames* is not an attempt to develop knowledge of women in a vacuum, separated from knowledge and ethics. Christine was exercising her own power by writing the *Cité des Dames*, and she was trying to make it easier for other women to exercise power. This attempt applied to the low as well as the great; in the opening scene, the narrator claims that by confronting the misogynistic tradition, she is giving voice to the concerns expressed to her by women of all levels of society: "princesses,

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great ladies, and women of the middle and lower classes" (*princepces, grandes dames, moyennes et petites*; I. 1. 1). The behavior Christine enjoins may be what she thought were the best means women could use to establish their own authority.

If Isabeau, Christine, and other women were to be successful in breaching certain traditions to enter the "masculine" sphere, they would have to be all the more conventional in other areas. Furthermore, despite the conventionality of the conclusion, the body of the *Cité des Dames* greatly expands the range of conduct available to ladies by including many examples that contemporary society would deem unladylike behavior. The Amazons were only one of those examples.

Christine lived to see her ideal incarnated and possibly incinerated (depending on the date of Christine's death). Jehanne d'Arc fulfilled Christine's hopes for women and justified her fears. Her fate confirmed Christine's suspicion that "noble men" (*nobles hommes*), who were required to protect women, often did not (*Cité des Dames* I. 3. 3). Joan needed her virtues to offset her military activities and her transvestite dress. Yet her virginity, her visions, her testimonials by the clergy, and her military victories were not enough to save her from charges of witchcraft and illicit sexual conduct or from the English stake (Bullough 3. 25-34, 56-61, 74-77). Nevertheless, these qualities had an impact. Shakespeare's account of Joan in *Henry VI, Part I* followed the negative

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propaganda started in England by Edward Hall (Bullough 3. 12), but in the long term the portrait hurt the play's image more than Joan's.

> Warburton and other eighteenth-century editors, repelled by its [*Henry VI, Part I*'s] coarse depiction of Joan of Arc and by its alleged inelegance of style, assumed that Shakespeare could not have written such a sorry thing. (Baker 587)

Christine composed *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc,* which was the first known poem in honor of Joan and the only one published while Joan was alive. She completed the poem on July 31, 1429 (Kennedy and Varty 53-54). "Medieval France's greatest woman writer thus ended her long literary career with a celebration of medieval France's greatest woman hero" (Brownlee 131). Not only was Joan's advent good for "the legitimate king of France" ("*Du roy de France legitime*"; *Ditié* IV), and for the nation of France (X), but also for women as a gender.

> Hee! quel honneur au femenin
> Sexe! (XXXV)
>
> Oh, what an honor for the female sex!

Christine does not follow the precedent of *Cité des Dames* in calling Joan a *dame*; instead, she calls her "the Maid" ("*la Pucelle*"), with the revaluation of the word into an honorific that became standard (XIV). Indeed, Joan becomes a figure of a divine reversal of fortune that lifts up the fallen and humble and dashes the proud (VIII-IX).[6] Winter gives way

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[6]This kind of reversal was the subject of various psalms in the Old Testament, such as Psalm 107:39-43. It entered the specifically Christian tradition through the *Magnificat* of Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Jesus' Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-26), and other similar passages.

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to spring (I-III), the French beat back the English, and a Maid leads them (XIII). Joan demonstrated how much power a woman could exercise in spite of the obstacles society put in the way.

Christine does not directly compare Joan to the Amazons, despite the similarities between Joan and Christine's Amazons. Instead, Christine compares Joan to figures from the Christian tradition: Moses (XXIII), Joshua (XXV), Gideon (XXVI), Esther, Judith, and Deborah (XXVIII). She makes one possible comparison between Joan and the Amazons when she declares, "Neither Hector nor Achilles had such power!" ("*Tel force n'ot Hector n'Achilles*!"; XXXVI). Because of the traditional link between Penthesilea and Hector and Achilles, the men are possibly a link between Joan and the Amazons, albeit an indirect one. Joan supersedes the Amazons because of her present success and because of her allegiance to Christ and king.

> Joan's literal, historical *success* (in striking contradistinction to the failure of the earlier, exemplary bellatrices Penthesilea and Camilla, *Cité de* [*sic*] *Dames* I. 19 and I. 24) is thus an inherent part both of her identity and of her authorization. (Brownlee 138)

Christine and Joan authorize each other. The *Ditié* supports Joan in her military endeavors and serves as a balance against invectives (Stecoloulos 58), while Joan's success "validates . . . Christine's entire previous literary career" (Brownlee 150). Quilligan even argues that Christine's previous writings arguing in favor of "the authority of women" and her frequent, positive portraits of Amazons could have helped "in preparing

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the French dauphin and his court to accept a low-born female teenager as a savior of France" (*Allegory* 279-280).

> Her constant retelling of the Amazon myth, arguing for their legitimate domain in a martial realm of their own in text after text, could very well have prepared the culture at court to see a woman warrior as something other than a monster. (Quilligan, *Allegory* 280)

While Joan herself would probably not have been familiar with the Amazon myth, given her background as a shepherd's daughter, Christine's influence might have helped prevent the court from expelling her out of hand or burning her itself. She would not therefore have helped produce the Amazonian Joan but rather the context in which Joan could exist. Consciously or not, Joan followed a path blazed by Christine's good Amazons.

Conclusion

Much of the medieval treatment of the Amazon myth arose from and paralleled the ancient uses of the myth. Amazons continued to be a breach of the male-female hierarchy, with that hierarchy now reinforced by the great chain of being and by the authority of the Bible. Boccaccio's Theseus considered the Amazons an affront to the natural order and undertook to restore that order by conquering Amazonia. Because this was a fight with forces of chaos from outside rather than a dispute among insiders, Theseus did not have to restrict himself to the chivalric code. Boccaccio thus continued the tradition of regarding the Amazons as outsiders, as other contraposed to the European self. Theseus

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established his heroic ethos by exercising power over himself and the Amazons (among others).

Most versions of the myth continue to encourage the audience to identify with and derive glory from the men against the Amazons. The heroes are the men who overcome the Amazons, not the Amazons who oppose them. Even when Boccaccio includes Amazon tales in *De Mulieribus Claris*, he takes pains to distinguish the women in the stories from the women from his era. Into this situation came Christine de Pizan, who not only was a woman but also explicitly identified with women in her writing. In Christine's retelling of the myth, the Amazons became for the first time an exemplar for women. The Amazons had always been a matriarchy, usually one made up of "single mothers." Christine's innovation was the unprecedented step of making the Amazons good mothers and of making *the* good mother (the Virgin Mary) into an Amazon (see 116 and 122 above). While Christine's practical parenesis remained steadfastly traditional (Quilligan, *Allegory* 247-251), her description of the Amazons' annual mating ritual was non-judgmental. Women's pre-marital virginity and post-marital fidelity, so important in most patriarchal systems, would lose their inherent importance in an Amazonian society. Motherhood was a two-way relationship between mother and child, not a three-way relationship among mother, father, and child or a mere link of father to child. A woman could be a good mother without reference to a father. The myth had previously served to exalt the men who conquered

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the Amazons as exemplars for other men; Amazons were hitherto negative models for men to forestall and women to eschew lest they destroy society. Christine put a positive value on the Amazons' accomplishments and described them as illustrations of what women could do rather than as exceptions to the natural frailty of women. For Christine, women as well as men could become heroes, and Amazons were one example of heroic women.

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CHAPTER 4

RENAISSANCE MAN, AMAZON WOMAN

Introduction

The two most notable functions of the Amazon myth during the Renaissance are its use in thinking about the peoples being discovered through exploration and its use in analyzing gender relations at home. The Amazons had always been a peripatetic nation; the ancients located them first in one place and then in another. Plutarch early noted the tendency of geographers to border their maps with *terra incognita*.

> . . . *αἰτίας παραγράφουσιν ὅτι "Τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα θῖνες ἄνυδροι καὶ θηριώδεις" ἢ "πηλὸς ἀϊδνὴς" ἢ "Σκυθικὸν κρύος" ἢ "πέλαγος πεπηγός, . . ."* (*Theseus* 1. 1)
>
> They add the explanation, "The things that lie beyond are sandy desert and wild beasts," or "dusky marsh," or "Scythian frost," or "frozen sea, . . ."

Amazons typically dwelt in the "here be monsters" sections of such maps. They could exist as close to Greece as Ephesus and Smyrna (Strabo 11. 5. 4). Usually, however, they ranged farther afield in places such as Libya (Diodorus 3. 55. 5), Scythia (Herodotus 4. 114), or even Atlantis (Diodorus 3. 54). It is no surprise, then, that when European explorers ventured forth, they were on the lookout for Amazons. The

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Amazon myth provided the explorers with a model to interpret certain of the phenomena they encountered and with an incentive to persevere in their quests.

> Renaissance romances gave Amazons sexual as well as financial appeal, and Califia and her golden armor, her extraordinary beauty and wealth, were to play a part of great importance in the New World. (Kleinbaum 114)

The Amazon myth also provided a moral justification for conquest. Zamora argues that early explorers gendered the New World as feminine and their home cultures as masculine. Such gendering was self-serving. According to Zamora, the explorers had internalized the Aristotelian notion of "the natural slave," who "is a physically gifted but intellectually and morally deficient being" (Zamora 171, cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1. 5. 1132). "In this scheme, of course, the female is inferior to the male" (Zamora 171). Putative Amazons in the New World were evidence of its femininity and of its need for patriarchal order imposed by natural rulers (European males). Of course, the fantasy of conquering an Amazon still provided the fantasizer with a heroic identity.

The Amazon myth also proved useful in the consideration of trends taking place in European countries, especially Italy and Britain. The roles of women were changing as societies changed. Debates raged over the proper roles of women in society in general and in positions of authority in particular. Elizabeth I of England is the most famous instance of the powerful women in the era, but she was not the only such example. The

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"embarrassing" existence of powerful women and female heirs invited comparisons to a society where such were the rule (Sullivan 75).

> In this [Amazonian] form of matrilineal government, property consistently passes *through* women *to* women. In a patrilineal government, the power and property that pass through women occasionally get to a female heir. . . . [S]uch a woman is a structural anomaly and an embarrassing contradiction to the natural hierarchy of gender. (Sullivan 75)

Anxieties regarding the roles of women and fantasies about exotic women helped drive Renaissance versions of the Amazon.

New World, Old Amazons

The discovery of the New World and the discovery of New World Amazons were practically contemporaneous. Columbus' expedition spotted land on October 11, 1492 and landed on October 12, 1492 (Columbus, *Diario* 11 Oct. 1492).[1] On January 13, 1493, Columbus learned from a helpful "Indian" about the island of Matinino, an island that was inhabited only by women and that was rich in *tuob* (a native term for gold or copper) (Columbus, *Diario* 12 Jan. 1493).[2] In his translation of Columbus' *Diario*, Robert Fuson makes the following note about Matinino:

> The island of Martinique. The Island of Women was a myth, but it certainly fired up a lot of explorers, rivaling the legend of the Seven Cities and *El Dorado*. (174 n. 9)

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[1]Because of the number of versions of Columbus' *Log*, I refer to the entry dates rather than to the page number of a particular edition.

[2]The log entry for 12 January covers the next day also.

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While Columbus did not formally identify the women of Matinino as Amazons, the connection is not difficult to make. Columbus summarized his first voyage in a letter dated March 1493 (Fagg vii). In it, he ascribed standard Amazonian attributes to these women.

> Hæ autem feminæ nullum sui sexûs opus exercent: utuntur enim arcubus et spiculis, sicuti de earum conjugibus dixi, muniunt sese laminis æneis quarum maxima apud eas copia exsistit. (*Four Voyages* 15)
>
> Moreover, these women do not practice any woman's work, for they use bows and spears, as I said about their mates. They protect themselves with plates of armor made of bronze, of which a great abundance exists among them.

Those who spread the word of Columbus' discoveries did not hesitate to apply the Amazon label to the women of Matinino. The second book published in England about "the newe India," Richard Eden's 1553 translation of Sebastian Münster's universal cosmography (Eden vii), introduced England to some of new India's racier inhabitants.

> As the Admirall departed from the Iland of the *Canibales*, and went foreward on his viage, he passed by many Ilandes: among the whiche was one called *Matinina*, in whyche dwell only women, after the maner of them, called *Amazones*, as he learned of the men of the Ilandes which he brought with him into Spayne at his fyrste viage, and saued them from the fearsenes of the *Canibales*. (30)

Münster and Eden preserve Columbus' association of the Amazons with a savage tribe called the Canibales. These "mates" of the women were the members of an all-male tribe living on an island to the west of Matinino. Columbus' native informants called this island either Carib or Caniba, with its inhabitants being '*caníbales*' (Columbus, *Diario* 17 Dec.

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1492, 13 Jan. 1493). The most notable feature of this tribe was a certain dietary practice succinctly noted by Columbus.

> [H]i carne humana vescuntur. (Columbus, *Four Voyages* 14)
>
> They eat human flesh.

This "discovery" inspired the imaginations of those back home and even affected their languages. *'Caníbal'* and its cognates have largely displaced the cognates derived from the Greek *ἀνθρωποφάγος* (*anthropophagos*) that had until then been the dominant terms in western European languages for those who ingest human flesh.

The juxtaposition of Matinino and Caniba recapitulates the ancient association of the bloodthirsty Scythians with the Amazons (Herodotus 4. 64-65, 110-117). Like the ancient Gargarians (Strabo 11. 5. 1), the men of Caribe made the annual pilgrimage to Matinino to mate with the women; sons were sent to the men, and the women kept the daughters (*Diario* 16 January 1493). Winds, leaky ships, and incompetent native Americans who did not know how to point the exact direction of the islands kept Columbus from reaching his fantasy islands of cannibals and Amazons (*Diario* 16 January 1493). This part of Columbus' report also circulated through Europe, as Richard Eden's 1555 English translation of Peter Martyr's *Decades* demonstrates.

> By the waye, there appeared from the Northe. A great Ilande which the captiues that were taken in *Hispaniola*, called *Madanino*, or *Matitino*: Affirmynge it to be inhabited only with women: To whom the *Canibales* haue accesse at certen tymes of the yeare, as in owlde tyme the *Thracians* had to the *Amazones* in the Ilande of *Lesbos*. (Martyr 69)

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Although Columbus never found the Island of Women, it fit nicely into his overall discourse. He viewed the territories that he explored in feminine terms and the culture that sent him in masculine terms.

> Columbian writing ultimately interprets the difference between Europeans and Indians as a gender difference, not in the sexual or biological sense, but as difference ideologized and inscribed onto a cultural economy where gender becomes fundamentally a question of value, power, and dominance. (Zamora 173-174)

Columbus described the native Americans in terms of their beauty, their nudity, "their cowardice, and their apparently spontaneous and natural subservience to the Spaniards" (Zamora 173). Barbaric cannibals of Carib, effeminate natives, and masculine, independent women all demonstrated the need for the establishment of a proper hierarchy that would bring salvation to the ruled and fortune to the rulers.

Columbus' feminization of the territories he was exploring took a rather strange turn. The familiar myth is that Columbus sailed west to prove the world was round. Many people have also been taught that Columbus adopted the idea of the earth's size and spherical shape from Ptolemy and that Columbus was simply the first to apply that theory to reaching the east by travelling west. However, in the *Relación del Tercer Viaje*, Columbus modified the Ptolemaic theory of the spherical earth. Ptolemy's mistake was in thinking that the whole world was as round as the hemisphere he inhabited (215). Columbus speculated that the earth had a bulge, having the form of a pear (*de la forma de una pera*) or of a ball with a bulge like a woman's nipple (*una teta de muger allí puesta*;

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Textos 215). The world's "nipple" (*peçón*) was in the East, where he thought he was, along the equator (215). Because of its height, it was the part of the world closest to heaven.

> . . . y qu'esta parte d'este peçón sea la más alta e más propinca al cielo. (*Textos* 215)
>
> upon part of which is the nipple, which is the highest and closest to the heavens.

Columbus believed that the Earthly Paradise (*Paraíso Terrenal*) was located at the top of the breast, which was a gradual incline rather than a steep mountain. Columbus' geography here bears the stamp, not so much of Ptolemy, as of Dante. Dante placed Purgatory on the opposite side of the world from Jerusalem, so that sunrise at Purgatory was sunset at Jerusalem (Dante, *Purgatorio* 2. 1-9). Dante's Purgatory was an island mountain with seven levels, each of which was dedicated to purging one of the deadly sins (Musa viii). The poet makes his way up the mountain until he reaches the top, which is the "place chosen for the cradle of humankind" (*luogo eletto / a l'umana natura per suo nido*), that is, Eden (Dante 28. 77-78). Columbus differed from Dante in that his mountain had a mild incline, whereas Dante's mountain was difficult to climb, especially at first when more sin weighed down the penitents (Dante 12. 115-126). Furthermore, Columbus does not identify the rise under the terrestrial paradise as Purgatory. Entrance to Columbus' paradise could come only through divine will (*voluntad divina*), but Columbus believed he had drawn nigh unto that paradise (*Textos* 218), just as he identified the

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Canaries as the mythic Blessed Isles (*las islas Fortunate, que son las Canarias*; 217).

> This startling interpretation of the shape and location of Paradise, . . . illustrates the culmination of the process of feminization——in this case, even eroticization——of the sign "Indies" that began in the *Diario*. . . .
>
> Paradise, Columbus warns, is not accessible to men except through divine intervention. As in classical and medieval literature, the Garden is symbolic of the ideal, of yearning and nonpossession, of desire and inaccessibility. But through the eroticization in the "Relación" Paradise enters abruptly——as a fruit-breast——into the discursive economies of appropriation and domination: it becomes acquirable. (Zamora 175)

Columbus' projection of gender differences onto the globe itself, with his feminine world nipple in the eastern hemisphere and his phallically round western hemisphere, may have been idiosyncratic. Nevertheless, future generations continued to feminize the lands they explored, 'penetrating' 'virgin' territories that turned out to be 'fertile' or 'barren'. Focusing on Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discoverie of . . . Guiana*, Louis Montrose notes that future narratives of discovery continued to "recreate the ancient Amazons of Scythia in South America or in Africa" ("Work" 25). He argues that such accounts of Amazons are more important than they might seem to modern readers.

> Although these occurrences may appear to be incidental to the *Discoverie*'s narrative, they have an integral place in its textual ideo-logic [*sic*] of gender and power. . . . The notion of a separatist and intensely territorial nation of women warriors might be seen as a momentous transformation of the trope identifying the land with the female body. Implicit in the conceptual shift from *the land as woman* to *a land of women* is the possibility of representing women as collective social agents. (Montrose, "Work" 25)

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When Raleigh and other explorers found (or almost found) the Land of Women in the feminized New World, they continued a tradition brought to the New World by Columbus. The Amazon myth was one of many that would be pressed into service as tools explorers could use to make sense of the territories they were exploring. Native Americans were difficult to understand; the Amazon myth aided the attempt to increase that understanding "by portraying these cultures as the inversion of European civilization" (Taufer 36). "The Amazonian anticulture precisely inverts European norms of political authority, sexual license, marriage and child-rearing practices, and inheritance rules" (Montrose, "Work" 26). One element in the establishment of proper European norms in the New World was the introduction of Christianity.

Columbus' theory of the Earthly Paradise grew out of his religious views, which also provided him with a noble mission in his exploration. His version of Christianity provided him an identity distinct from the heroes examined hitherto. Earlier heroes had established their heroic ethos by killing Amazons or subjugating them to the proper hierarchy. Columbus' personal ethos arose partly from his desire to carry Christ to the heathen. Cummings argues that Columbus revealed this self-identity through his signature. One of Columbus' favorite signatures was the following:

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.S.
S.A.S
X M Y
Χρο FERENS.

(Cummings 5; Columbus, *Textos* 283, 289, 290, 291, etc.)

While the top three lines are "enigmatic" (Cummings 5), the fourth line is a play on Columbus' first name. The first element, 'Χρο', is a standard scribal abbreviation of the name 'Christ' based on its Greek form Χριστός (Christos).[3] 'Ferens' is the present participle of 'fero', a Latin word meaning 'bear' or 'carry'. "Columbus, aware of the legend of the saint who carried Christ across the river, expresses in his signature a high concept of his own significance as the man who bore Christ and his faith across an ocean" (Cummings 5).

From its inception in ancient times, the Amazon myth provided an opportunity to meditate upon the relationship between self and other, between a core culture and marginal cultures, between the "civilized" and those whom the civilized define as uncivilized. Just as the Amazon had represented the barbarian to the ancient Greek, she served as a metaphor for native Americans to the European and especially to the Spaniard (Taufer 35-36). One of the issues involved in such a meditation was whether and to what degree Amazons could be incorporated into the core

---

[3]The system of abbreviations of sacred names and words is known as *nomina sacra*. It was developed by early Christian scribes in part as a way of conserving paper. (Metzger 13-14). Even today it has not completely died out, despite the efforts of those who bemoan the use of 'Xmas' as a *nomen sacrilegum*.

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culture. It was generally agreed that the Amazon was a wild woman; the question was whether she could be tamed. Destroying her was a safe option; bringing her home was a risky venture. Theseus was the main figure to bring home an Amazon in the ancient versions. Hippolytus, his son from that union, was more like his mother in his worship of Artemis, refusing to follow his amorous father in the worship of Aphrodite. The tragic consequences illustrate the danger of trying to tame an Amazon.[4]

The medieval versions of the Theseus myth in Boccaccio's *Teseida* and Chaucer' "Knight's Tale" represent Theseus as successfully forcing the Amazons back into the divine order. Since the characters are portrayed as pre-Christian polytheists, the works do not directly address the issue of bringing Amazons into the Christian faith. Furthermore, the Amazons are therein portrayed as civilized, chivalrous ladies who had rebelled against their place but who could potentially be reintegrated into society. The post-Columbian discourse regarding Amazons considered whether those who had never belonged to society could be brought (or compelled) in. Once again the "civilized" asked the question of whether and how the wild woman (and man) could be safely and successfully incorporated into the core culture.

Beginning with Columbus' discovery, the conversion of the native inhabitants became an abiding concern to Europeans as they sought to fulfill the injunction to "teach all nations" (*μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*;

---

[4]See pp. 60-63 above.

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Matt. 28:19). When describing the differences between native Americans and Europeans, Columbus wrote of the "lack or deficiency" of the natives (Zamora 159). Native Americans lacked courage, clothes, language, and religion (Zamora 159-161). Columbus had barely made landfall before he had concluded that the inhabitants had no religion.

> Y creo que ligeramente se harían cristianos, que me pareçió que ninguna secta tenían. (Columbus, *Diario* 11 Oct. 1492)
>
> And I believe they would become Christians without much resistance because it appeared to me that they did not have any religion.

Most versions of the Amazon myth have included two extreme lacks: the lack of men in the society proper and the lack of one of the Amazon's breasts, which is removed at birth.[5] Thus it is understandable that when Columbus found people with so many lacks, he should seek an island populated by women without men (*isla . . . poblada de mugeres sin hombres*; Columbus, *Diario* 16 Jan. 1493). As a myth about what was unknown, different, and exotic, Amazons became metaphoric for the new cultures that Europeans were encountering, just as they had earlier become metaphoric for the Persians to the Greeks (Tyrrell 5).

> The repeated stories of Amazon sightings in the New World reflected the Europeans' own concerns with Indian cultures: their alternative social orderings, alternative sexual practices, and, of course, their possession of gold. (Taufer 36)

---

[5]These two absences are possibly related. By removing a breast, the Amazon becomes less feminine, more masculine. The removal also demonstrates the withholding of sustenance for the man. The Amazon's masculinity and her refusal to nourish the man work together to remove him from society.

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Treatments of Amazons in popular Spanish romances either consciously or unconsciously paralleled the debate over the spiritual status of native Americans (Taufer 38). Although some Spaniards advocated the destruction of the native Americans because they were too inferior spiritually to become Christian, official church and state policy (sometimes honored in the breach) was that native Americans could become Christian and that they should be converted by love, not force (Taufer 39). Although the Spanish placed all non-Christians in the general category of pagan, there was some diversity within that category (Taufer 44). Moors and Spanish Jews were seen as internal threats to Spanish unity and stability (Taufer 43). The Ottoman Empire was an external threat; it had advanced into the Balkans, moved to the Danube, pushed into Greece, and even taken Constantinople in 1453, an event still fresh in Europeans' minds (Hussey 79-84). As remote pagans, native Americans did not pose a direct threat. Furthermore, native Americans had not rejected Christianity as had the Jews, Moors, and Ottomans and therefore had a stronger claim to tolerance. Hopefully reason and persuasion would lead the native Americans to Christ (Taufer 43-44). Similarly, the representations of Amazons in the romances of Montalvo, Silva, and Luján were brought into the Christian fold despite their original war against Christian forces.

This fate contrasts to that of the original Amazons, whom the Greeks usually destroyed, the fate of other infidels in many of these

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romances, and the fate of too many of the native Americans who encountered European civilization (Taufer 37). Taufer believes that these Amazons were converted rather than destroyed outright because they were in part examples of what would hopefully happen with native Americans (48). As part of their conversions, "these barbarian queens give up not only their religion but also their culture: they embrace and submit to the patriarchal institutions of Church and patrilineal monogamy" (Taufer 48). At this point, conversion and destruction begin to lose some of their distinction; in either case, the culture ceases to exist. They can be different means to similar goals. Robert Jewett sees a similarity between conversion and destruction in "the ancient Semitic custom of the 'ban' or 'devotion' of spoils to Yahweh" (145). חֵרֶם (*ḥᵉrᵉm*) can be translated as "devoted . . . to destruction" (Joshua 6: 17 RSV). May and Metzger define it as "a technical term meaning that the city and all that is in it is to be offered as a holocaust to the LORD; the taking of booty is strictly forbidden" (May and Metzger 269n). According to Jewett, חֵרֶם and cultural assimilation both seek to avoid the contamination of one culture by another (145).

> The critical point is that coexistence with the alien realm was thought to be impossible. The choice was to destroy or to convert by radically altering the threatening features. In either case the duty was to eradicate the distinctive marks of the alien sphere. (Jewett 145)

Within Jewett's model, the theoretical fate of the Amazonian (and native American) culture if not of individual Amazons (and native

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Americans) would be eradication. Of course, the actual degree of cultural assimilation and/or destruction varied widely in different times and places. Those who assimilated would become a part of the mainstream culture. In addition to supplying Amazons (and their native courterparts) with men, the Spaniards would supply language, clothes, religion, and order. Like Boccaccio's Theseus, they would take over the Amazon nation and then supply a government "pleasing" to the women (and themselves) (Boccaccio, *Teseida* 2. 8), a patriarchal and patrilineal order that would look out for the best interests of the governed as well as "eradicate the distinctive marks of the alien sphere" (Jewett 145).

Early explorers spent a great deal of time searching for those very distinctive marks that they hoped to eradicate ultimately. For example, the Amazon River got its name from Amazons whom Orellana's 1542 expedition claimed to have found (Taufer 37). Columbus, Cortez, Orellana, and other explorers returned from America with tales of Amazons that inspired the writers of adventure romances (Taufer 37). This proved to be a circular process, for explorers also took to the New World the tales of Amazons spun by authors like Montalvo, Silva, and Luján, even as Columbus had originally projected the European Amazon myth onto the screen of the Indies.

In 1862, Edward Everett Hale discovered the origin of the name 'California' in Garcia Montalvo's *Sergas de Esplandián*. Montalvo was

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continuing the romantic adventures of the *Amadís Cycle*.[1] Hale disparages the work and notes that when Don Quixote's lost his sanity from reading such romances, the local curate spared the four books of *Amadís de Gaul* as the best of their *genre* but consigned *Sergas de Esplandián* to the flames (Hale 33-35), even though Sergas was billed as "the legitimate son of Amadís de Gaul" ("*hijo legítimo de Amadís de Gaul*"; Cervantes 1: 111).

> ——Pues en verdad——dijo el cura——que no le ha de valer al hijo la bondad del padre. (1: 112)
>
> "Then in truth," said the curate, "the excellence of the father must not be attributed to the son."

Indeed, although the *Amadís Cycle* laid the literary groundwork that made *Don Quixote* possible (Pierce 42), the appearance of *Don Quixote* helped discredit the genre of the chivalric romance (O'Connor 5-6). *Sergas de Esplandián* went into such an eclipse that it took the literary detective work of Hale to find therein the source of the name 'California'.

---

[1]The first four books of the cycle are entitled *Amadís de Gaul*. The authorship and even the original language of *Amadís de Gaul* are uncertain; the best guess is that Montalvo was the final redactor of material that had already been in circulation (Pierce 17, Barber 1-6). Montalvo probably composed book four with less reliance on such materials (Barber 3). The earliest extant edition of the first four books was published in 1508. Montalvo published book V, *Sergas de Esplandián*, in 1510 (Pierce 12). Páez de Ribera added a sixth book that same year. Feliciano de Silva wrote books seven (1514), nine (1530), ten (1532), and eleven (1535). Juan Díaz added book eight to the series in 1526, and a final twelfth book rounded the series off to a proper epic number in 1546, with the author possibly being Pedro de Luján (O'Connor 6).

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Despite its later obscurity, *Sergas de Esplandián* enjoyed a widespread popularity at the time of its publication. Montalvo probably published his romance in 1510; the printings of 1519, 1521, 1525, and 1526 are still extant (Hale 34). The Californian peninsula was discovered in 1526 and named in 1535, after the name 'California' had been coined by Montalvo and disseminated through those publications (Hale 31).

Montalvo placed his island of women on the right hand of the Indies (*á la diestra mano de las Indias*) close to the Terrestrial Paradise (*Paraíso Terrenal*), apparently following the lead of Columbus (Montalvo, *Sergas* 539). He populated it with Amazons who were big, bold, black, and hence fearsome. All their weapons were made of gold because it was the only metal on the island. These Amazons tamed flying griffins (*Sergas* 539), giving them the air superiority once enjoyed by Bellerophon and Pegasus in their fight against the Amazons (see p. 23 above). The Amazons trained young griffins by feeding them captive men and their own male babies, so that the griffins defended the island by eating any man who landed there (*Sergas* 539). Montalvo named his island 'California' and named its queen 'Calafia' (*Sergas* 539-540).

In 1535 Cortez named a peninsula he came across 'California' (Hale 32), possibly thinking that he had found his island on the right hand of the Indies. Hale examines the other proposed explanations for the origin of the name and dismisses them as too fanciful and inadequate (32-34). The early explorers probably did not have the education to compose the

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name, as some had suggested, from the Latin *calida fornax* ("hot furnace") or the Greek *καλεπορνεία* (*kaleporneia*, "beautiful adultery"; Hale 32-33). According to Hale, it is far more likely that Cortez and his men found the name in *Sergas de Esplandián*.

> Such books made the principal reading of the young blades of that day who could read at all. (Hale 38)
>
> Over acres of such reading, served out in large folios,——the yellow-covered novels of their time,——did the Pizarros and Balboas and Cortezes and other young blades while away the weary hours of their camp life. (Hale 48)

Cortez and his party compensated for the barren landscape of the Baja by infusing it with the fantasy of bold Amazons and mountains of gold and jewels awaiting the hero who was man enough to take them. The geography and societies of fantasy helped drive exploration by giving explorers incentives. They had the motive of quick wealth, which was the same motive that eventually drove the California gold rush of 1849. The hope of finding Amazons provided them with a heroic ethos inasmuch as they would be fighting the powerful women of myth, not attacking poorly armed native women. "She [the Amazon] is therefore a suitable opponent for the most virile of heroes, and a man who has never envisioned harming a woman can freely indulge in fantasies of murdering an Amazon" (Kleinbaum 1).

Furthermore, the Amazons supplied an opportunity for sexual titillation. The tradition of the annual mating ritual continued to be as popular as it was in ancient times. New fantasies also took shape, as in

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Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The first forty cantos of the popular epic appeared in 1516; in 1532 Ariosto published an edition expanded to forty-six cantos (Baker and Giamatti xv-xvi). At one point in the epic, rough seas force the martial heroine Marfisa and her group to choose between capsizing in the storm or making for a port that the patron of the ship finds almost as frightening:

> Il padron narrò lui che quella riva
> tutta tenean le femine omicide,
> di quai l'antiqua legge ognun ch'arriva
> in perpetuo tien servo, o che l'uccide;
> e questa serte solamente schiva
> chi nel campo dieci uomini conquide,
> e poi la notte può assaggiar nel letto
> diece donzelle con carnal diletto.
> (Ariosto 19. 57)
>
> The patron tells him that the
> whole shore holds murderous women
> who, according to ancient law, held in perpetual slavery or
> killed every man who arrived;
> and that he alone could avoid this fate
> who could overcome ten men in the field,
> and that night could assuage with carnal
> delight ten damsels in bed.

After Amazons surround the group, the Amazons' herald confirms the custom and demands that the group choose slavery, death, or the contest.

> ——Gli è ver——dicea——che s'uom si ritrovasse
> tra voi così animoso e così forte,
> che contra dieci nostri uomini osasse
> prender battaglia, e desse lor la morte,
> e far con diece femine bastasse
> per una notte ufficio di consorte;
> egli si rimarria principe nostro,
> e gir voi ne potreste al camin vostro. (19. 67)

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> "It is true," she said, "that if one is found
> among you so courageous and brave,
> who dares fight against ten of our men
> in battle and kills them,
> and he then in one night is able to fulfill
> the office of consort with ten women,
> he will remain here as our prince,
> and you will be able to go on your way."

If the champion won, his people would go free, and he would stay with his ten new wives and rule Amazonia (19. 67). If he lost in either "joust" (*giostra*, 19. 73), the Amazons would kill him and enslave his people (19. 68).

It seems strange that the Amazons used men as their fighters; indeed, those were the only ten in the kingdom allowed to bear arms (19. 71). Other men in the kingdom had to do menial labor or "women's" work, and wear women's clothes (19. 72). Since the Amazons did have men to represent matriarchy, at least in the first type of joust, Ariosto balances the contest by having a woman, Marfisa, represent patriarchy, again in the first joust. The men in her entourage do not want her to be their representative.

> Volendo tòrre i cavallieri a sorte
> chi di lor debba per commune scampo
> l'una decina in piazza porre a morte,
> e poi l'altra ferir ne l'altro campo;
> non disegnavan di Marfisa forte,
> stimando che trovar dovesse inciampo
> ne la seconda giostra de la sera,
> ch'ad averne vittoria abil non era. (19. 73)

> The knights decided to draw lots for the one
> who, for their common deliverance, ought
> first to put to death the ten men in the piazza;
> and then wound the others in the other field.

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> They did not design to include bold Marfisa,
> thinking she would be found stumbling
> in the second joust in the evening, and
> that she would not be able to have the victory.

The men did not think that Marfisa would be able to handle the evening encounter with ten Amazons. Ariosto's dismissive jest simultaneously evokes and neatly sidesteps the issue of lesbianism among Amazons. The myth always held the potential that its homosocial organization would lead to homosexual behavior, but Ariosto is apparently the first author to broach the issue, however obliquely. Indeed, as far as I know, this possibility remained unexplored until the publication of *Les Guerilleres* by Monique Wittig in 1969 and "When It Changed" by Joanna Russ in 1972. Why this potential of the myth went undeveloped in literature for twenty-seven centuries (assuming Homer wrote in the eighth century B.C.) is unknowable. Perhaps the women who used the myth considered the prospect too salacious, and perhaps the men preferred to fantasize about the Amazons' having a pent-up demand for men that would find release in Dionysian revelry in "a sort of sublimated summer resort——just Girls and Girls and Girls" (Gilman, *Herland* 7).

Of course, each man thought that he was qualified to conquer in both fields of battle. "They hoped to complete both the one and the other" (*che fornir l'uno e l'altro avea speranza*; 19. 69). Each wanted a kingdom handed to him to rule with his ten queens by his side. So too did the adventurers who read such material, who also viewed themselves as qualified for victory in both fields of battle with the Amazons. This

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was a traditional fantasy; the Amazon myth had always involved overcoming the woman warrior both as woman and warrior. "To win an Amazon, either through arms or through love or, even better, through both, is to be certified as a hero" (Kleinbaum 1).

Thus the hero and the Amazon are fighting when they mate; sex is war carried on by other means. Thus Ariosto describes the challenge to have intercourse with ten Amazons as a "second joust" (*seconda giostra*) in which the challenger would "wound" (*ferir*) the ten and gain the victory (19. 73). Even Marfisa is confident that she can prevail in that battle by relying on her "sword" (*spada*) to make up for her not having a penis.

> Et a Marfisa non mancava il core,
> ben che mal atta alla seconda danza;
> ma dove non l'aitasse la natura,
> con la spada supplir stava sicura. (19. 69)

> Nor did the heart fail in Marfisa
> although poorly fitted for the second dance.
> She was secure that where nature had not aided,
> her lack would be supplied by the sword.

In the long term, stories about Amazons in the New World had consequences in two primary areas. The first involves the treatment of the natives and the justification of the exercise of power over them. In its most benign use, the Amazon myth supported the conversion of natives to Christianity as well as European values and social organizations. In its less benign manifestations, the myth tended to retain its traditional glorification of military conquest and sexual violence and to validate the use of those against real natives, not just against romance Amazons.

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> As European exploration and exploitation accelerated, America the Amazon was thought to deserve the fate intended for the New World as Woman——rape and conquest. The violence brought to subdue her was justified by her independence and indifference, feminine ploys to attract and lure the unwary male beguiled by dreams of a perfect world. (Tiffany and Adams 73)

The other area of impact, closely related to the first, involves the development of knowledge about the natives. People have long recognized the possibility that Europeans brought tales of Amazons to the New World with them and got the natives to tell them stories that they wished to hear (Tiffany and Adams 72).

Yet the idea of the Amazon is one that has lingered. Tiffany and Adams have studied the way in which the Amazon and other myths about women continue to affect anthropology, "the 'Science of Man'" (2, 7). Instead of somehow overcoming their own societies' preoccupations and preconceptions to discover what other societies are "really" like, anthropologists have carried with them questions colored by their own cultures regarding gender as well as other issues. Tiffany and Adams call the network of ideas and questions that anthropologists still carry with them "the Romance of the Wild Woman, a constellation of images, metaphors, and meanings about women and their sexuality set against the contrast between civilization and the primitive" (1).

> Rooted in Western civilization and ideas, the romance extends back in time to classical antiquity. Pythagorean oppositions between male and female and Aristotelian discourses on sex and gender differences focused on the problematic nature of womanhood. According to this intellectual legacy, framed in androcentric language, women

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> *make* problems and women *are* problems. (Tiffany and Adams 1)

Theories of Amazons in the New World were part of a larger network of ideas and images, a network extending back into antiquity and ahead to the modern era. Sightings of Amazons have more to do with the desire of the explorers and their need to fit the cultures they encountered into preexisting models than to do with the cultures themselves. Christopher Miller's description of Africanist discourse also applies in part to theories about Amazons. Miller argues that traditional portrayals of Africa going back to Diodorus Siculus juxtapose images of "Other-as-dream" and images of "Other-as-nightmare" (25). Somehow Africa is simultaneously dream and nightmare. If the Orient has been the negative image of the West, Africa has been a nullity, the ineffable dark continent, its people and geography unknown and unknowable (13, 15, 24-25).

> But the distinction between Africanist and Orientalist discourses is most definitely not based on any characteristics of either Africa or the "Orient." Nor is it based on any real difference in European knowledge of the two places. (Miller 20)

Like Homer's Ethiopians, the Amazons are "sundered in two, the farthest of people, some being where the sun sets, some where it rises" (*διχθὰ δεδαίαται, ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν, / οἱ μὲν δυσομένου Ὑπερίονος οἱ δ' ἀνιόντος*; *Odyssey* 1. 23-24, see Miller 23-24). Wherever those who have heard of the myth went, they kept a sharp lookout for Amazons. Yet Amazons remained for the most part just beyond the horizon, "the farthest of women," to paraphrase Homer. Like Africa, they are both

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dream and nightmare, both challenging patriarchy and also promising the opportunity for glory, riches, and sexual indulgence. As in ancient times, when Amazons remained more textual than material, doubts remained about their existence. For example Samuel Purchas includes the following passage from Nunno di Gusman in his *Pilgrimes*[7].

> From thence ten dayes further I shall goe to finde the Amazons, which some say dwell in the Sea, some in an arme of the Sea, and that they are rich, and accounted of the people for Goddesses, and whiter than other women. They use Bowes, Arrowes and Targets: have many and great Townes; at a certaine time admit them to accompanie them, which bring up the males, as these the female issue, &c. (18. 60-61)

Gusman expects to find fair goddesses who are rich, powerful, and sexually exotic. Purchas makes his opinion of Gusman's expectations clear in a pithy marginal comment: "*Amazonian Dreames*" (18. 59). Although Gusman wrote his account in 1530 and Purchas wrote his comment in 1625, the time gap alone is not enough to account for the difference of expectations. In his 1595 expedition to Guiana, Sir Walter Raleigh was aware of the doubts regarding the Amazons, yet he came to believe.

> I made inquiry amongst the most ancient and best traueled of the *Orenoqueponi*, & I had knowledge of all the riuers between *Orenoque* and *Amazones*, and was very desirous to vnderstand the trueth of those warlike women, bicause of some it is beleeued, of others not: And though I digresse from my purpose, yet I wil set downe that [which] hath beene deliuered me for truth of those women, and I spake

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[7]This collection also goes by the title *Purchas His Pilgrimage*.

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> with a *Casique* or Lorde of people that told me he had been in the riuer, and beyond it also. (23)

As is typical of such accounts, Raleigh bases his judgment regarding "the trueth of those warlike women" on the testimony of others, since he was personally unable to reach the Amazons. One important source for his belief was Antonio de Berrio, the leader of the Spanish base on the Orinoco River in Guiana. Since Raleigh had captured Berrio and burned his base, it is hard to know how much Berrio believed the "fabulous tales that had so intrigued Ralegh"; however, the information he gave Raleigh "concerning geographical features, natives, and tribal chiefs appears to have been accurate" (Shirley 85). Raleigh defends his belief on the basis of the credibility of the witnesses and on their accord with ancient histories and geographies. He openly relies on the testimony of the past and concludes that this sundered nation has an outpost near Guiana.

> The memories of the like women are verie ancient as well in *Africa* as in *Asia*: In *Africa* those that had *Medusa* for *Queene*: others in *Scithia* neere the riuers of *Tanais* and *Thermadon*: we finde also that *Lampedo* and *Marthesia* were *Queens* of the *Amazones*: in many histories they are verified to haue been, and in diuers ages and Prouinces: But they which are not far from *Guiana* do accompanie with men but once in a yeare, and for the time of one moneth, which I gather by their relation to be in Aprill. (23)

Having construed his knowledge of the Amazons from the available sources, contemporary and ancient, Raleigh launches right into his description of one of the favorite portions of the Amazon myth, the annual mating bacchanalia and its repercussions.

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> And that time all Kings of the borders assemble, and Queenes of the *Amazones*, and after the Queenes haue chosen, the rest cast lots for their *Valentines*. This one moneth, they feast, dance, & drinke of their wines in abundance, and the Moone being done, they all depart to their owne Prouinces. If they conceiue, and be deliuered of a sonne, they returne him to the father, if of a daughter they nourish it, and retaine it, and as many as haue daughters send unto the begetters a Present, all being desirous to increase their owne sex and kind. (23-24)

Further native testimony revealed to Raleigh the dream/nightmare quality of the "bloodthirsty" Amazons as they killed all their male prisoners but granted them something of a last request. An integral part of their dream/nightmare status was that they possessed what Raleigh had come for, gold and jewels, and yet defended those things so fiercely.

> It was farther told me, that if in these wars they tooke any prisoners that they used to accompany with those also at what time soeuer, but in the end for certaine they put them to death: for they are said to be very cruell and bloodthirsty, especially to such as offer to inuade their territories. These *Amazones* haue likewise great store of these plates of golde, which they recouer by exchange chiefly for a kinde of greene stones, which the Spaniards call *Piedras Hÿadas*. (24)

One hundred years of exploration had done little more than move the Amazons to ever more remote areas. The need to fit New World wine into Old World wineskins reflects a common need "to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing" (Said 58). Yet the New World was not the only place where the Amazon myth proved useful in the interpretation of new things. Circumstances back home also invited the use of the myth, as illustrated in the following section.

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Amazon Queens and Fairies

> Let me not here forget the Campe at *Tilbery* in which her Majestie was in person, and that if the *Spaniard* had prevailed by Sea to have given him battaile by land, appearing in the head of her Troopes, and incouraging her Souldiers, habited like an *Amazonian* Queen, Buskind and plumed, having a golden Truncheon, Gantlet, and Gorget; Armes sufficient to expresse her high and magnanimous spirit. (Heywood 211)

One of the functions of the Amazon myth in Renaissance literature was as a metaphor for understanding the presence of women sovereigns, for understanding a culture where a woman was ruling as an exception in terms of a culture where women traditionally ruled. The issue of a female monarch was a pressing one in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. Because of the length of her reign and the amount of literature associated with her name, Elizabeth I is the focal figure of this section. Although she was the most successful queen, Elizabeth was not the only woman to occupy a throne in this period. Mary Tudor preceded her on the English throne. Mary, Queen of Scots, was a contemporary of Elizabeth, and Mary's mother, Mary of Guise, had ruled Scotland as her daughter's regent (Breslow 11). In the issue of women being sovereigns, issues of gender overlapped with issues of class, economics, and religion as all these spheres underwent flux. Having a woman monarch simply made chronic, submerged issues into acute, highly visible ones. Was such a rule in accordance with divine law and natural law? Was it desirable? Could a woman rule for herself or only as a regent for an heir?

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Who ruled if she married? The debate over women in power continued after Elizabeth's demise (Roberts 196) just as it preceded her ascension.

A woman as monarch presented difficulties because she brought into conflict two hierarchies, one of class and the other of gender (Sullivan 67-68). It was problematic "for Elizabeth Tudor's subjects to uphold the power of a female monarch while representing as natural the subordination of other women" (Sullivan 67). A reigning woman was thus a challenge to the theory of the great chain of being; she revealed that instead of one smooth hierarchy encompassing the whole universe, there were competing hierarchies which sometimes cancelled out one another.

Direct comparisons of Elizabeth to Amazons were rare and center around her appearance in the English camp at the time of the Spanish Armada in 1588 (see p. 164 above). Amazonia did not provide a precise parallel to what was happening in England, where gynocracy was the exception. The society as a whole remained patriarchal, and its patrilineal inheritance system remained intact, in contrast to the Amazonian system of government and inheritance.

> In this particular form of matrilineal government, property consistently passes *through* women *to* women. In a patrilineal government, the power and property that pass through women occasionally get to a female heir. Like Pamela at the end of the *Old Arcadia* or Elizabeth Tudor during Sidney's lifetime, such a woman is a structural anomaly and an embarrassing contradiction to the natural hierarchy of gender. (Sullivan 75)

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Furthermore, Elizabeth does not seem to have welcomed comparisons with Amazons. She seems to have cultivated the image of a peacemaking prince rather than the image of a bellicose queen (Roberts 194). She also apparently wanted to avoid comparisons with a group whose culture was "a dangerous example of unwomanly conduct" (Wright 456). She also seems to have preferred representations that avoided comparing her with other women in favor of ones that set her apart from her gender, "a phoenix who excelled her sex, being not only exempt from the undesirable qualities of women but also gifted with the desirable qualities of men" (Schleiner 172, 170-180).

Despite the paucity of direct references to Elizabeth as an Amazon, literary Amazons take up issues centering on Elizabeth and deal with them in safely remote climes. Erickson calls the various indirect treatments of Elizabeth "refracted images" or "fractured images" of her (31-32). The need for such treatments arose from persistent difficulties in having a woman ruler. Quilligan states of Elizabeth's queenship:

> . . . her presence as a female, capable of acting in public, continues to remain a shock to the patriarchal system; it is constantly in need of recuperation through the ideological functioning of what we call Elizabethan literature. ("Comedy" 163)

James E. Phillips identifies three basic ways to approach Elizabeth's right to rule. One method was simply to deny the right and ability of women to rule (9-11). The opposite approach was to affirm the general ability of women to rule (15-16). A position adopted by Genevan Calvinists was

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that women in general were not fit to rule, but that in particular cases God's providence could overturn the general rule and allow a woman to rule (8-9).

One man who was not afraid to attack the issue of women sovereigns directly was John Knox. In 1558 he issued *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstruous regiment of women*. His strident opposition to women ruling grew out of the religious and political situation of Scotland and England in 1558. In Scotland, Mary of Guise was serving as the regent for her daughter Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary of Guise had filled important political positions with Catholic Frenchmen, had arranged for the marriage of her daughter to the French Dauphin, and had persecuted reformers like Knox. In England, Mary Tudor, married to Philip of Spain since 1554, was attempting to return the country to Catholicism and to reverse the tentative religious reformation of Henry VIII and the actual reformation carried out during the reign of Edward VI (Breslow 11-14). Knox thought the women rulers of Scotland and England were subjugating their nations to larger nations and were upholding false religion over true religion.

> We se our countrie set furthe for a pray to foreine nations, we heare the blood of our brethren, the mẽbers of Christ Iesus most cruellie to be shed, and the monstruous empire of a cruell woman (the secrete counsel of God excepted) we knowe to be the onlie occasion of all these miseries (Knox, *First* 3ᵛ).

Knox issued his diatribe against women rulers shortly before the Protestant Elizabeth assumed the British throne upon the death of Mary

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Tudor on November 17, 1558 (Phillips 12). The timing of his *First Blast* thus turned out to be politically maladroit. "In his day the work . . . enlarged his fame, angered his opponents, and embarrassed his friends" (Breslow 23). Indeed, in April of 1559, Knox wrote that "my FIRST BLAST hath blowne from me all my friends in England" (*Works* 6. 14). A preacher as well as a poiemicist, Knox gave several convenient summaries of his argument. The following one occurs following the preface at the beginning of the main section, which is entitled, "The first blast to awaken women degenerate" (9).

> To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire aboue any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnãt to nature, cõtumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reueled will and approued ordinãce, and finally it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and iustice. (*First* 9^{r})

Knox's three arguments focus on nature, God's will, and good order, that is, on whether a woman's rule is in accord with natural law, divine law, and political expedience. The second argument uses proofs from biblical and patristic sources and develops the idea that God created Eve after Adam and subordinated her to Adam (and women to men) because she sinned first (First 13^{r}-26^{r}). Knox bases his first and third arguments directly on our old friend, the great chain of being. Knox wants to bring the various hierarchies back into harmony, but he asserts the preeminence of the gender hierarchy over the social hierarchy so vigorously that in effect he attacks the ideological underpinnings of the monarchy in general (Breslow 25).

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Woman is naturally subservient to man. By natural knowledge, Knox means knowledge that comes through means other than divine revelation. When he goes to nature to make his case, he goes to Aristotle and Roman law (10^{r}-13^{r}). A belief in woman's natural inferiority is one bit of truth shared by Jews, Christians, and those who did not believe in God. "Mã, I say, in many other cases blind, doth in this behalfe see verie clearlie" (*First* 10^{v}). Knox makes patriarchy natural and therefore absolute, denying that it is a social, mutable arrangement. As a breach of the natural social order,[8] the "empire of women" is unnatural, or, as Knox puts it, "monstriferouse" (*First* 6^{v}), a monster being anything unnatural. If any of the ancients were to see the spectacle of a woman ruler, Knox predicts that another monstrous regiment would come to mind.

> I am assuredlie persuaded that if any of those men, which illuminated onelie by the light of nature, did see and pronounce causes sufficient, why women oght not to beare rule nor authoritie, shuld this day liue ãd see a woman sitting in iudgment, or riding frome parliament in the middest of men, hauing the royall crowne vpon her head, the sworde and sceptre borne before her, in signe that the administration of iustice was in her power: I am assuredlie persuaded, I say, that suche a sight shulde so astonishe them, that they shuld iudge the hole worlde to be transformed into Amazones, and that suche a metamorphosis and change was made of all the men of that countrie, as poetes do feyn was made of the companyons of Vlisses, or at least that albeit the owtwarde form of men remained, yet shuld they iudge that their hartes were changed frome the wisdome, vnderstanding, and

[8]This construction would not be an oxymoron for Knox since he defined nature in contrast to the divine, not in contrast to the social.

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> courage of men, to the foolishe fondnes ãd cowardise of women. (*First* 11^{v}-11^{r})

Knox envisions his Amazons in the role-reversal model of Diodorus, where each gender fills roles "naturally" reserved for the other (Diodorus 3. 53). The power of Amazons to transform gender roles was a monstrosity comparable to the power of Circe to turn Odysseus' men into swine (*Odyssey* 10. 133-399). Knox included another tradition about Amazons in a note in the margin by the Amazon statement.

> *Amazones were monstruouse women, that coulde not abide the regimēt of men, and therfore killed their husbandes.* (*First* 11^{r})

To Knox, the Amazons were as unnatural and therefore as monstrous as the women monarchs of his day. They rebelled due to their unwillingness to live according to their natural subordination to men in the chain of being, resulting in the murder (or worse) of their husbands.

> For Knox, the ultimate horror of women's rule is the threat of emasculation——the internal transformation of men into women——which he identifies with the apocalyptic nightmare of a triumphant Amazon race. In singling out the example of the Amazons as the ultimate specter of female rule, Knox invoked the terror of a fictional race of women that was to fascinate the writers of the English Renaissance. (Roberts 189)

In the cases of Amazons, Circe, and contemporaneous women monarchs, the aggressive woman unmans her victim, either by making him an animal, by killing him, or by emasculating him and rendering him effeminate. Yet even when men are "effeminate" and "degenerate," that

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is no excuse for women to "vsurpe any authoritie aboue them" (*First* 24^{r}-25^{v}).

Knox was not the only writer to exhibit anxiety over man's loss of control of woman as signified by women monarchs. Portrayals of strong women were likely to be as anxious as sympathetic toward those characters.

> Shakespearean works with strong women may still have a patriarchal accent; the tone shifts from resolute patriarchal control to patriarchal anxiety and dismay.
>
> The presence of strong women in Shakespeare's work from the Elizabethan period can be read as oblique glances at the cultural presence of Queen Elizabeth I. (Erickson 24)

The Amazon's overt opposition to patriarchy and her bellicose approach to international (and sexual) relations made her unsuitable for many direct comparisons to Elizabeth. The one notable exception to this rule involves her visit to Tilbury. On August 9, 1588, Elizabeth reviewed the English troops assembled at Tilbury awaiting the Spanish Armada (Rice 96, Guy 340). Schleiner reviews the direct comparisons of Elizabeth to an Amazon and concludes that every one he could find involves the victory over the Spanish Armada (180). Some accounts of the event have Elizabeth dressed as an Amazon while she reviewed the troops. In this case, it is difficult to determine where Elizabeth's royal theatrics ended and her chroniclers' imaginations began. "Curiously enough, the writers' descriptions became more and more precise as the Tilbury event receded into the past" (Schleiner 175). Thus Heywood's

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account of 1640 had gained somewhat in detail over Aske's more contemporaneous account of 1588.

> Let me not here forget the Campe at *Tilbery* in which her Majestie was in person, and that if the *Spaniard* had prevailed by Sea to have given him battaile by land, appearing in the head of her Troopes, and incouraging her Souldiers, habited like an *Amazonian* Queene, Buskind and plumed, having a golden Truncheon, Gantlet, and Gorget. (Heywood, *Exemplary* 211)

> Most brauely mounted on a stately Steede
> With Trunchion in her hand (not vs'd thereto)
> And with her none, except her Liutenant,
> Accompaned with the Lord *Chamberlaine*,
> Come marching towards this her marching fight.
> In nought vnlike the *Amazonian Queene*,
> Who beating downe amaine the bloodie *Greekes*,
> Thereby to grapple with *Achillis* stout,
> Euen at the time when *Troy* was sore besieg'd. (Aske 23, D4)[9]

Heywood adds buskins, plumes, gauntlet, and gorget to the truncheon that Aske mentions. Even Aske's description reflects his fantasies identifying Elizabeth with Penthesilea, "the *Amazonian Queene*" who came to Troy "to grapple with *Achillis* stout" (Aske 23). While descriptions of the event vary, what is clear is that Elizabeth's subjects decoded her presentation of self in terms of Amazons, that they saw her as the martial maid leading the battle against the Spanish invaders (Schleiner 168). In addition to comparing Elizabeth to an Amazon, James Aske, in his early commemoration of the victory over the Armada entitled *Elizabetha Triumphans*, also compared Elizabeth to both "the Goddesse

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[9]This work has confused pagination, resulting in two pages numbered 23. The other one is F2.

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Peace" (22) and to Bellona, the Roman war goddess (18). In her analysis of such accounts, Susan Frye states, "So described, Elizabeth is an obvious analogue to Britomart, Spenser's armored heoine [*sic*] in *The Faerie Queene*" (96).

Although the English, like the Romans, liked to trace their genealogy back to the Trojans, Aske is one of the few writers in either tradition to acknowledge a debt to the Amazons for fighting for Troy. Amazons normally must side with the enemy so that the male hero can prove his prowess by overcoming them (Kleinbaum 26). The Amazon myth normally provided a model for masculine triumph over the uncontrolled woman, but Aske tapped its potential as a model for female valor. He extended his construction of Elizabeth as a martial heroine by comparing her with the English heroine Boudicca, the queen who led a rebellion against Rome in A.D. 61 that was temporarily successful.

> Now Voada once Englands happie Queene,
> Through *Romans* flight by her constrain'd to flie:
> Who making way amidst the slaughtered corps,
> Pursued her foes with honor of the day
> With Vodice her daughter (her soo like,
> Who vrging wounds with constant courage died)
> Are now reuiu'd, their vertues liue (I say)
> Through this our Queene, now *Englands* happy Queene.
> (Aske 23)

Even in ancient Rome, Boudicca received somewhat sympathetic treatment. In the account of Tacitus, she rose up against the Romans because they plundered the area and abused the inhabitants. Romans even lashed Boudicca herself and raped her daughters (*Annals* 14. 30-31).

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Although not an Amazon, Boudicca led an army "with more women than men" (*plus . . . feminarum quam iuventutis*; Tacitus, *Annals* 14. 36). Boudicca proved not only that England could throw back a great empire, but also that such a victory could come with a woman heading the army. For Aske, Elizabeth became Boudicca "reuiu'd" (Aske 23).

In addition to the blurring of gender roles evident in her presence and dress at Tilbury, Leonel Sharp's account of Elizabeth's address to the troops also blurs gender distinctions.

> I know I have the bodie, but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and Stomach of a King, and of a King of *England* too, and think foul scorn that *Parma* or *Spain*, or any Prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my Realm, to which rather then any dishonour shall grow by me, I my self will take up arms, I my self will be your General, Judge, and Rewarder of everie one of your virtues in the field. (Sharp 259)

Susan Frye calls the historicity of Sharp's version of the speech into question: he relayed the speech in a letter written years later, probably in 1623. Furthermore, Elizabeth's concerns in the speech dovetail rather too conveniently with concerns of his own. Finally, other inaccuracies in his account of her journey to Tilbury draw this into question also (98-101). Yet the very process of mythologizing Elizabeth's appearance at Tilbury "affords a study of what was——and is——at stake in describing Elizabeth's appearance there" (Frye 96).

According to the theory of the double body of the king, Elizabeth was a woman in terms of "the body natural" and a man in terms of "the body politic" (Roberts 193-194). Elizabeth's speech "dwelt upon the

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womanly frailty of her body natural and the masculine strength of her body politic" (Montrose, "Shaping" 79-80). Even here, however, the lines blurred as Elizabeth's body natural became more masculine and her body politic more feminine. If the invasion were to occur, it would be a violation of the borders of England. The now feminine body politic was being "threatened with violation by the masculine Spanish land and sea forces personified in King Philip and the duke of Parma" (Montrose, "Work" 28). According to Susan Frye, "in an age when England formed Elizabeth's body politic, an invasion of England constituted an attack on Elizabeth's person——in effect, a rape" (106). In defense of the feminized body politic, Elizabeth herself apparently took a "solemn vowe" (Aske 26, Frye 101-103) to lead the army against the invaders, putting her body natural to a quintessentially masculine use.

> Ne Pallaces or Castles huge of stone
> Shall hold as then our presence from their view:
> But in the midst and very heart of them,
> *Bellona*-like we meane as then to march. (Aske 26)

Even if Elizabeth did appear at Tilbury in the role of the Amazon "[w]ith Trunchion in her hand," she otherwise preferred to let the truncheon (and the Amazon) remain "not vs'd" (Aske 23). The truncheon was certainly there, for Elizabeth "held the power of life and death over every Englishman" (Montrose, "Shaping" 77). Elizabeth might fend off the Spanish as an avenging Amazon, but she could not rule her own subjects as an Amazon who would by her nature subvert patriarchy. No matter how she ruled, her unique position in society sparked anxiety.

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> With one vital exception, all forms of public and domestic authority in Elizabethan England were vested in men: in fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, lords. It was inevitable that the rule of a woman who was unmastered by any man would generate peculiar tensions within such a "patriarchal" society. (Montrose, "Shaping" 68).

The Amazon image did not generally fit into the cult of Elizabeth, wherein Elizabeth presented herself as "a virgin-mother——part Madonna, part Ephesian Diana" (Montrose, "Shaping" 67). According to the contemporary and independent records of Paul Hentzner and the French ambassador André Hurault, she displayed her breasts and midriff to those in her audiences, symbolizing both her virginity and her maternity (Montrose, "Shaping" 66-67, 329; Hentzner 104-105). Many Elizabethan Amazons do reflect anxieties regarding powerful women in general and Elizabeth in particular. Such uses of the myth abound, but the four plays of Shakespeare's first historical tetralogy[10] are good examples because Shakespeare uses the plays to justify the Tudor reign by vilifying Richard III even as he displaces onto the powerful women therein social anxieties regarding the female Tudor ruler. First produced in the early 1590s, the plays are neither among Shakespeare's best nor his most popular (H. Baker 587-589). They do, however, take a long look at the problems surrounding the problem of powerful women.

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[10]*The First Part of Henry the Sixth, The Second Part of Henry the Sixth, The Third Part of Henry the Sixth,* and *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third.*

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Shakespeare's first Amazonian figure appears in *Henry VI, Part I,* and she is familiar from history and from the third chapter of this dissertation: Joan la Pucelle. Joan presents herself as a virgin, dresses in men's armor, and leads armies into battle; she thus recapitulates on the stage Elizabeth's own theatrics at Tilbury. Because Joan was an enemy of England rather than its ruler, Shakespeare could safely make her a monster and a scapegoat, safely at least in his own time. The portrait of Joan would later bring the play into such question that "until recent times it was virtually excluded from the canon" (Baker 587).

> Warburton and other eighteenth-century editors, repelled by its coarse depiction of Joan of Arc and by its alleged inelegance of style, assumed that Shakespeare could not have written such a sorry thing. . . . Thus its authorship has been ascribed, on such evidence as style and use of sources, to a dizzying list of candidates: to Greene, to Greene assisted by Peele and Shakespeare, to Peele and Shakespeare working as a team, to a syndicate comprising Marlowe, Peele, Nashe, Shakespeare, and certain unknown writers. The names of Chapman, Drayton, Kyd, and Lodge have also crept into the discussion. (H. Baker 587)

Although it interesting to note that the fortunes of these plays varied in inverse proportion to the current estimates of Joan, the debate over authorship does not impact significantly on my argument. For the sake of convenience, I refer to the author(s) of the play as Shakespeare without taking a position on the actual authorship question.

Joan's death by burning could bring a catharsis of emotions that had more to do with contemporary queens than dead enemies. Joan's mysterious power turns out to be demonic rather than divine. She relies

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on fiends for her victories, but in the end the fiends abandon her to the English (V. iii. 1-29). Joan proves to be a direct challenge to the patriarchal system, bringing into question the link between father and child. When she is on her way to the stake, her father approaches to see her before she dies. Joan, however, refuses to admit he is her father.

> *Shep*. Ah, Joan, sweet daughter Joan, I'll die with [thee!
> *Puc.* Decrepit miser! Base ignoble wretch!
> I am descended of a gentler blood.
> Thou art no father nor no friend of mine.
> *Shep*. Out, out! My lords, and please you, 'tis not so,
> I did beget her, all the parish knows.
> Her mother liveth yet, can testify
> She was the first fruit of my bach'lorship. . . .
> *Puc.* Peasant, avaunt!——You have suborn'd this man
> Of purpose to obscure my noble birth. (V. iv. 6-13, 21-22)

Joan's unnatural behavior turns even her own father against her; the aggrieved father exclaims, "O, burn her, burn her! hanging is too good" (V. iv. 33).

Joan further undermines patriarchy by claiming to be a virgin while being sexually active. Chastity on the part of women is a prerequisite for forging the link of father and child. Such concerns do not relate only to Joan or Elizabeth. As discussed before (51 above), anxiety regarding this weak link has sparked comment from Homer to Freud. As a woman who uses her chastity as a sign of connection to the Virgin Mary and of her right to circumvent other expectations regarding women ("thou shalt find that I exceed my sex," I. ii. 90), Joan's virginity is a constant issue in *Henry VI, Pt. 1*. She urges Charles to take her for his "warlike mate" (I. ii.

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92), and shows up with Charles when the French are roused by an English nighttime raid (II. i. 48). Disparaging epithets abound: "shameless courtezan" (III. ii. 45), "Foul fiend of France, and hag of all despite, / Encompass'd with thy lustful paramours" (III. ii. 52-53), "a giglot wench" (IV. vii. 41), and "Strumpet" (V. iv. 84). Shakespeare's Joan eventually confesses her sexual immorality. Before she is executed, she requests a delay of the execution, saying she is pregnant. Because she is single, the question of paternity arises. Because her captors declare that they will not spare a child of Charles the Dauphin, she first asserts that the father is the Duke of Alenson, and then that the father is actually Reignier, the King of Naples (V. iv. 60-79). Thus the Shakespearean Joan is like the ancient Amazons not only in her martial prowess but also in the doubt she casts on the father-child link.

Shakespeare's Joan refracts some of the problems facing Elizabeth. Like Joan, Elizabeth led her people under the theory that she "exceeded her sex" (see *Henry VI, Pt. 1* I. ii. 90). Her virginity, one important sign that she exceeded her sex, was one that had to remain invisible. Did her image of virginity correspond to her actual behavior? Even if it did, Elizabeth's removal of herself from the reproductive cycle created a constitutional crisis for a system dependent on that cycle for stability. Elizabeth disrupted the cycle of succession by being a female heir and by not bearing an heir to succeed her in turn. Because she was born female, she had to face continual questions regarding her legitimacy that a male

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heir would not have faced. The Act of Succession of 1534 declared Anne Boleyn's offspring to be Henry's legitimate children; it was Sir Thomas More's refusal to take an oath supporting this act that led to his execution (Guy 134-135, 140). More's objection was not to placing Elizabeth in the line of succession; it was the part of the oath that would have recognized Henry, not the Pope, as the supreme head of the English church (Scarisbrick 331-332).

Had Elizabeth been a son rather than a daughter, More's dilemma concerning the oath of supremacy embedded in the oath of succession would have remained. Nevertheless, a son could have at least expected the support of Henry VIII himself, considering Henry's preoccupation with producing a male heir. As for Elizabeth, however, when Anne was tried for adultery, Henry allowed the paternity of Elizabeth to be called into question (C. Erickson 254-255). "Before she was out of her cradle, her terrifying father had had her mother, Anne Boleyn, executed for alleged infidelity and herself——her child——bastardized" (Bryant 23). Following Anne's execution and the birth of Edward by Jane Seymour in 1537, Henry pushed through Parliament the Second Act of Succession, which declared both Mary and Elizabeth illegitimate (Guy 141-142). They were not restored to legitimacy and the line of succession until the Third Act of Succession in 1544 (Guy 196). Even Henry VIII's death did not resolve the issue; the Duke of Northumberland, acting in the name of Edward, declared his sisters again illegitimate on June 21, 1553, and willed the

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throne to Jane Grey. When Edward died on July 6, Mary raised the army that finally established her legitimacy (or at least her power) and her place in the line of succession (Guy 226). As the child of a different mother and a union that the Catholic church did not recognize, and as a supporter of a church independent from Rome, Elizabeth would continue to have problems with legitimacy in the eyes of Rome and Catholic Europe, especially France and Spain. According to Catholic canon law, "Elizabeth was illegitimate and, therefore, a usurper" (Bryant 31). From birth to death, Elizabeth was always a difficulty for the cycle of succession. Had Shakespeare wanted to be more like John Knox, he could have directly addressed those problems; he wisely chose to deal with them in an indirect manner.

Shakespeare's Countess of Auvergne is not a warrior, but like Joan, she wants to do her part for France. She invites Lord Talbot, the most effective English general, to visit her so that she can capture him.

> The plot is laid. If all things fall out right,
> I shall as famous be by this exploit
> As Scythian Tomyris by Cyrus' death. (II. iii. 4-6)

As a Scythian woman warrior, Tomyris could be an Amazon when that served an author's purposes.[11] Unlike Tomyris and Joan, the Countess wants to achieve victory through feminine wiles rather than through military prowess. Like Joan, the Countess demonstrates the potential for

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[11]See the discussion of Christine's version of "Thamyris" on pp. 121-123 above.

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danger that occurs when women use their relations with men for their purposes and when they try to become actors on the stage of history. Talbot eludes the danger by having soldiers nearby to save him when she springs her trap. Like Odysseus with Circe, he escapes by being prepared and by not allowing her to distract him from his purpose. The Countess thus only succeeds in enhancing the heroic stature of Talbot.

The "Amazonian trull" (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. iv. 114) in the first tetralogy who gets the most extensive treatment by far is Queen Margaret. She appears in all four plays, and progresses from coy maid to unfaithful wife and *de facto* ruler for her nice but weak husband, Henry VI, and ends the series as one of the Erinyes who pursue Richard III with a message of impending doom. Margaret could be the fulfillment of Knox's fear of the strong woman who emerges to "vsurpe" rule for an "effeminate," "degenerate" man (Knox 24-25). Henry governs his own passion to the point that he is too mild to govern others. His inability to govern his wife is symptomatic of his inability to govern others. Margaret tries to fill the power vacuum; the Duchess of Gloucester notes that the real master of the family wears dresses: "in this place most master wear no breeches" (*Henry VI, Pt. 2* I. iii. 145). Margaret showed that she "wore the pants in the family," as it were, by maintaining control over her own sexual behavior and over her offspring. She finds Henry too given to study and prayer for her tastes; she prefers the Duke of Suffolk and has an affair with him (*Henry VI, Pt. 2* I. iii. 45-70, IV. i. 75). This affair was

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not historical; it was Shakespeare's creation (Harrison 143). The affair thus serves to underscore the danger of a woman in charge of herself, much less anything else.

Margaret's ambitions extend to her son, Edward. When she learns that Henry has named Richard Plantagenet as the heir to the throne over his son Edward, she explodes. "Ah, timorous wretch, / thou hast undone thyself, thy son, and me" (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. i. 231-232). In her anger, she asserts her superior connection to Edward as his mother.

> *Q. Mar.* Ah, wretched man, would I had died a maid
> And never seen thee, never borne thee son,
> Seeing thou hast prov'd so unnatural a father!
> Hath he deserv'd to lose his birthright thus?
> Or felt that pain which I did for him once,
> Or nourish'd him as I did with my blood,
> Thou wouldst have left thy dearest heart-blood there
> Rather than have made that savage duke thine heir,
> And disinherited thine only son. (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. i. 216-225)

Even as she speaks for the patriarchal system of the son's inheriting from the father, Margaret does not recognize Henry's primacy as father. She also refuses to recognize his primacy as king. She steps into the void left by his ineffectual goodness. She leaves him and takes charge of the war against the Yorkists; she is Amazonian enough that she not only helps lead the army, but she also asserts her *Mutterrecht* over her son.

> *Q. Mar.* I here divorce myself
> Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed,
> Until that act of parliament be repeal'd
> Whereby my son is disinherited. . . .
> Come, son, let's away.

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> Our army is ready; come, we'll after them. . . .
> *K. Hen*. Gentle son Edward, thou wilt stay [with] me?
> *Queen*. Ay, to be murther'd by his enemies.
> *Prince*. When I return with victory [from] the field
> I'll see your Grace; till then, I'll follow her. (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. i. 247-250, 255-256, 259-262)

Shakespeare's treatment of Margaret is not wholly unsympathetic; nevertheless, her refusal to recognize Henry's right to dispose of the kingdom and of his son's future is dangerous to the structure of society. Even in her most sympathetic role, that of a Fury raging at the evil Richard III, she is still a woman entering the man's realm of history, and her call for vengeance is based on a woman's right over her husband and child.

> *Q. Mar*. Out, devil! I do remember them too well:
> Thou kill'dst my husband Henry in the Tower,
> And Edward, my poor son, at Tewksbury. (Shakespeare, *Richard III* I. iii.)

In the women's curses are echoes of Antigone seeking burial for her brother Polynices, of Clytemnestra seeking vengeance for the death of Iphigenia, and especially of the Erinyes seeking the punishment of Orestes for slaying his mother, Clytemnestra (Sophocles, *Antigone* 1-85; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1521-1559; *Eumenides* 200-224). Gail Horst-Warhaff has noted that women exercised a form of power through their laments for the dead (26-27). The women's lament for Hector when Priam returned with his body is one example of their role in funeral rituals (Homer, *Iliad* 24. 718-775). As Greece moved from a society based on the household to one based on the state, laws developed that regulated

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women's laments, allowing the state to break the cycle of vendetta that unchecked invective could prolong and to use grief for its own purposes. Thus anger over a military defeat could be directed toward the enemy rather than against the leaders of the city (99, 102-103, 117-118). Margaret's laments and curses may be less powerful than her earlier army, but she remains a formidable woman.

At her worst, Margaret is ruthless. It is this ruthlessness that elicits the comparison of her to an Amazon. In his imprecations against Margaret for her part in the death of his son, York invokes the image of the blood-thirsty, child-killing Amazon, along with the typical companion images of wild beasts and cannibals.

> *York*. She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of [France,
> Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!
> How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex
> To triumph like an Amazonian trull
> Upon their woes whom fortune captivates! . . .
> Thou art as opposite to every good
> As the antipodes are unto us,
> Or as the south to the septentrion.
> O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide! . . .
> Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible;
> Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless. . . .
> That face of his the hungry cannibals
> Would not have touch'd, would not have stain'd with blood;
> But you are more inhuman, more inexorable,
> O, ten times more, than tigers of Hyrcania.
> See, ruthless queen, a hapless father's tears! (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. iv. 111-115, 134-137, 141-142, 152-156)

Some of the stereotypes in York's tirade could almost be a paraphrase of Knox, who on one page can quote Chrysostom as saying that woman "is rashe and foolhardie, and their couetousnes is like the

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goulf of hell, that is, insaciable" (25), and on the next page can write that Basilius Magnus "affirmeth woman to be a tendre creature, flexible, soft and pitifull: whiche nature, God hath geuẽ vnto her, that she may be apt to norishe children" (26). Margaret's character is not unwomanly; it is woman's nature as it develops when a woman exercises power. "Because in the nature of all woman [*sic*], lurketh suche vices, as in good gouernors are not tolerable" (Knox 25). Margaret does not exhibit her "soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible" side (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. iv. 141); instead, she and Clifford stab York to death. She then commands, "Off with his head, and set it on York gates, / So York may overlook the town of York" (*Henry VI, Pt. 3* I. iv. 179). Her power parallels that of Elizabeth, which was demonstrated in the famous beheadings of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1587 and of the Earl of Essex in 1601 (Guy 336, Quilligan, "Comedy" 171).

Margaret emerges on the stage from an axiological crisis resulting from, among other things, conflicting hierarchies of social rank and gender. Margaret displays the values associated with her class rather than with her gender. She is a Machiavellian, almost Nietzschean, character. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche describes two approaches to morality: the aristocratic and the priestly (29-31, 38-41).[12] Shakespeare portrays a society wherein neither the priestly

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[12] Nietzsche ascribes the origins of the priestly approach to the Jews; it spread to the Gentiles through the poison of Christianity (31-33). Aristocratic values are evident in "the Roman, Arabic, German, and

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Shakespeare portrays a society wherein neither the priestly values of Henry nor the aristocratic values of just about everybody else work particularly well in producing a harmonious society. Talbot comes closest to demonstrating the aristocrat's "magnificent *blonde brute*, avidly rampant for spoil and victory" tempered by "consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride, and friendship" (Nietzsche 39-40). He properly seeks an outlet for his need for conquest in France, where he can both achieve glory and expand the kingdom. The other English aristocrats unleash their predatory behavior on one another, disrupting the kingdom. According to Marilyn Williamson, in the feudal society of the period, "competition for power meant severe limits on male loyalties to one another, while a mother or sister could prove a reliable ally" (42). Furthermore, the presence of strong women in the first tetralogy allows them to serve as scapegoats for this predatory behavior.

> The effect of the strong female presence in this world of men is to mask the historical process so that prophecy seems to order history, a mother's violence exceeds the atrocities of males, witchcraft explains military weakness or shifting loyalties, marriage for love accounts for political betrayals, and all ambition or rebellion can seem reassuringly unnatural because they are qualities of the tiger-hearted Margaret or the deformed Richard, not the flower of English nobility who betrayed and killed one another for fifty years. (Williamson 42)

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encompasses the period under consideration. "At any rate there took place in the Renaissance a brilliantly sinister revival of the classical ideal, of the aristocratic valuation of all things" (55).

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The epithet of Amazon serves to explain how Margaret is able to be a women yet exhibit the predatory characteristics of her class stereotypically attributed to men. Such a use of the Amazon myth would hardly help legitimize Elizabeth's role as queen. Nor would the portrait of the Amazon Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for she has been restrained by Theseus, who has succeeded in controlling his Amazon where Henry VI failed.

> *The.* Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
> And won thy love doing thee injuries. (I. i. 16-17)

Shakespeare's Duke Theseus uses reason to govern his realm (and his woman) as effectively as Chaucer's and Boccaccio's did, but Shakespeare's Theseus lacks some of his former luster as a role model in a country where it was a woman who occupied the throne, and the "duke" who came wooing with his sword was Prince Philip II of Spain, who had been one of Elizabeth's suitors after Mary Tudor, his wife and her half-sister, had died. The intentions of the European princes toward Elizabeth were disturbingly parallel to the intentions of the heroes who wanted to conquer Amazonia. The options open to both sets of conquerors were assimilation through matrimony and conquest.

> For, as long as she [Elizabeth] remained unmarried, France and Spain each nursed hopes, heretic though she was, of bringing her country into its dynastic orbit and herself and her people back to the Roman fold. (Bryant 37)

When it became clear that Elizabeth would not marry him or any other Catholic prince, King Philip shifted to the option of conquest, sending his

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Armada in 1588: "he was now resolved to deal, once and for all, with the menace of England and its heretic Queen——the wasting ulcer at the heart of the Catholic polity in the West" (110). Such incidents did not encourage the English to celebrate the defeat of Amazons by male conquerors with the same gusto as was the case in Spanish literature. However, there was another use of the Amazon myth that did strengthen Elizabeth's reign, a use as old as the Parthenon and as recent as Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*: the defeat of the Amazons by a *female* conqueror.

The shield effect is one of the functions of the Amazon myth discussed in chapter two above (69-77). The Amazon traditionally certified the patriarchal warrior's heroic status by providing a strong enemy to overcome. There were two ways for the Amazon myth to certify a woman's heroic stature. The first approach was to identify the woman warrior with the Amazon, who was always a heroic figure. Elizabeth (or at least her chroniclers) used this approach at Tilbury but seldom elsewhere because of the negative reactions that portraying Elizabeth as an inveterate opponent of patriarchy would entail. The second approach was to do as the Athenians did with Athena; put the woman warrior in the role of the heroic male conquering the Amazons. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* uses both approaches, with the second approach predominating. Not only does he present heroic martial maids; he explicitly compares them to Queen Elizabeth, calling them shadows of her true glory.

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But O dred Soueraine
Thus farre forth pardon, sith that choicest wit
Cannot your glorious pourtraict figure plaine
That I in colourd showes may shadow it,
And antique praises vnto present persons fit. (III. Pr. 3)

Ne let his fairest *Cynthia* refuse,
In mirrours more then one her selfe to see,
But either *Gloriana* let her chuse,
Or in *Belphœbe* fashioned to bee:
In th'one her rule, in th'other her rare chastitee. (III. Pr. 5)

In his letter to Raleigh dated 23 January 1589, Spenser sees the two characters as reflecting the two bodies of the queen, with the Faerie Queene Gloriana reflecting the body politic and Belphoebe reflecting the body natural.

> In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land. And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphœbe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia (Phœbe and Cynthia being both names of Diana.) (Spenser 737)

Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, one of Spenser's principal sources, has a woman warrior named Bradamante; Spenser names two of his martial heroines Belphoebe and Britomart. In the proem to book III, Spenser calls on Elizabeth to see herself in the mirror of Belphoebe. Earlier in the book, he compares Belphoebe both to the goddess Diana and to Penthesilea, "that famous Queene / Of *Amazons*, whom *Pyrrhus* did destroy" (II. iii. 31). If Elizabeth is like Belphoebe, and Belphoebe is like Penthesilea, then

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by extension Elizabeth can see Penthesilea reflecting from the hall of mirrors. But Spenser does not emphasize the Amazonian aspect of his martial maids and definitely not of Elizabeth herself. Unlike Amazons, they do not fight against men on behalf of a nation of women. Such an emphasis would undermine rather than enhance the ethos of the characters and of the queen they shadowed. In Book Five, Britomart even overthrows the gynocracy of Radigund and replaces it with a patriarchal system.

Spenser introduces "the famous *Britomart*" immediately after holding up the mirrors of Gloriana and Belphoebe to Elizabeth (III. i. 8). Britomart is both another mirror for Elizabeth and, within the story, Elizabeth's ancestor (III. iii. 26-49). His selection of this name for his next mirror is a particularly happy one for his allegory. In ancient Crete, the name Britomartis (*Βριτόμαρτις*) was a name for Artemis (Strabo 10. 4. 14, Liddell and Scott 330), making it suitable for the conceit of comparing Elizabeth to the goddess Diana, who also had the names Artemis, Cynthia, and Phoebe. Elsewhere Britomartis was a name for one of Artemis' nymphs (Liddell and Scott 330), still making it a good name for a knight of chastity (Hamilton 306) and for a mirror of Elizabeth. Britomart is also a fitting name because in Spenser's England the influence of Latin made it suggest "Brito-Mart (Mars), the martial Britoness" (Hamilton 306). Britomart thus mythically embodies the martial spirit of Britain, as demonstrated by her epithets, which include "Britonesse" (III. i. 58),

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"warlike mayd" (III. i. 60), "Briton Mayd" (III. ii. 4), and "martiall Mayd" (III. ii. 9). Britomart (and, by extension, Elizabeth) can thus be to Britain what Athena was to Athens.

In contrast to Athena, Britomart acts on behalf of her love Artegall rather than on behalf of her father. In fact, she leaves her father to find the man she saw and fell in love with as she looked into a crystal ball (III. ii. 17-26). At one point Britomart has to rescue Artegall from the dungeon of Radigund, "the cruell Amazon" (V. v. 47). Unlike Britomart, Radigund belongs to a nation of Amazons (V. vii. 24), and she strives to make women dominate men. In contrast to his treatment of other women warriors, Spenser stresses Radigund's identity as an Amazon (V. v. 1, V. vii. 26, 28, 31). The fifth book of *The Faerie Queene* is an allegory about justice; the disruption of justice in the social realm also disrupts the great chain of being, creating a sympathetic disorder in the heavens (V. Pr. 9-11). The rule of women over men within the fifth book is emblematic of unjust government and of the subversion of the natural hierarchy.

> Such is the crueltie of womenkynd,
> When they haue shaken off the shamefast band
> With which wise Nature did them strongly bynd,
> T'obay the heasts of mans well ruling hand,
> That then all rule and reason they withstand,
> To purchase a licentious libertie.
> But vertuous women wisely vnderstand,
> That they were borne to base humilitie,
> Vnlesse the heauens them lift to lawfull soueraintie. (V. v. 25)

Unlike the bright mirrors Gloriana, Britomart, and Belphoebe, Radigund is a dark mirror whom Spenser consciously averts from

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Elizabeth with his "Vnlesse." He agrees with Knox that women as a whole should not exercise authority, but he resists the argument that what is true for the female gender as a whole is true for every woman. Indeed, Spenser's accounts of powerful women in the poem and his examples of successful women leaders from English history indicate his openness to the ability of women to rule (Roberts 192-193). Nevertheless, Radigund is a portrait of what Britomart (or Elizabeth) could become if she attempted to use her power to overturn patriarchal structures as a whole. The macrocosmic disruptions in the heavens and the mesocosmic disruptions in the society find their microcosmic corollary in Radigund's inability to rule herself.[13] Her unrequited lust for Artegall (V. v. 26-57) distracted her attention from governing and extending her nation, with the result that "the corrupt body natural subverts the body politic" (Roberts 195). She succumbs to the passion of love in a manner similar to that of Dido in the *Aeneid*.

> Which long concealing in her wouert brest,
> She haw'd the cud of louers carefull plight;
> Yet could it not so thoroughly digest,
> Being fast fixed in her wounded spright,
> But it tormented her both day and night.
> (Spenser V. v. 27)

> At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura
> volnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni. (Vergil 4. 1-2)

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[13]I am following Aho's terminology: "the macrocosm, the planets and stars; the mesocosm, the public affairs of society; and the microcosm, the life and psyche of each individual" (34).

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> But the queen, long ago wounded with a grave pain, feeds the wound from her veins and she is consumed with a hidden fire.

In both cases, love turns out to be disastrous personally as well as politically. Mercury's warning to Aeneas about Dido would apply equally well to Radigund: "'*varium et mutabile semper / femina*'" ("Woman is ever fickle and inconstant"; 4. 571-571). Ruled by passion, they are unfit to govern others.

Radigund's victory over Artegall is an example of her unjust conduct. In determining the terms of combat, she gets Artegall to agree to terms that are contrary to chivalric codes; Artegall agrees to serve her perpetually if she wins (V. iv. 49). Artegall strikes her to the ground "In sencelesse swoune" and removes her helmet in anticipation of removing her head (V. v. 11). However, when he discovers that his opponent is a woman and a beautiful one at that, "his cruell minded hart / Empierced was with pittifull regard, / That his sharpe sword he threw from him apart" (V. v. 13). When Radigund awakens, she repays his mercy by attacking him with her "former cruelnesse" (V. v. 14). His capture is thus due to his allowing his own passion to usurp his reason; to that degree Britomart's jealousy over his relationship with Radigund is well-founded.

Just as passion rules reason in Radigund, women rule men in her society. Not satisfied with arrogating power to themselves, the Amazons degrade the men who fall into their power. Gender roles are reversed

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rather than erased in this system. If taking masculine dress and activities somehow elevates women, then the reverse degrades men.

> . . . she made him to be dight
> In womans weedes, that is to manhood shame,
> And put before his lap a napron white,
> In stead of Curiets and bases fit for fight. (V. v. 20)

Having to wear women's clothes and do women's work was not only humiliating, it was also symbolically emasculating. Spenser reinforces this element by having Radigund break Artegall's sword and replace it with a distaff so he could join the other defeated knights in "spinning and carding" (V. v. 21-23). "Radigund's scheme of emasculation sounds remarkably like the dire threat that Knox had prophesied in his *First Blast* concerning women's rule" (Roberts 189).

Artegall's somewhat comic fate of sitting around in a dress sewing reflects a real anxiety in Spenser's England, an anxiety over dependence on a powerful woman. Within the *Faerie Queene*, Radigund serves as a scapegoat for such an anxiety centering on Britomart.

> Radigund is Britomart's double, split off from her as an allegorical personification of everything in Artegall's beloved that threatens him. (Montrose, "Shaping" 78)

H. S. V. Jones sees a parallel between the duel of Britomart against Radigund and the conflict between Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots (Jones 261-262). In both cases, the "bad" queen attracts negative emotions that could have undermined the "good" one. By extension, Radigund serves as a scapegoat for the anxiety centering on Elizabeth.

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Elizabeth had the power to "unman" her subjects through her rule. Montrose gives the following description of her power and influence:

> . . . the woman to whom *all* Elizabethan men were vulnerable was Queen Elizabeth herself. Within legal and fiscal limits, she held the power of life and death over every Englishman, the power to advance or frustrate the worldly desires of all her subjects. Her personality and personal symbolism helped to mold English culture and the consciousness of Englishmen for several generations. ("Shaping" 77)

Radigund unmanned her vassals in ways that Elizabeth dared not. Elizabeth could not treat men with the same disdain with which her successor, James I, treated women. James' fear of women was probably related to his dependence on two powerful women: Queen Elizabeth and James' mother, Mary, Queen of Scots (Orgel 125-126). James was noted for "his general distrust of women and his compulsive and public attachment to young men" (Orgel 125). He wrote a book on witchcraft, *Daemonologie*, and suspected witches of an organized and protracted conspiracy against him (Orgel 124). Women had to kneel in his presence, and he openly disparaged their virtue and men who honored them (Willson 196). Had Elizabeth displayed similar attitudes toward men she would have likely suffered a fate similar to Radigund's: "She [Britomart] with one stroke both head and helmet cleft" (V. vii. 34).

Where James' style of rule emphasized fear and submission on the part of all his subjects, male as well as female, Elizabeth's emphasized love (Orgel 120). This included the use of courtly love as a tool for maintaining her rule: "the queen's dalliances did not weaken her power

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but strengthened it, did not hinder her business but furthered it" (Montrose, "Shaping" 85). While Elizabeth had the public persona of a virgin, it was not that of an asexual virgin. If Elizabeth presented herself as a perpetual virgin, her courtiers were her perpetual suitors. Rather than rule on behalf of a father, husband, or son as did many queens (and even Athena), Elizabeth ruled for herself, her courtiers, and her nation. Herein lies one reason for Elizabeth's peculiar behavior of holding audience in clothes that exposed her breasts and stomach (a custom usually restricted to young unmarried women) even though she was sixty-five (see p. 176 above).

Elizabeth's relationship to her courtiers combined patronage with courtship, to the point that when the courtship ended, so might the patronage. She was "almost pathological about the marriage of one of her favorites" (Shirley 73). Thus when she learned of the secret marriage of Sir Walter Raleigh to Elizabeth Throckmorton in 1592 and the birth of a child to them, she sent the happy couple to honeymoon in the Tower (Shirley 75-76). Raleigh was only able to secure their release by giving Elizabeth £40,000 from one of his privateering ventures (Shirley 76-77). Happier for her courtiers was her ability to dispense royal boons to her favorites. Britomart exhibits this ability in her allocation of the Amazons' territory after she defeats Radigund in combat.

The Athenians had dealt with anxieties over the place of a goddess as the patroness of a patriarchal society by projecting unsettling traits

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onto the Amazons on her shield in the Parthenon and onto Clytemnestra and her Erinyes; Athena could cleanse herself of the taint of the traits by overcoming the female figures who now displayed them. Like Athena, Britomart overcomes the woman who embodies "everything in Artegall's beloved that threatens him" (Montrose, "Shaping" 78). This was also the way for Elizabeth to overcome the stigma attached to her as a powerful woman. Because the indigenous society is inherently unjust, its must be conquered and turned over to those who will rule it properly.

> So there a while they afterwards remained,
> Him to refresh, and her late wounds to heale:
> During which space she there as Princess rained,
> And changing all that forme of common weale,
> The liberty of women did repeale,
> Which they had long vsurpt; and them restoring
> To mens subiection, did true Iustice deale:
> That all they as a Goddesse her adoring,
> Her wisedome did admire, and hearkned to her loring.
>
> For all those Knights, which long in captiue shade
> Had shrowded bene, she did from thraldome free;
> And magistrates of all that city made,
> And gaue to them great liuing and large fee:
> And that they should for euer faithfull bee,
> Made them sweare fealty to *Artegall*.
> (V. vii. 42-43)

In addition to being an allegory of justice and an allegory of Elizabeth's conflict with Mary, Queen of Scots (H. Jones 251-252), the fifth book of *The Faerie Queene* can be read as a justification of the colonialism of the Protestant faction Spenser supported. Leaders of this faction included Leicester, Sidney, Lord Grey of Wilton, Essex, and Raleigh. The faction favored the termination of Elizabeth's attempts to

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come to peace with Spain, England's leadership in a coalition of Protestant nations, and the expansion of England's colonies. The group looked to Elizabeth to head this international coalition and provide them with an outlet for their dreams of conquest and glory (Shepherd 21).

Britomart does not give up her reign, but she rules as a goddess, as Isis did with Osiris (*Faerie Queene* V. vii. 1-4). Ordinary women must return to their proper subjection to men. Britomart generously patronizes the knights who had been Radigund's captives, giving them "great liuing and large fee" as a *quid pro quo* for their loyalty (V. vii. 43). Like Theseus in the *Theseid*, she distributes to the men the political power, the economic wealth, and the Amazons themselves. It is her empowering of the men as much as her military victory over Radigund that gives her the status of "a Goddesse." Britomart differs from Radigund in that she heads a patriarchal system wherein the others with power are all men. This was also true of Elizabeth's England, at least in theory.

> With one vital exception, all forms of public and domestic authority in Elizabethan England were vested in men: in fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, lords. (Montrose, "Shaping" 68)

Like Britomart, Elizabeth ruled with "the prerogative of a goddess," and, like Britomart, she "could best justify her authority by putting other women in their places" (Montrose, "Shaping" 79). Elizabeth could best enhance her own ethos and power by entering the lists as an Amazon-conqueror rather than as an Amazon.

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Sir Walter Raleigh never got around to writing the epic Spenser anticipated (Spenser 743), but he exhibited similar fantasies in his dreams of conquest in Guiana. By 1594, Raleigh had returned to favor enough to receive a commission to explore and plunder the Caribbean, which Spain claimed (Montrose, "Work" 11). In the tradition of other works of discovery, Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana*, published in 1596, constructed "knowledge" about the country as much from European mythic archetypes as from observations in the field. Like many of his predecessors, Raleigh returned with stories of Amazons.

> I made inquiry amongst the most ancient and best traueled of the *Orenoqueponi*, & I had knowledge of all the riuers between *Orenoque* and *Amazones*, and was very desirous to vnderstand the trueth of those warlike women, bicause of some it is beleeued, of others not: And though I digresse from my purpose, yet I wil set downe that hath beene deliuered me for truth of those women, and I spake with a *Casique* or Lorde of people that told me he had been in the riuer, and beyond it also. The nations of these women are on the south side of the riuer in the Prouinces of *Topago*, and their chiefest strengths, and retracts are in the Ilands scituate on the south side of the entrance, some 60 leagues within the mouth of the saide [Amazon] riuer. (23)

Raleigh goes on to discuss Amazon customs, as considered above (161). He returns to the subject of the Amazons at the end of his work. He does not quite produce the epic Spenser awaited, but his typography and ambition wax poetic together.

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. . . . And where the south border of *Guiana* reacheth to the Dominion and Empire of the *Amazones*, those women shall heereby heare the name of a virgin, which is not onely able to defend her owne territories and her neighbors, but also to inuade and conquere so great Empyres and so farre remoued.
To speake more at this time, I feare would be but troblesome: I trust in God, this being true,will suffice, and that he which is king of all kings and Lord of Lords, will put it into her hart which is Lady of Ladies topos- [*sic*] sesse it, if not, I wil iudge those men worthy to be kings thereof, that by her grace and leaue will vndertake it of themselues.
(Raleigh 101)

Raleigh believes the Amazons will recognize a similarity between their nation and Elizabeth's England, since women rule both. However, he also foresees that gynocratic dispensation meeting a forcible end in Guiana, much like its end in Spenser's fairy world. "The Amazonomachy that Ralegh projects into the imaginative space of the New World is analogous to that narrated by Spenser within the imaginative space of Faeryland" (Montrose, "Shaping" 78).

Raleigh's discoveries even made their way into fairy land. Spenser worked them into the fourth book of *The Faerie Queene*, which was published in 1596, the same year the *Discoverie* was published.

Rich Oranochy, though but knowen late
and that huge Riuer, which doth beare his name
Of warlike Amazons, which doe possesse the same. (IV. xi. 21, see Raleigh 23).

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Raleigh finds in Spenser an eager audience for his dreams of glory through the conquest of the Amazons.

> Ioy on those warlike women, which so long
> Can from all men so rich a kingdome hold;
> And shame on you, O men, which boast your strong
> And valiant hearts, in thoughts lesse hard and bold,
> Yet quaile in conquest of that land of gold.
> But this to you, O Britons, most pertaines,
> To whom the right hereof it selfe hath sold;
> The which for sparing litle cost or paines,
> Loose so immortall glory, and so endlesse gaines. (IV. xi. 22)

Spenser and Raleigh share a vision of "immortall glory" and "endlesse gaines" through the conquest of the Amazons. Both of these grow out of the Amazons' previous success; the Britons can overcome the women whom no men had hitherto been able to subdue; such a feat would demonstrate the superlative nature of the British martial spirit. They could also claim the vast riches the Amazons had accumulated during their previous success. In the fifth book of *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart fulfills this vision by overcoming the Amazons and distributing to the knights "great liuing and large fee" (V. vii. 43).

Raleigh, aided by God and Spenser, strives to "put it into her hart which is Lady of Ladies" to possess Guiana and distribute it among her favorites (101). Raleigh wants Elizabeth to play the part of Britomart. Having released Raleigh from his bondage (where he had been put by Elizabeth playing the part of Radigund), Elizabeth-as-Britomart could elevate her perpetual suitor (Raleigh-as-Artegall) to the level of king of Guiana, or at least allow him to carve out his own kingdom there. By

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allowing her (male) favorites to conquer the Amazon territory, Elizabeth would demonstrate that she was committed to a just social order. Furthermore, a river of gold flowing from Guiana into Elizabeth's coffers could do much to restore Raleigh to her favor (Shirley 77). By mobilizing her knights for heroic activity rather than immobilizing them in the Tower, Elizabeth would show herself to be a Britomart rather than a Radigund; that is, she would certify that she held the heroic status of an Amazon-tamer and also that she was not herself an Amazon.

> Ralegh's strategy for persuading the queen to advance his colonial enterprise is to insinuate that she is both like and unlike an Amazon, that Elizabethan imperialism threatens not only the empire of Guiana but the empire of the Amazons, and that Elizabeth can definitively cleanse herself from contamination by the Amazons if she sanctions their subjugation. (Montrose, "Shaping" 78)

The tensions that Spenser and Raleigh tried to resolve in the marginal regions of the Fairy World and the New World sprang from tensions in England itself. Both of these exotic foreign worlds were products of, and attempts to resolve, issues involving the center of England. These issues involved sexual politics, of course, but they also involved the operation of the English government, religious controversies, relations among the classes, relations with other colonial powers, and relations with and perceptions of indigenous populations. Amazons provided a safely remote outlet for dealing with those issues for those who did not wish to follow the example of John Knox in addressing the issues too directly.

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Conclusion

Few of the traditional functions of the Amazon myth completely fell away in the Renaissance, nor did many completely new uses of the myth develop, but certain functions gained greatly in significance. The classical use of the myth to certify the heroism of the man who conquered the Amazon had been minimal during much of the Medieval period but had resurged in the writings of Boccaccio and Chaucer. This use continued and expanded in the development of the romances and in the exploration of the New World. The romances and the exploration supported each other. The romances excited many of their readers to sail off to adventure, and the accounts of those adventures provided material for further romances.

The Amazon provided not only a call to adventure but also a tool for understanding the cultures the explorers were encountering. The early chronicles of the New World frequently mention the difficulty of describing it. Amazons were a known but exotic entity, belonging to a taxonomy of the exotic that dated back to classic times and that provided bewildered adventurers with an interpretative grid for constructing knowledge about the unknown. Stories about direct contact with Amazons were rare; more frequently explorers came back with reports of Amazons attributed to native Americans, even when the explorers could scarcely communicate with the natives. Although questions about the location of gold and other riches topped the list of the explorers, inquiries

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about Amazons were a perennial favorite. Explorers asked about Amazons because their mythology of the exotic led them to expect Amazons. Exotic women belonged in exotic climes, virgin women in virgin territory, impenetrable women in impenetrable forests. Like its Amazonian inhabitants, "*Guiana* is a Countrey that hath yet her Maydenhead" (Raleigh 96). Such countries and women provided explorers with an opportunity to prosper materially and to excel as heroes through overcoming superlative opponents.

A final major focus of the Amazon myth during the Renaissance involved the rise of powerful women. As in the case of the exotic foreigners, these exotic locals could be understood in terms of Amazons. A powerful woman labelled as an Amazon could lay claim to the heroic martial stature of the Amazon, as tradition holds that Queen Elizabeth did at Tilbury. However, she would also be susceptible to the negative connotations associated with Amazons, as in Shakespeare's portrayal of Queen Margaret.

The Amazon myth could be most useful in supporting a woman ruler by providing her with a foe to overcome. Spenser placed Britomart and Ariosto placed Marfisa in the roles normally assigned to men as the conquerors of Amazons. Britomart's conquest of Radigund parallels Elizabeth's defeat of Mary, Queen of Scots. Furthermore, in *The Discoverie of Guiana*, Raleigh makes a plea to Elizabeth to play the role of a Britomart or Marfisa in conquering Guiana. She could thereby establish

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her own heroic status as an Amazon-fighter, and also allow her loyal subjects in the conquest to demonstrate their own heroism and amass their own fortunes taken from the Amazons. The Amazons could serve as the scapegoats for tensions centering on Elizabeth and her power; her conflict with the Earl of Essex in 1601 showed that she could wield power "real enough, finally, to cut off the Earl's head" (Quilligan, "Comedy" 171), just as it had been real enough in 1587 to behead Mary, Queen of Scots (Guy 336).

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CHAPTER 5

ROMANTIC AND VICTORIAN AMAZONS

Introduction

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of the familiar elements and functions of the Amazon myth endured. One of the elements that grew in importance was the focus on Amazons as lost women. Amazons had always existed at or beyond the boundaries of "civilized" territory; they were one of the markers of those boundaries. As explored territory expanded, the amount of land left to find Amazons shrank. The English explorer Sir Richard F. Burton finally succeeded where over two millennia of explorers had failed when he located Amazons in Dahomey. At least he found that King Gelele of Dahomey had three divisions of his army, including his own body-guards, composed of women (2: 50-51). Burton somewhat wistfully concluded that these were not true Amazons and that the reality he found did not measure up to the dream he lost (2: 53).

If Burton searched for Amazons "out there," J. J. Bachofen searched for them "back then." Bachofen developed a Darwinian schema of history in which all civilizations passed through an Amazonian stage on

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their way to the more highly evolved patriarchal stage. Whether lost far away or long ago, Amazonian societies stood in contrast with the civilized here and now, a typical enough function for the myth. What was new in Bachofen was that the Amazons were no longer seen as usurping the male role in the natural hierarchy. Instead they exhibited a primitive level of organization in the evolution of culture. Nevertheless, for all that social Darwinism differed from earlier theories of culture, matriarchy was still believed to be inferior to patriarchy.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland* is in keeping with the theme of lost Amazons. Apropos of the theme, the novel itself was lost after its initial serialized publication in 1915 until its reissue in 1979 under the title *Herland: A Lost Feminist Utopian Novel*. Although she wrote the book in 1915, Gilman was herself born in 1860, and the book reflects her Victorian sensibilities. Since it was World War I that exorcised the Victorian Zeitgeist, I am therefore including *Herland* in my treatment of the Romantic and Victorian eras. Like Christine de Pizan, Gilman turned the normally dystopic Amazonian state into a utopia. She holds up Herland as an example of what women can achieve when not held back by society and as an example of what society can become when women wield power. Gilman wrote from the point of view of three intrepid male explorers who find the lost country of women. As the book progresses, the narrator Vandyck (Van) Jennings slowly realizes that it is actually his

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culture that is lost and badly in need of the Herland's more highly evolved values.

Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* from 1807, perhaps the most melodramatic treatment of the Amazon myth ever, depicts an Amazon who falls beneath the level of human to that of animal. His Penthesilea is lost, alienated from her society, from her love, Achilles, and even from herself. Her quest to become a hero equal to Achilles ultimately leads her to kill him and, with her dogs, to partially eat him. Remarkably, Penthesilea is not the villain of the story but its hero. Kleist inherited one tradition that identified Amazons with cannibals and animals and another tradition that honored Amazons as heroes; he was the first to combine the traditions to produce an Amazon who was both feral cannibal and tragic hero.

Kleist's Penthesilea belongs to the Romantic pantheon of Promethean heroes. As such she struggles in a world that is both classic and post-Enlightenment. Like other Romantic heroes who say no to divine commands received by tradition, she tries to find her own values in an era that divorced value from fact. She does so in the classic manner of attempting to prove her own heroic stature by overcoming another heroic figure. Just as Heracles, Theseus, and Achilles proved their heroism by conquering Amazons, so Penthesilea can establish her heroism by

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conquering a Greek hero and subjecting him to her power. Like Achilles, she faces not only the danger of losing but also the danger of going too far if she wins.

Kiss of the Amazon Woman

> So war es ein Versehen. Küsse, Bisse,
> Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,
> Kann schon das eine für das andre greifen. (Kleist 24. 2981-2983)
>
> So it was a mistake. Buss, bite,
> These words sound alike. Whoever loves right
> From the heart can certainly take one for the other.

Penthesilea utters these words as she realizes that, while in a frenzy, she has killed her beloved Achilles and partially eaten him. The story of Penthesilea and Achilles was first recorded in the eighth century B.C. in the epic *Aethiopis* by Arctinus, wherein the Amazons came to try to raise the siege on Troy (Proclus 506, Hammond and Scullard 102). In this and most subsequent versions of the story, Penthesilea dies in a duel with Achilles. In Arctinus' account, Achilles dies from an arrow shot by Paris. Kleist was not the first to feel the story needed modification. Writing in the fourth century A.D., twelve hundred years after Arctinus, Quintus Smyrnaeus had Apollo himself shoot the arrow that brought down Achilles (Quintus 3. 60-82), apparently feeling that Paris was not a worthy enough antagonist to fell Achilles. Kleist was even bolder in the changes he made; he was the first author to allow Penthesilea to kill Achilles, and, despite the long association of Amazons with cannibalism,

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the first to give an account of an Amazon eating human flesh. It is this crime that makes Penthesilea a Promethean hero.[1]

Tracing the development of the Promethean hero lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. The classic treatment of this development occurs in *The Romantic Agony* by Mario Praz. He deals with the Byronic Fatal Man in the second chapter, "The Metamorphoses of Satan" (51-91) and the Fatal Woman in the fourth chapter, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (187-286). He defines the defiant heroes of the era as "Rebels in the grand manner, grandsons of Milton's Satan and brothers of Schiller's Robber" (58). The Fatal Man is 'Byronic' because "it was Byron who brought to perfection the rebel type, remote descendant of Milton's Satan" (Praz 61). In his own troubled life, Kleist was unable to reconcile himself to the political situation of his era and was something of a rebel himself. A nationalist opponent to the Napoleonic state, he wrote much of the play while in a French prison (see discussion below, pp. 222-224). Seen through Kleist's interpretive framework, Homer's Achilles is the veritable apotheosis of such a Fatal Man.

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[1]Kleist saw in Penthesilea's activity the polar opposite to the passivity of another of his heroines. He wrote Marie von Kleist that Käthchen "is the opposite of Penthesilea, her other pole, a being as mighty through complete sacrifice as the other one is through action" ("*ist die Kehrseite der Penthesilea, ihr andrer Pol, ein Wesen, das ebenso mächtig ist durch gänzliche Hingebung, als jene durch Handeln,*" Kleist, *Briefe* 388). While an analysis of *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, its heroine does reflect a sentimental ideal of feminine passivity, an ideal that Penthesilea breaches through her activity and aggressiveness.

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> Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
> οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
> πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
> ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
> οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή. (l. 1-5)
>
> The wrath do sing, Goddess, of Achilles the son of Peleus,
> Ruinous wrath that brought a myriad of troubles on the
> [Achaeans,
> That sent the souls of many valiant heroes to Hades,
> And that made their bodies prey to dogs
> And all kinds of carrion birds, fulfilling the will of Zeus.

Achilles is an apotheosis to Penthesilea also, who calls him a young war god (*Kriegsgott* 15. 1807).[2]

Penthesilea is Kleist's sequel to the *Iliad*. Kleist's Achilles "is not a mythological character who has also been treated by Homer, but rather he steps out of the pages of the Iliad" (Angress 101). Penthesilea feels attracted toward the character who dared defy Agamemnon and defile Hector, who threatened the common cause by refusing to fight and then used "the common cause to take his private revenge" (Angress 101). Kleist even structures the play on the model of the *Iliad*: instead of a dramatic structure with acts and scenes, he has twenty-four scenes to parallel the twenty-four books of the *Iliad*. Furthermore, the description of the death and desecration of Achilles in the twenty-second and twenty-third scenes of the play parallels the death and desecration of Hector in

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[2]The versions of *Penthesilea* number the lines of the play continuously from the beginning to the end, rather than begin anew with each scene. Thus "15. 1807" indicates that line 1807 occurs in scene 15. Although line numbers alone would be enough to locate the line's position in the play, I also include scene numbers because the sequencing of the scenes serves an important function in the play.

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the twenty-second and twenty-third books of the epic. Kleist parallels the two to the point of having Penthesilea shoot her arrow through Achilles' "slender neck" (*schlanken Hals*, 23. 2629), just as Achilles had speared Hector through his "tender neck" (*ἁπαλοῖο αὐχένος*, *Iliad* 22. 327).

Penthesilea's pursuit of Achilles conflicts with the Amazons' law of temporary, anonymous mating with whomever they catch in battle. She relates that it is a personal quest placed on her by her mother, Queen Otrere, when the latter was upon her deathbed (Kleist 15. 2097-2150). They had heard the epic songs about Achilles. After her mother's death, while the Amazons prepared to attack the Greeks, Penthesilea found her thoughts and fantasies filled with a savage, sublime Achilles.

> Den Lieben, Wilden, Süßen, Schrecklichen,
> Den Überwinder Hektors! O Pelide! (15. 2185-2186)
>
> Bald sah ich dich, wie du ihn niederschlugst,
> Vor Ilium, den flücht'gen Priamiden;
> Wie du, entflammt von hoher Siegerlust,
> Das Antlitz wandtest, während er die Scheitel,
> Die blutigen, auf nackter Erde schleifte. (15. 2194-2198: cf. *Iliad* 22. 395-405)
>
> That dear, savage, sweet, terrible one,
> That conqueror of Hector! O Pelides! . . .
>
> I could almost see you as you struck him down
> Before Ilium, that fleet-footed son of Priam——
> As you, inflamed by the high lust of victory,
> Turned down your face while his bloody
> Head slid over the naked earth.

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Thus Penthesilea is attracted to Achilles, not in spite of his excesses, but because of them. Despite her rather adolescent attraction,[3] her "paradoxical compound of erotic desire and girlish worship" (St. Leon 23), she does not simply come to throw herself at his feet. Somewhat like Thalestris with Alexander (Diodorus 17. 77. 1-3), she wants to conceive a child by the hero in hopes of producing a heroic daughter (Amazons threw their boys into the Orcus River: Kleist 15. 1965-1967). However, even more important than her desire to produce a heroic daughter by Achilles is her goal to be the same kind of hero he is, to win him for herself or die trying (*Dich zu gewinnen, oder umzukommen*, 15. 2221). In Kleist's hands, Achilles and Penthesilea both become Romantic fatal heroes. While Penthesilea and Achilles are clearly attracted to each other in the play, their passion is largely based on each one's desire to dominate the other, on their mutual and mutually exclusive will to power. She seeks to tame the untamable fatal man who was a bane to friend and foe alike; his feelings toward her are similar.

The Romantics felt drawn to the figures of Aeschylus' Prometheus and Milton's Satan, those defiers of divine will and purveyors of proscribed knowledge. By their willful exercise of power and distribution of knowledge, they establish their status as heroic criminals. Nor were they heroes in spite of their crimes; it was their crimes that made them

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[3] According to Odysseus, when Penthesilea first saw Achilles, she acted "'like a sixteen year old girl'" ("*Gleich einem sechzehnjähr'gen Mädchen*," 1. 86).

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heroes. The "innermost kernel of the Prometheus myth" (*innersten Kern der Prometheussage)* is "the necessity of crime impelling the titanically striving individual" (*"die dem titanisch strebenden Individuum gebotene Nothwendigkeit des Frevels,"* Nietzsche, *Geburt der Tragödie* 70).

> Prometheus is the mythic figure who best suits the uses of Romantic poetry, for no other traditional being has in him the full range of Romantic moral sensibility and the full Romantic capacity for creation and destruction. (Bloom 120)

The fact that Prometheus' crime was rebelling against the brutish tyranny of Zeus and that the play *Prometheus Bound* was a protest against tyranny in general (Podlecki 111, 116) made the figure of Prometheus that much more attractive to those who saw themselves as striving for liberation from unjust governments.

Inevitably the desire to dominate the other brings Achilles and Penthesilea into conflict. Achilles makes his will to power quite clear on several occasions, both to the Greeks and to the Amazons. Following his first encounter with Penthesilea, he makes the following declaration to his comrades.

> Nichte ehr zu meinen Freunden will ich lenken,
> Ich schwör's, und Pergamos nicht wiedersehn,
> Als bis ich sie zu meiner Braut gemacht,
> Und sie, die Stirn bekränzt mit Tedeswunden,
> Kann durch die Straßen häuptlings mit mir schleifen.
> (4. 611-615)

> I will never drive back to my friends,
> I swear, nor will I see Pergamon again,
> Until I have made her my bride,
> And she, her brow wreathed with deadly wounds,
> Can slide head first through the streets by me.

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He makes a similar boast to Prothoe, one of Penthesilea's lieutenants.

> Mein Will ist, ihr zu tun, muß ich dir sagen,
> Wie ich dem stolzen Sohn des Priam tat. (13. 1513-1514)
>
> My will is, I must tell you, to do with her
> Just as I did with that arrogant son of Priam.

Penthesilea does not verbalize a desire to desecrate Achilles, although her actions speak loudly enough on this point, but she is clear about her desire to conquer him.

> Fluch mir, empfing ich jemals einen Mann,
> Den mir das Schwert nicht würdig zugeführt. (14. 1580-1581)
>
> A curse on me, if I ever take a man
> Whom my sword did not properly supply.

Moreover, she expresses her desire to dominate him in terms of taming him, somewhat reminiscent of the medieval image of men and women taming each other (91-93 above).

> Den jungen trotz'gen Kriegsgott bändg' ich mir. (5. 630)
>
> I'll tether me that defiant young war god.
>
> Nun denn, so grüß ich dich mit diesem Kuß,
> Unbändigster der Menschen, mein! Ich bin's,
> Du junger Kriegsgott, der du angehörst;
> Wenn man im Volk dich fragt, so nennst du mich. (15. 1805-1808)
>
> Now then, I thus greet you with this kiss,
> The most unbridled of men, you are mine! Oh young war God, I am the one to whom you belong;
> When people ask you, be sure to name me.

At the end of their only extensive conversation, Achilles and Penthesilea each try to talk the other into returning to their respective

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homes in submission. Penthesilea wants Achilles to accompany her to the festival of roses in Themiscyra; Achilles wants her to return to Phthia as *his* queen (*meiner Königin*, 13. 1524). As the battle around them intensifies and separates them, their debate degenerates into an unintentionally comic shouting of the names of the cities.

> PENTHESILEA: Du willst mir nicht nach Themiscyra folgen? . .
>
> ACHILLES: Nach Phtia, Kön'gin.
> PENTHESILEA: Oh!——Nach Themiscyra!
> Oh! Freund! Nach Themiscyra, sag ich dir. (17. 2281, 2285-2286)
>
> PENTHESILEA: Will you not follow me to Themiscyra? . . .
>
> ACHILLES: To Phthia, Queen.
> PENTHESILEA: Oh!——To Themiscyra!
> Oh, Friend! To Themiscyra, I tell you.

Only after being separated in battle do Achilles and Penthesilea consider submitting to each other. Penthesilea curses her troops for rescuing her from Achilles' grasp when she was his proper prisoner; that rescue was a breach of the rules of chivalry (*Rittersitte*, 19. 2298-2308). Achilles decides to challenge her to a mock battle so he can "lose" to her and attend the Festival of Roses in Themiscyra, after which he still plans to take her to Phthia (21. 2447-2488). Achilles makes a disastrous mistake in that challenge, for Penthesilea thinks it is a real challenge and meets the lightly armed Achilles with full armor, dogs, chariots, and even elephants (elephants?), the latter having more to do with fantasies of exotic Amazons than with Scythian fauna (20. 2352-21. 2550). Achilles

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(over)confidently steps out to meet Penthesilea, assuring his Myrmidons that he has tamed her and her menagerie.

> Die fressen aus der Hand, wahrscheinlich——Folgt mir!
> ——Oh! Die sind zahm, wie sie. (20. 2547-2548)
>
> Follow me! I bet they'll be eating out of our hands.
> ——Oh! They are tame, like her.

Achilles' arrogance is his downfall; Penthesilea's madness is hers. Instead of bringing Achilles back for the Festival of Roses, Penthesilea sics her dogs on him and joins them in eating his flesh (22. 2589-23. 2674). When Penthesilea finally regains her senses, she allows her concerned lieutenant Prothoe to disarm her in Prothoe's attempt to prevent her suicide. But Prothoe cannot take what is, for the Romantics, the most potent weapon. Penthesilea dies by a pure assertion of will, making hers a quintessentially Romantic death (24. 3011-3034).

It would be easy enough to read Kleist's play as yet another cautionary tale about how dangerous and unnatural it is to let women have power. Yet such a reading would oversimplify the work. In the Romantic era, the exercise of personal power and the establishment of a personal ethos took place against the backdrop of the Enlightenment and the changes that had taken place in the realm of knowledge, changes which, according to Langbaum, left a wilderness in their wake.

> That wilderness is the legacy of the Enlightenment, of the scientific and critical effort of the Enlightenment which, in its desire to separate fact from the values of a crumbling tradition, separated fact from all values——bequeathing a world in which fact is measurable quantity while value is man-made and illusory. Such a world offers no objective

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> verification for just the perceptions by which men live, perceptions of beauty, goodness and spirit. (Langbaum 11)

When the Amazons sweep down onto the armies at Troy and start attacking both Trojan and Greek, Kleist does have Odysseus mutter the standard accusation that the situation is not natural, that the Amazons should fight for one side or the other and not attack both (l. 22-38). Their actions defy his neat polar oppositions of Greek and Trojan. However, during the play, the Amazons' motive becomes apparent; they are collecting men for their mating rituals. Such a project is hardly less rational than, or even all that different from, the Greeks and Trojans fighting for Helen (Mahlendorf 255), or the Greeks' own internal conflicts over Chryseïs and Briseïs, which also broke down the neat binary opposition between Greek and Trojan as it cost the Greeks their moral distinction from the Trojans and threatened to dissolve the Greek pole (Homer 9. 338-345). The Amazons also create a distraction from the business of the Trojan-Greek conflict, but their state is as rational within its framework as is the Greeks' state within their framework.

> The fact that Odysseus equates natural law and the customs of his nation and that he does so from ignorance of other customs should make us hesitate before we speak of what is "natürlich" and "unnatürlich" in this drama. (Angress 122)

Kleist's Amazonian and Greek states have their roots in the classic myths, but the states themselves are products of the Enlightenment. While no detailed description of the Greek state occurs in the text, Penthesilea gives a lengthy description to Achilles of the origin of the

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Amazonian state. In the account, Scythian women either had to submit to the Ethiopians who had killed their husbands or had to rebel. They killed the Ethiopians under the leadership of their first queen, Tanaïs, who led them to declare their permanent independence from men and who sealed the pact by ripping off her right breast (15. 1911-2005). Future Amazons would defend their independence by taking only men they had conquered in battle and by only consorting with them for a brief period of time. While most of the incidents related are familiar from mythology, the ideology and rhetoric were from Kleist's own era.

> The foundation myth of the Amazons in fact tells of an evidently "modern" revolt against social and sexual oppression, which is put forward as a rational act of self-defense and self-emancipation, justified, like the democratic revolutions of England and, more recently, America and France, by appeal to "natural right." (Rigby 327)

The universe no longer legitimated the state in the manner it once had. Social contracts between the rulers and the ruled lacked the absolute status of a covenant among ruler, ruled, and God. Within the play, it is not that the Amazon and Greek cultures have no sense of right and wrong, but that the Enlightenment's divorce of fact from value (which Kleist projects back onto the two cultures) makes impossible an objective decision that one of these cultures is natural and the other unnatural. The Amazonian state is no longer a breach of the great chain of being; it is simply another social contract based on another tradition.

A rational, independent state had been born, but at a tremendous personal cost to the women involved, whose physical mutilation

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symbolized their social and emotional mutilation. At various times in the narrative, Achilles editorializes on the Amazon state and its rituals with such adjectives as "unwomanly" (*unweiblich*), "unnatural" (*unnatürlich*), "impossible" (*unmöglich*), "inhuman" (*unmenschlich)*, and "criminal" (*frevelhaft*) (15. 1902, 2005, 2011). Yet Achilles' Greek state is no more "natural" in the framework of this play than the Amazon state. Each state is the product of historical forces; their opposition is between two different societies, not between a natural and an unnatural one.

> In *Penthesilea* there is ample scope for perceiving the Hegelian conflict of two forces which have apparently equal and absolute justification but which can only assert themselves as 'negation and transgression of the other'. (Stephens, "Illusion" 198).

In fact, the two societies are similar in being aggressive, violent, sexually segregated societies (Angress 117, Mahlendorf 255). Each society has its own system of values which are regarded as valid for it. The person who accepts the presuppositions of the Amazons (or Greeks) will find the Amazon (or Greek) state to be internally consistent with those presuppositions. Like the Greek state, the Amazon state is not so much inhuman and unwomanly as it is a dehumanizing machine (Rigby 323). Earlier accounts of the Amazon myth that mention the removal of a breast tend to focus on the cost to men: the Amazon's refusal to marry the adult male, to nourish the male child, or to establish the paternal link. Kleist retains these, but he adds to them the cost to the Amazons themselves. Thus when Penthesilea recounts to Achilles the Amazon foundation myth,

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she includes the usual details that the Amazon women determined not to be subject to men, to kill any man who came into their territory, and to put male offspring to death (15. 1953-1967). Unlike parallel accounts, Penthesilea goes on to add that when Tanaïs ripped off her right breast, she fell into a faint (15. 1988). It is this ritual that Achilles finds so objectionable, so "*barbarisch*" (15. 1992-2014).

Penthesilea's challenge is to find a way to meet certain emotional needs in a state that makes no allowances for those needs. She seeks to meet those needs through Achilles, who has previously established his independence from the Greek state. In the *Iliad*, he refused orders, threats, bribes, and appeals to patriotism; when he finally acted, it was his choice to act (*Iliad* 1, 9, 18, 19). As Diomedes noted when Achilles refused to return to battle, "He will fight when the wrath in his heart commands him and a god rouses him" ("*τότε δ' αὖτε μαχήσεται, ὁππότε κέν μιν / θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἀνώγῃ καὶ θεὸς ὄρσῃ*": 9. 702-703).

Balancing social demands against personal needs was a problem for Kleist as well as for Penthesilea and Achilles. Joining the Prussian army when he was fifteen, Kleist resigned in 1799 at the age of twenty-two. He noted at the time that in disciplining his men he could not fulfill both his duties as an officer and his duties as a man; the demands of the state as represented by military regulations conflicted with his personal morality (Damrosch 311-312).

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Kleist often came into conflict with the Enlightened state, which arrived in the old-fashioned way of a conqueror promulgating his laws. On March 21, 1804, the Code civil des Français, later eponymously renamed the Code Napoléon, went into effect throughout the French Empire, including the large portions of Europe it then held. This code came "automatically into force throughout the Empire, without any regard whatsoever either for the past history or for the present state of civilization of any of the numerous peoples involved" (Campbell xxxvi). Although he once tried to join the French army in the hopes of dying in battle, Kleist in general opposed the Napoleonic state (Damrosch 299). In January 1807, the French arrested him in Berlin, which they then occupied, and imprisoned him for six months on the false charge that he was a spy. It was during this confinement that he wrote the bulk of *Penthesilea* (Damrosch 299).

Kleist's nationalism continued to cause him problems. He founded the *Berliner Abendblätter* in October 1810 and edited it until March 1811, when the government forced it to close because of his political views (Damrosch 307). That fall he tried to re-enter the Prussian army when it seemed that Friedrich Wilhelm would finally fight Napoleon, but the appointment fell through when Friedrich Wilhelm signed an alliance with Napoleon instead (Damrosch 309). On November 21, 1811, Kleist fulfilled a suicide pact with Henriette Vogel; after first having coffee with her on the shore of the Wannsee, he shot her and then himself (Maass

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278-287). Kleist had repeatedly proposed suicide pacts to various people, and he finally succeeded with Vogel, who was apparently ill with cancer (Damrosch 309).

Kleist's use of the Penthesilea myth was one part of a broader movement: "the romanticists' use of the past to give meaning to an admittedly meaningless world" (Langbaum 12). Kleist did not seek normative traditions for himself in the past, for the Enlightenment had made that classical sense of the past impossible for him. The romantic sense of the past was to seek to experience something different from and more noble than the present. Langbaum's description of the romantic author seems particularly applicable to *Penthesilea*.

> By giving us as exotic a past as possible, the romanticist gives us a past which, because it is inapplicable to the present, we can inhabit as a way not of learning a lesson but of enlarging our experience. (Langbaum 13)

Unlike Pheidias, Kleist is not carving himself into the battle so that he can emulate past heroism and its values (see p. 51 above); he is experiencing the past as part of an attempt to reintegrate fact and value on the basis of that experience (Langbaum 21). This process is ongoing rather than one that can be completed because the values are always grounded in current experience (Langbaum 26-27); one's own past experiences are open to the same critique as any other tradition. This reliance on experience is an extension of the empiricism of the Enlightenment.

> Like the scientist's hypothesis, the romanticist's formulation is evolved out of experience and is continually tested against experience. The difference is that the scientist's experiment

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> is a selected and analysed experience, whereas experience for the romanticist is even more empiric because less rationalized. . . . Romanticism is in this sense not so much a reaction against eighteenth-century empiricism as a reaction within it, a corrected empiricism. (Langbaum 22)

The romantic's task is to reconstruct order using the "creative . . . faculty . . . of imagination" (Langbaum 14). The romantic hero's self is at the center of this activity: "he discovers his own feelings and his own will as a source of value in an otherwise meaningless universe" (Langbaum 16). The hero then projects those feelings onto the external world and identifies with it, "so that the living consciousness perceived in the object is [his or her] own" (Langbaum 24).

Penthesilea tries to establish her heroic identity through two acts of will: rebelling against the Amazonian tradition as represented by her counselors and projecting her will on Achilles. Achilles' agenda is similar to hers. Their mutually exclusive projections onto each other help cause the tragedy and reveal the flaw in romantic projection. The romantic hero constructs a new universe from an internal vision, but what if the external world refuses to conform to the vision? What if the romantic hero meets another romantic hero with a conflicting projection? Penthesilea and Achilles have mutually exclusive fantasies, fantasies based in their Amazonian and Greek backgrounds.

> The drama rushes to its catastrophic conclusion precisely because the protagonists persist in apprehending each other through the filter of the obscuring perspective imposed by their respective communities. (Stipa 31)

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Two hundred years before Kleist wrote *Penthesilea*, Cervantes had identified the solipsistic tendency of romantic projection: the giants the hero was fighting could look suspiciously like windmills to bystanders (*Don Quixote* chap. 8). Penthesilea and Achilles appear quixotic to both Greeks and Amazons.

Penthesilea and Achilles have both been socialized to believe their own gender should dominate. Neither one can truly submit to the other; neither can envision an equal relationship based on mutual respect, for that would entail an attempt to understand the other in his/her own right. Instead, each tries to persuade the other to submit to a new system. Thus in their shouting match, Themiscyra and Phthia represent matriarchy versus patriarchy (see discussion on p. 217 above). Each fails to truly see the other because of their mutually exclusive backgrounds. In the play, "the subject is not so much constitutive as it is constituted by other forces" (Stipa 37). Even with their romantic creative power, they are more likely to reflect their cultures than to create something completely new.

Penthesilea and Achilles, like Kleist, are products of their own cultures even while they are unable to integrate successfully into their cultures. The old opposition of man as reason versus woman as desire has metamorphosed in this story into both the Greek and the Amazon societies as reason versus both Achilles and Penthesilea as desire (Mahlendorf 256-257, Angress 134). Both Achilles and Penthesilea

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breach the mores of the groups they lead.[4] For Kleist, the most important taboos Achilles broke in the *Iliad* center on the treatment of Hector's body. Achilles not only desecrates the body of Hector by dragging it behind his chariot, but he even threatens to allow the dying Hector to become carrion and expresses a desire to eat him raw.

> *"μή με, κύον, γούνων γουνάζεο μηδὲ τοκήων.*
> *αἴ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη*
> *ὤμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι, οἷα ἔοργας,*
> *ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὃς σῆς γε κύνας κεφαλῆς ἀπαλάλκοι."* (22. 345-348)
>
> "Do not entreat me, dog, by knees or parents.
> Oh that fury and wrath might somehow allow me
> To carve your flesh and eat it raw for what you have done;
> There is no one who can ward the dogs away from your [head."

These threats, unrealized in the *Iliad*, are fulfilled in *Penthesilea*. Kleist stresses the continuity of his Achilles with the Achilles of the *Iliad* by having him threaten to desecrate Penthesilea the way he did Hector as well as threaten to humiliate her sexually.[5] No one wards the dogs or Penthesilea away from Achilles' head. When Penthesilea eats Achilles, she joins a Romantic tradition that includes both cannibals and vampires among its fatal heroes (Praz 76, 80).

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[4]In Kleist's play, Agamemnon does not make an appearance; he spends the play off-stage (1. 194). Achilles, typically for his character, pursues his own goals while Odysseus, Diomedes, and Antilochus unsuccessfully try to influence him. Likewise, he had rejected the embassy led by Odysseus and Aias on behalf of Agamemnon in Book 9 of the *Iliad*.

[5]Kleist 4. 611-615, 13. 1513-1520. See p. 215 above.

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Angress points out that this desecration was not a direct indictment of the Amazonian culture; Kleist represents the defeat of Achilles from the Amazons' point of view, who react with consternation (106). When Penthesilea first brings down Achilles, the Amazons rejoice because they think that Penthesilea will follow their custom and bring back Achilles for the Festival of Roses, their mating ritual.

> Triumph! Triumph! Triumph! Achilleus stürzt!
> Gefangen ist der Held! Die Siegerin,
> Mit Rosen wird sie seine Scheitel kränzen! (22. 2582-2584)

> Triumph! Triumph! Triumph! Achilles has fallen!
> The hero is captured! The victress
> Will crown his head with roses!

Their joy soon turns to horror as an anonymous Amazon soldier reports "with shock" (*mit Entsetzen*) what she sees next; the action itself occurs offstage (22. 2591).

> DIE AMAZONE: Penthesilea,
> Sie liegt, den grimm'gen Hunden beigesellt,
> Sie, die ein Menschenschoß gebar, und reißt,——
> Die Glieder des Achills reißt sie in Stücken!
> DIE OBERPRIESTERIN: Entsetzen! o Entsetzen!
> ALLE: Fürchterlich! (22. 2594-2598)

> THE AMAZON. Penthesilea,
> She is lying, she joins her fierce hounds,
> She, born from a human womb, yet she tears,
> She tears Achilles' limbs in bits!
> HIGH PRIESTESS. Horror! Oh horror!
> ALL. Dreadful!

Even Penthesilea shares this appraisal of her action. After killing Achilles, she forgets what she has done to him. Upon seeing his desecrated body, she exclaims:

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Wer von euch tat das, ihr Entsetzlichen! (24. 2896)

Which of you did this, you monsters!

Both the reaction of the High Priestess and the corresponding antiphony of the chorus reveal the depth of the Amazons' dismay over the turn of events. Together the High Priestess and the chorus represent the unity of official and popular Amazon morality in rejecting Penthesilea's crime. The High Priestess goes on to disavow responsibility for Penthesilea's action and even to question Penthesilea's humanity.

DIE OBERPRIESTERIN *mit Entsetzen:* Diana ruf ich an:
Ich bin an dieser Greueltat nicht schuldig! (24. 2711-2712)

THE HIGH PRIESTESS *with horror.* Diana hear me:
I am not guilty of this atrocity!

War ich's, du——Mensch nicht mehr, wie nenn ich dich?
Die diesen Mord dir schrecklich abgefordert?——(24. 2731-2732)

You——no longer human——what should I call you?
Did I command you to do this dreadful murder?

Although the High Priestess energetically washes her hands of her queen, things are never that simple in *Penthesilea*. According to St. Leon, "legislative morality conflicts with the natural demands of the world and takes no cognizance of the wide divergence of individual emotional needs" (36). The Amazons worship Artemis and Ares, and, like Euripides' Hippolytus, they worship Artemis to the neglect of Aphrodite. In fact, when Penthesilea calls on Aphrodite, the priestesses around her respond with almost as much horror as they would later at the death of Achilles.

PENTHESILEA:——O Aphrodite!

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DIE OBERPRIESTERIN: Die Unselige!
DIE ERSTE PRIESTERIN: Verloren ist sie!
DIE ZWEITE: Den Erinnyen
Zum Raub ist ihre Selle hingegeben! (9. 1232-1234)

PENTHESILEA.——Oh, Aphrodite!
THE HIGH PRIESTESS. The pitiful woman!
FIRST PRIESTESS. She is lost!
SECOND PRIESTESS. The Furies
have stolen her soul!

"Aphrodite . . . is a name sacrilegious to the Amazons" (Paulin 43). The Amazons' customs demand that each see a man as "a temporary breeding partner" (Crosby 40) and to attach no deeper feelings to him. Unlike her companions, she cannot successfully suppress the urges of Aphrodite.

DIE HAUPTMÄNNIN: Vom giftigsten der Pfeile Amors sei,
Heißt es, ihr jugendliches Herz getroffen. (7. 1075-1076)

THE CAPTAIN: By Eros' most poison arrow,
they say, her maiden heart has been pierced.

Like her society, Penthesilea cannot find a way to integrate the worship of Aphrodite with the worship of Artemis, although she does wish to do so.

Ist's meine Schuld, daß ich im Feld der Schlacht
Um sein Gefühl mich kämpfend muß bewerben?
Was will ich denn, wenn ich das Schwert ihm zücke?
Will ich ihn denn zum Orkus niederschleudern?
Ich will ihn ja, ihr ew'gen Götter, nur
An diese Brust will ich ihn niederziehn!
(9. 1186-1187)

Is it my fault that I must court his feelings
With my fighting in the field of battle?
What will I want when I draw my sword on him?
Will I want to hurl him down to Orcus?
I only want, by the eternal gods,
To pull him down on this breast!

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Although the Amazonian religion takes no responsibility for its effects on Penthesilea (St. Leon 36), she is as much a product of it as Milton's Satan is a product of Milton's God. A particular kind of law produces a particular kind of transgression. The Amazons' denial of Eros means that when it manifests itself, it will do so as transgression and possibly as madness. Love in *Penthesilea* accords well with Hesiod's ancient description.

> *ἠδ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι,*
> *λυσιμελής, πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων*
> *δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν.* (*Theogony* 120-122)
>
> And Love, most beautiful of the immortal gods,
> weakening the limbs and overpowering in their hearts the
> minds and wise plans of all gods and all people.

Penthesilea's rebellion against the norms of her society is not intellectual; such an approach would not challenge the backdrop of Enlightenment intellectualism. She gives her intellectual assent to the Amazon lifestyle; indeed, when she describes her culture's history and customs to Achilles in scene fifteen, she is the play's most eloquent apologist for Amazonian society. It is Love piercing her heart that overturns her mind and wise plans and that drives her from the Amazonian path.

Penthesilea's rebellion and passion manifest themselves as madness. Bystanders interpret both her passion and Achilles' as madness and frequently compare them to unreasoning beasts. Early in the play, Odysseus and Diomedes set forth the principle that will guide the approach of both the Greeks and the Amazons toward their respective

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heroes, which is to stop their aberrant behavior. Diomedes explicitly aligns the position of society with reason and that of Achilles with madness.

> Laßt uns vereint, ihr Könige, noch einmal
> Vernuft keilförmig, mit Gelassenheit,
> Auf seine rasende Entschließung setzen. (1. 229-231)
>
> Kings, let us unite once again
> And coolly set our reason, like a wedge
> Against his deranged stubbornness.

At this point, Odysseus has just given an epic simile making Achilles a dog caught up in the hunt for a stag; Odysseus recognizes that in such a state, Achilles is beyond the reach of argument alone. The ever-pragmatic Odysseus has suggested more direct action.

> Durchbohrt mit einem Pfeilschuß, ihn zu fesseln,
> Die Schenkel ihm. (1. 221-222)
>
> Pierce his thigh with an arrow
> To pin him.

After all efforts to reason with Penthesilea fail, the High Priestess, the Amazons' counterpart to Odysseus (Mahlendorf 256-257), likewise suggests stopping Penthesilea by force, comparing her to a mad dog.

> Und reißt, wenn sich ihr Fuß darin verfängt,
> Dem wutgetroffnen Hunde gleich, sie nieder:
> Daß wir sie binden, in die Heimat bringen,
> Und sehen, ob sie noch zu retten sei. (22. 2578-2581)
>
> And when her foot is caught in the snare,
> Pull her down like a mad dog.
> We'll bind her, take her home,
> And see whether she can still be saved.

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As Penthesilea and Achilles move toward their final encounter, Odysseus and the High Priestess bark parallel orders to their forces. Their interchanges continue the theme of a madness that robs the victims of their humanity as well as their reason, reducing them to the level of animals.

> DIOMEDES: Der Rasende!
> ODYSSEUS: Laßt uns ihn knebeln, binden——hört, ihr Griechen!
> (21. 2548-1549)

> DIE OBERPRIESTERIN: Reißt sie zu Boden nieder! Bindet sie!
> EINE AMAZONE: Meinst du die Königin?
> DIE OBERPRIESTERIN: Die Hünden, mein ich! (22. 2552-2553)

> DIOMEDES. That lunatic!
> ODYSSEUS. Let's fasten and tie him up——listen, you Greeks!

> HIGH PRIESTESS. Pull her down to the ground! Tie her up!
> AN AMAZON. You mean the Queen?
> HIGH PRIESTESS. I mean that bitch!

Achilles is less carried away by his passion than is Penthesilea by hers; his goal does not seem rational to the Greeks, but the way he pursues his goal is. What he lacks is self-awareness, an understanding of Penthesilea, and a consideration of the consequences of his actions. At some level, Penthesilea is aware that she is courting disaster as well as Achilles, and she tries to regain her sanity and composure.

> PENTHESILEA *mit erzwungener Fassung*:
> Gut. Wie ihr wollt. Sei's drum. Ich will mich fassen.
> Dies Herz, weil es sein muß, bezwingen will ich's,
> Und tun mit Grazie, was die Not erheischt.
> Recht habt ihr auch. Warum auch wie ein Kind gleich,

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> Weil sich ein flücht'ger Wunsch mir nicht gewärt,
> Mit meinen Götten brechen? (9. 1196-1201)
>
> PENTHESILEA *with forced composure*:
> Good. As you wish. So be it. I'll get a grip on myself.
> I will overcome this heart because it must be so
> And will do with grace what necessity dictates.
> You are right also. Why should I break with my
> gods like a child because I could not grant
> myself a fleeting fancy?

Penthesilea is never able to overcome her "fleeting fancy"; "*flücht'ger Wunsch*" may accurately describe Achilles' feelings, but it is an understatement when applied to Penthesilea. Those around her interpret the triumph of Penthesilea's passion over her reason as a sign that she has fallen below the level of human to the animal level. Indeed, Penthesilea in her lucid moments would agree with that interpretation, yet her distraction was precisely the irruption of the Dionysian with which the Romantics attempted to balance the Apollonian Enlightenment. Several scholars have commented on the Dionysian tendencies of *Penthesilea* (Paulin 39, 44-45, 51; Rigby 322; Stephens 200). They are referring to the schema Nietzsche developed in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. According to Nietzsche, Apollo and Dionysus were the two deities of art in Greece. Apollo was the patron of plastic arts, and Dionysus of music. Apollo established the "*principium individuationis*" (the principle of individuation); Dionysus dissolved that principle in his ecstasies. Apollo gave intuition (*Anschauung*) through dreams; Dionysus gave ecstasy (*Entzückung*) through drunkenness (25-26, 28-29, 84, 103-104). Later tragedy, under

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the influence of Socrates and Euripides, replaced Apollonian intuition with thought and Dionysian ecstasy with passion (83-84).

Kleist, writing before Nietzsche, nevertheless anticipates him by making Penthesilea explicitly Dionysian, restoring the ecstatic to tragedy.[6] In Odysseus' account of the Greeks' first parley with Penthesilea, he notes that Penthesilea did not pay attention to the conversation because she was so smitten by Achilles. When she did speak, it was to exclaim to Prothoe, "*solch einem Mann*" ("What a man!" 1. 89). Odysseus continues:

> Achill und ich, wir sehn uns lächelnd an,
> Sie ruht, sie selbst, mit trunknem Blick schon wieder
> Auf des Äginers schimmernde Gestalt. (1. 92-94)
>
> Achilles and I smile at each other.
> She herself again rests a drunken gaze
> On the shimmering form of the Aegean man.

From her first glance at Achilles, Penthesilea behaves drunkenly. As she approaches the fatal confrontation with Achilles, the High Priestess notes her Dionysian behavior even more explicitly than did Odysseus.

> Jetzt unter ihren Hunden wütet sie,
> Mit schaumbedeckter Lipp, und nennt sie Schwestern,
> Die heulenden, und der Mänade gleich,
> Mit ihren Bogen durch die Felder tanzend. (22. 2567-2570)
>
> Now she is raving among her dogs,
> Foaming at the mouth and calling them her sisters.
> Them howling, and her like a Maenad,
> Dancing through the fields with her bow.

---

[6]According to Rigby, it was the influence of Nietzsche that finally allowed this "truly Dionysian drama" "to be brought in from the cold" in the 1920s, after a century of being either criticized or ignored (322).

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By comparing Penthesilea to a Maenad, the High Priestess thus likens her to a bacchante, an acolyte of Dionysus. The word itself comes from the Greek *μαινάς* (*mainas*, related to the English word 'maniac'), which means "raving," "frantic," or, substantivally, "mad woman" (Liddell and Scott 1073). The traditional behavior of Maenads makes the situation even more ominous for Achilles. Paulin compares Penthesilea to Agave, a Maenad who, in the midst of her worship of Bacchus, mistook her son Pentheus for a wild lion and with her female companions rent him limb from limb, victoriously holding his head aloft in victory (44-45; Euripides, *The Bacchanals* 1043-1199; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3. 708-733). Kleist's Penthesilea also follows the model of Virgil's Dido, who was so distracted over being forsaken by her lover Aeneas that she rushed about the city like a *Thyias* (a Maenad) who had "heard the Bacchic cry" (*audito . . . Baccho*; *Aeneid* 4. 302). Both Penthesilea and Dido are examples of women rulers who have allowed passion to overthrow reason and who therefore have lost their ability to govern effectively. The outcome was better for Aeneas than for Achilles because Aeneas, more like Odysseus than Achilles in this case, had already fled.

Penthesilea the Maenad, like Agave, tears her beloved limb from limb in a Dionysian ecstasy (Kleist 22. 2594-2597). One motive for cannibalism is to take the other into the self. Penthesilea merges with Achilles in eating him, making his crime her own. Her action is both violent and orgasmic; like Achilles, she tends to combine sex with

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violence (Angress 106). Achilles had alternately threatened to desecrate Penthesilea and to make her his queen; at one point he had even simultaneously directed the battle against the Amazons and wooed Penthesilea (11. 1406-1446). Penthesilea's desecration of Achilles and her sexual pleasure in that act were both breaches of Amazonian taboo; the Amazons carefully separated sexual pleasure from combat, returning home with their prisoners before mating with them (Angress 110; Kleist 14. 1706-1709, 15. 1859-1866). As Penthesilea gradually recovers her senses following her consumption, she has no memory of what has happened, but she knows she has had an ecstatic experience.

> Ach!——Wie wunderbar. (24. 2835)
>
> Ah!——How wonderful.

> *nach einer Pause, mit einer Art von Verzückung:*
> Ich bin so selig, Schwester! Überselig!
> Ganz reif zum Tod o Diana, fühl ich mich!
> Zwar weiß ich nicht, was hier mit mir geschehn,
> Doch gleich des festen Glaubens könnt ich sterben,
> Daß ich mir den Peliden überwand. (24. 2864-2868)
>
> *After a pause, with a manner of rapture:*
> I am so happy, Sister! More than happy!
> Quite ready for death, oh Diana, do I feel!
> To be sure, I do not know what happened to me here,
> But I can die with the sure belief
> That I overcame Pelides.

When she discovers the dead Achilles, she initially cannot believe that she is the one who killed him. After she is convinced, she interprets what she has done in sexual terms.

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Küßt ich ihn tot? (24. 2977)

Kissed I him dead?

So war es ein Versehen. Küsse, Bisse,
Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,
Kann schon das eine für das andre greifen. (Kleist 24. 2981-2983)

So it was a mistake. Buss, bite,
These words sound alike. Whoever loves right from the [heart
Can certainly take one for the other.

Through her tragic life and death, Penthesilea becomes a romantic hero. Her frenzy may be madness to her and those around her, but it qualifies as a type of knowledge that rationalism cannot provide or really comprehend, the knowledge of "concrete experience" (Langbaum 22). Her experience is an example of a romantic hero gaining her "own insight into 'the life of things'" (Langbaum 22). In order to fulfill her heroic task, her experience must have an impact on those around her that is in some sense positive; her forbidden knowledge must correlate to her exercise of power.

Der edle Mensch sündigt nicht, . . . durch sein Handeln mag jedes Gesetz, jede natürliche Ordnung, ja die sittliche Welt zu Grunde gehen, eben durch dieses Handeln wird ein höherer magischer Kreis von Wirkungen gezogen, die eine neue Welt auf den Ruinen der umgestürzten alten gründen. (Nietzsche, *Geburt* 65)

The noble man does not sin, . . . through his action all law, all natural order, yes, the moral world may fall to the ground, but through this action a higher magic circle will be drawn from its effects, a new world founded from the ruins of the overthrown old one.

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Penthesilea's actions do not destroy the Amazons; they will return to Themiscyra (24. 3004). However, she does symbolically overturn the enlightened Amazonian state founded on the memory of Tanaïs, the first queen. The Amazons have preserved two important relics from Tanaïs' era that legitimate their state: her bow and her ashes. The woman who can use the bow as worthily as Tanaïs did will establish her right to succeed her. This is similar to the *Odyssey*, wherein the suitors tried to demonstrate their worthiness to marry Penelope and replace Odysseus by a competition in which they tried unsuccessfully to string and shoot his bow (*Odyssey* 21). Penthesilea uses Tanaïs' bow to shoot the arrow that fells Achilles (23. 2645-2655). When she returns to the Amazons in a distracted, aphasic state, calm but mute, she carefully cleans and stores the arrow that brought down Achilles. One of the Amazons remarks on Penthesilea's attitude toward the bow.

> O heilig hielt sie ihn, das muß man sagen!—— (24. 2757)
>
> Oh, she holds it to be holy, one must say that!——

Yet when she finishes cleaning the arrow, she shudders and drops the bow, which rocks back and forth before it finally comes to rest (24. 2768-2764). One of the Amazons recognizes this as the end of what Tanaïs started.

> DIE DRITTE AMAZONE: Und stirbt,
> Wie er der Tanaïs geboren ward. (24. 2771-2772)
>
> THE THIRD AMAZON. And it dies,
> Just as it was born to Tanaïs.

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The High Priestess, despite having called Penthesilea a dreadful woman (*die Entsetzliche* 24. 2768) when she let go of the bow, concurs with this interpretation. She takes the bow's rocking as a sign from Diana that Penthesilea is the equal of Tanaïs.

> Die groß Stifterin des Frauenreiches,
> Die Tanaïs, das gesteh ich jetzt, sie hat
> Den Bogen würd'ger nicht geführt als du. (24. 2776-2778)
>
> The great foundress of the women's state,
> Tanaïs, I now confess,
> Never drew the bow more worthily than you.

The dropped bow symbolizes what Penthesilea accomplished: the end of the state Tanaïs founded. "After it there is a return to first principles" (St. Leon 36). Penthesilea implores Prothoe, her second in command and likely successor, to finish the job of supplanting the old state with an undefined new order. She has secret instructions for Prothoe to complete back in Themiscyra.

> Und—— —— ——im Vertraun ein Wort, das niemand höre,
> Der Tanaïs Asche, streut sie in die Luft! (24. 3008)
>
> And—— —— ——a word in confidence, so nobody can hear,
> The ashes of Tanaïs, scatter them in the air!

Thus Penthesilea establishes her heroic ethos when she exercises power by engaging in a forbidden experience that breaches and destroys Amazonian society and that lays the groundwork for a renewed society. Kleist is as vague regarding the new society as he is precise regarding the traditional Amazonian society. Perhaps any new society will inevitably entail a lapse from Penthesilea's ecstasy in the mutilation of Achilles back

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into a rationalized state, just as the original rationalized Amazonian state emerged from Tanaïs' orgy of slaughter and self-mutilation.[7]

Kleist nonetheless introduces a kind of hero to the Amazon myth who has not been encountered in the myth before or since. In Amazon myths, the heroes are normally the men who subdue the Amazons. On the few occasions that Amazons were presented as heroes in their own right, the authors first carefully purged them of their objectionable traits, as in the cases of Christine de Pizan and Spenser. Kleist preserves and even enhances these elements in Penthesilea yet nevertheless makes her the hero (albeit a fatal one) of the tragedy. Other treatments of the myth in this era are more traditional in portraying Amazons either as challenges to male heroes or as sanitized heroes in their own right.

Stone Age Amazons

Since ancient times, Amazons have been closely linked to the barbaric. J. J. Bachofen and Sir Richard F. Burton discovered barbarous Amazons roughly simultaneously, Burton in the African nation of Dahomey and Bachofen in ancient myths, laws, and monuments. Bachofen published *Das Mutterrecht* in 1861; Burton issued *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome* in 1864. Neither of them applies the term "stone age" to their Amazons, but the earliest citation of the term in the *Oxford*

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[7]The self-mutilation occurred when she ripped off her right breast, starting the tradition for which the Amazons were supposedly named *die Amazonen oder Busenlosen* ("the Amazons or breastless ones," 15. 1989).

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English Dictionary is from that period, in 1863 (16: 762). The definition of the term reflects the evolutionary presuppositions underlying it.

> The period or stage in the development of human culture which is marked by the exclusive or greatly predominant use of stone as material for weapons and implements, in contradistinction to the later 'ages' in which bronze or iron was used. (16: 762)

The term "stone age" denotes a level of civilization either at an earlier stage of development or at a retarded or arrested stage of development. Comparing those less civilized "back then" with those less civilized "out there" was already established by the mid-nineteenth century. One early example of this comparison was the title of a book published by Father Joseph F. Lafitau in 1724: *Mœurs des Sauvages Ameriquains, Comparées aux Mœurs des Premiers Temps* (*Customs of American Savages Compared with Customs of Primitive Times*). Bachofen's Amazons would be primarily the ancient primitives, Burton's the exotic foreign savages.

Both men saw their Amazons as occupying a lower position in a hierarchy of cultures. Burton found support in his Amazons for a racial and cultural hierarchy that theoretically had some potential for advance but that was essentially static. In contrast, Bachofen's theory centered on the idea of cultural evolution, with Amazons occupying a position somewhere between the lack of civilization and the full flower of civilization that was patriarchy.

As fanciful as Bachofen's schema may be and as unfamiliar as his name may be even in scholarly circles, he has had a widespread influence.

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Originally his target audience of classicists rejected him. He was castigated by "the classical circles of academic hardshelled crabs" (Campbell li). Acceptance was slow in developing. Nietzsche came to Basel in 1869 and became a personal and professional ally, developing his own theory of the Dionysian and the Apollonian from Bachofen's (Campbell lii-liii, Smeds 3). Anthropologists found models for their new science in Bachofen's work. Engels and Freud adapted elements of his thought (Campbell lii-liii, Smeds 3). In *The Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer adopted much of Bachofen's thought with very little credit, a process mirrored by the Cambridge school of comparative religion (Campbell liv-lv). In addition to his influence on the discipline of comparative religion, an influence that is still present in German-language studies,[8] he has influenced psychology and art. Feminists in the 1960s adapted his theories by transforming the matriarchal age into a golden age from which civilization lapsed (Smeds 3). Bachofen has also had an impact on the study of myth. He believed that myths follow regular laws and that they reveal a culture's "'informing idea' (*Grundanschauung*)" (Bachofen 1: 16, Campbell xxviii).

> Bachofen's concern was to go past plots to their symbolized sense, by grouping analogous figures and then reading these as metaphors of a common informing idea. (Campbell xxvi)

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[8]The most recent work on his thought is Susanna Lanwerd's *Mythos, Mutterrecht und Magie*, published in 1993.

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Joseph Campbell, who wrote the introduction to an English translation of Bachofen, serves as an acolyte of and apologist for Bachofen. Campbell argues that archaeology has confirmed much of Bachofen's thesis.

> The essential epoch-making cultural mutations, it now was being shown, had occurred in specific, identifiable centers, from which the effects then had gone out to the ends of the earth, like ripples on a pond from a tossed stone. . . .
>
> Are we not to name all this an "evolution," "unilinear" and in "progressive stages"? (xliv-xlv)

Campbell was as much of a popularizer as a theoretician, and through him some of Bachofen's ideas reached a mass audience, especially in the *Star Wars* trilogy made by Campbell's disciple, George Lucas. There *Vaterrecht* becomes transmuted into *Vaderrecht*. Microcosm (Luke) and mesocosm (republican forces) must align themselves with the macrocosm (the Force) to contend with those associated with the "Dark" side of the Force. In contrast to Bachofen, the contest in the trilogy is not between the father and the mother; the mother is never a significant factor. The central personal contest is instead between Darth Vader, who wants to establish his power over Luke, and Luke, who strives to be independent from his father and who resists becoming like him.

Bachofen's theory of the development of civilization grew in part from changes that had occurred in the idea of the great chain of being. One implication of a vertical chain of being that ranged from God at the top to minerals at the bottom was a static universe. Every slot on the

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chain had always been occupied and always would be. Thus all evil would always be present. Understood in this way, the great chain of being was "equivalent to the doctrine of the Conservation of Evil" (Lovejoy 245). A temporal rather than static great chain of being would allow for progress and improvement. According to the temporal chain of being, the universe develops or evolves from the lower to the higher. Thus in biology, "lower" life forms evolve into "higher." Such thinking is not confined to biology. Lovejoy (262) finds it applied to cosmology in Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, which was published from 1742 to 1744 (Mitford xxxvii).

> Then thou, like them [the stars] shalt shine; like them, shalt [rise
> From low to lofty; from obscure to bright;
> By due gradation, nature's sacred law.
> The stars, from whence?——Ask chaos——he can tell.
> These bright temptations to idolatry,
> From darkness, and confusion, took their birth;
> Sons of deformity! from fluid dregs
> Tartarean, first they rose to masses rude;
> And then, to spheres opaque; then dimly shone;
> Then brighten'd; then blaz'd out in perfect day.
> Nature delights in progress; in advance
> From worse to better: but, when minds ascend,
> Progress, in part, depends upon themselves.
> Heaven aids exertion. (Young 283)

Bachofen's belief in the progress of history through conflict reflects the influence of the Hegelian thought of the time (Campbell, xlvi), but his schema of historical development sounds like an application to society of the kind of cosmological progress that Young relates to the individual. As with earlier versions of the chain of being, the mesocosm of the society

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and the microcosm of the individual must be aligned with the macrocosm of the universe if they are to prosper (see p. 97 above). The difference is that whereas formerly one's goal was to fit into one's slot in the chain of being, now the goal becomes progress up the chain, a goal that formerly had been a cardinal sin of rebellion against one's place. In fact, "bettering oneself" through upward social mobility becomes an imperative, with its own heroes found in historical figures like Benjamin Franklin and in the fictional characters of writers like Horatio Alger. Like the universe, the individual and the society can now advance up the chain of being.

Bachofen applies cosmological terms to social development.

> Von den drei großen kosmischen Körpern: Erde, Mond, Sonne, erscheint der erste als Träger des Muttertums, während der letzte die Entwicklung des Vaterprinzips leitet. (1: 57)
>
> Of the three great cosmic bodies——earth, moon, sun——the first appears as the agent of maternity, while the last directs the evolution of the paternal principle.

He sees human societies as following a universal pattern of development from earth to moon to sun, from hetaerism (*Hetärismus*) to matriarchy (*Gynaikokratie*) to patriarchy (*Paternität*), with matriarchy occupying a middle position (*Mittelstellung*) between the lowest and highest stages of civilization (1: 36). A basic conflict in the family and in society is the one between mother right (*Mutterrecht*) and father right (*Vaterrecht*). A society founded on *Mutterrecht* recognizes the mother as the primary parent and the one who has the primary responsibility for and authority

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over the child. A society founded on *Vaterrecht* transfers this recognition to the father.

Bachofen does not see these principles as equivalent but views the father principle as superior to the mother principle. For him, the myth that best illustrates the triumph of *Vaterrecht* over *Mutterrecht* is Aeschylus' treatment of the trial of Orestes in the *Eumenides* (Bachofen 1: 172-195). Like Apollo in the *Eumenides* (657-666), Bachofen values the father above the mother. Paradoxically, his stated reason for valuing the father more is that the father-child link is more tenuous than the mother-child link. Because the mother-child link is open to sense perceptions (*Sinnenwahrnehmung*), it is a natural, earthly relationship that humans share with animals. The father-child link is always something of a fiction (*Fiktion*) because he has no visible connection to the child (*Mit dem Kinde in keinem sichtbaren Zusammenhang*, 1: 54). The paternal principle is therefore a triumph of reason, and paternity a spiritual relationship specific to humans.

While she differs in her evaluation of the validity of ancient Greek thought, Page duBois concurs with Bachofen in seeing that thought as revolving around polarities and analogies (see p. 30 above). She sees the following polarities as underlying pre-Socratic Greek thought.

Greek/barbarian
Male/female
Human/animal (4)

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The first terms of the equation are privileged over the second terms, which serve as polar opposites. Terms in a column are linked by analogy, with the result that female is linked with barbarian and animal. Bachofen multiplies such polarities almost endlessly.

father	mother	
sun	moon	
sea	earth	
uranian	chthonic	
day	night	
right	left	
human	animal	
occident	orient	
active	passive	
spiritual	material	(1: 17-18, 42, 53-55)

As in duBois' analysis, the terms on the left column of the polarities are superior to the terms on the right. Likewise, the terms connect to the other items in their respective columns through analogy.

The hetaeristic and matriarchal stages are tellurian (*tellurische*), or earthly (1: 19). Night, which is identified with the earth, the maternal, and the chthonic, governs these stages (1: 59). The matriarchal stage shows progress over the hetaeristic as the tilled field shows it over the swamp (1: 37-40). Matriarchal society is not simply tellurian; it also rises to a lunar level. The basic forms of matriarchy are the stringent (*strenge*) Amazonian, the orderly Demetrian, and the degrading Dionysian (1: 46-48, 50).

Bachofen finds the sun to be analogous to patriarchal society. Like the sun, patriarchy starts with dawn, wherein the sun triumphs over the maternal darkness (*mütterlichen Dunkel*). However, the dawn stage of

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development is still a nocturnal day (*ἡμέρη νυκτερινή*); just as the sun emerges from the earth at dawn, so too the male god of dawn is still a son dependent on the mother rather than the father. The noon of patriarchy represents liberation from the mother and the male subjugation of the female. This is the Dionysian stage of patriarchy. The ultimate stage of patriarchy is the Apollonian, wherein the light becomes immutable rather than cyclic (1: 58-60). Delphic Apollo proved to be too mutable after all for Bachofen, who located the enduring triumph of Apollonian patriarchy in Roman law (1: 60-61). According to him, the ancients saw Augustus as a *zweiten Orest* (a second Orestes) who avenged the death of his spiritual father (*geistigen Vater*) and established an enduring Apollonian state (63).

Within Bachofen's grand cosmic schemes, Amazons play an important part. Bachofen has a generally positive view of gynocracy, displaying a "romantic fascination with goddess-worship as matriarchy" (Smeds 9). Sometimes Bachofen's positive evaluation extends to the Amazons. "From the woman comes the first civilization of people" (*Von dem Weibe geht die erste Gesittung der Völker aus*, 1: 123-124), and the first stage of matriarchy was Amazonian (1: 49-50). He saw Amazonian matriarchy as at least an improvement over the hetaerism it supplanted. At the hetaeristic level, humans mated like dogs according to an unregulated *ius naturale* (1: 104).

> Auf der tiefsten Stufe des Daseins zeigt der Mensch neben völlig freier Geschlechtsmischung auch Öffentlichkeit

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> der Begattung. Gleich dem Tiere befriedigt er den Trieb der Natur ohne dauernde Verbindung mit einem bestimmten Weibe und vor aller Augen. . . . Der Hund ist der hetärischen, jeder Befruchtung sich freuenden Erde Bild. Regelloser, stets sichtbarer Begattung hingegeben, stellt er das Prinzip tierischer Zeugung am klarsten und in seiner rohesten Form dar. (1: 104, 106)
>
> At the lowest level of existence, man's sexual life is almost fully free, and mating is public. Like the animals, he satisfies the impulse of nature in plain sight and without an enduring union with a particular woman. . . . The dog is the image of the hetaeristic earth, which is pleased with all fertilization. Given to unregulated and constantly visible mating, it exhibits the principle of animal procreation in its clearest and crudest form.

Bachofen sees Amazonism as a reaction against hetaerism even though parts of the preceding quotation could almost be a paraphrase of Strabo's description of the Amazons' random, anonymous mating rituals (Strabo 11. 5. 1). The critical difference is that the Amazon rebels against men's unrestricted demands on her and asserts control over her own body.

> In ihn tritt das Gefühl der höhern Rechte des Muttertums zuerst den sinnlichen Ansprüchen der physischen Kraft entgegen. (1: 50)
>
> In the Amazonian stage, the feeling of the higher right of motherhood first opposes the sensual demands of physical force.

Bachofen thinks this stage is universal and uses as evidence the ancient reports placing Amazons in various and sundry (and sundered) locations (1: 49). Even if particular tales of Amazon conquests may be exaggerated, their "historical foundation is not shaken" (*geschichtliche Grundlage . . . nicht erschüttert*, 1: 51). The degradation (*Entwürdigung*)

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of women in the hetaeristic stage, which is also universal, inevitably leads to the rise of the opposite social structure. Bachofen here espouses the Hegeiian doctrine of "the inevitabie succession of extremes" (*dem notwendigen Wechsel der Extreme*, 1: 48). According to Bachofen's evolutionary historiography, the Amazonian reaction to the degradation of the hetaeristic stage is the first step toward "a purer existence" (*einem reinern Dasein*). Amazonian accomplishments went beyond their horseback conquests; Amazons settled down to develop agriculture and to establish cities. Bachofen gives women in general credit for ending the nomadic life (*Wanderleben*) in preference for a settled life, a move resisted by the men (1: 51).

> In der Fixierung des Lebens erfüllt das weibliche Geschlecht seine Naturbestimmung. Von der Gründung und Schmückung des häuslichen Herdes hängt die Hebung des Daseins und alle Gesittung vorzugsweise ab. (1: 51)
>
> In the settling of life, the female gender fulfills her natural destiny. The promotion of the existence of all civilization develops especially from the foundation and adornment of the domestic hearth.

Bachofen's Amazons do not fare so well when he compares them to subsequent stages of civilization. Once civilization has advanced to the Demetrian stage and beyond, a recurrence of Amazonism is a degeneration (105). In contrast to his praise of early Amazons, Bachofen is more negative about Amazons when he compares them to his subsequent stages of civilization. With the advent of agriculture, the

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Demetrian moon naturally supersedes the Amazonian moon, a beneficial development.

> . . . so leiht doch das Amazonentum dem Nachtgestirn eine zugleich düsterere und strengere Natur als die demetrische Gynaikokratie. (1: 50)
>
> So indeed the Amazonian [moon] lends the night sky a nature that is at once gloomier and more stringent than does the Demetrian gynocracy.

The Amazonian moon is the "stern virgin" (*strenge Jungfrau*) ever fleeing the sun; the Demetrian moon has made its peace with the sun and represents "marital union" (*ehelichen Vereins*, 1: 50). Marriage is a natural and necessary development for civilization, and it marks the achievement of a more developed matriarchal system than the Amazonian (1: 50). Amazonian societies can arise from later matriarchies or even from patriarchies, but rather than being an advance, they are "a regression and a degeneration at later stages of culture" (*Rückfall und Ausartung inmitten späterer Kulturstufen*, 1: 50).

At this point, Bachofen's analysis of the Amazons converges with the familiar paradigms. The Amazons exhibit the limitations of the rest of their gender. Matriarchy was necessary to tame the wildness of men, but it was only an intermediate stage.

> Dienen muß der Mann, bevor er zur Herrschaft gelangt. (1: 123-124)
>
> Man must serve before he is ready to rule.

Implicit in this statement is Bachofen's belief that at the proper time, man should rule. As in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, *Mutterrecht* must give way to

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Vaterrecht for a society to reach its highest stage (1: 177-194). Compared to patriarchy's potential for spirituality, matriarchy is limited to the material and must give way to the higher order.

> Mit einem Worte: das gynaikokratische Dasein ist der geordnete Naturalismus, sein Denkgesetz das stoffliche, seine Entwicklung eine überwiegend physische: eine Kulturstufe, mit dem Mutterrecht ebenso notwendig verbunden als der Zeit der Paternität fremd und unbegreifbar. (1: 35)
>
> In a word, matriarchal existence is an ordered naturalism, its governing thought material, its evolution primarily physical. Mother right is as essential an ally to this stage as it is foreign and incomprehensible to the time of patriarchy.

For Bachofen, Amazonian matriarchy had been a relatively low stage of matriarchy; however, even the highest Aeolian (Sapphic) stage of matriarchal thought is subject to the limitations of the female gender. Limited to the "womanly-material" (*weiblich-stofflich*), the thought cannot attain to the "paternal-Apollonian" (*väterlich-apollinisch*). Women are governed "through instinct, not reflection" (*durch Triebe als durch Reflexion*) and are subject to a double mind (*δύο νοήματα*), leaving them "suspended between frenzy and self-control, between indulgence and excellence" (*schwebend zwischen μανία und σωφροσύνη, ὑβροσύνη und ἀρετή*, 2: 825). Bachofen here divides men and women into the traditional dichotomies of reason/passion and activity/passivity. For Bachofen, matriarchy alternated between extremes. He saw this, not as a function of his own Hegelian presuppositions, but as a sign of the

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difficulty that the "feminine nature" (*weibliche Natur*) has "observing moderation and the mean" (*Mitte und Maß zu halten*, 1: 45).

The Amazons were extreme even among the naturally extreme matriarchies, the "extreme degeneration of woman right" (*höchste Ausartung des Weiberrechts*, 1: 87). The extreme form of the Amazon society, with its "unnatural intensification of women's power" (*naturwidrige Steigerung ihrer Gewalt*), was its own undoing (1: 134). Because of his evolutionary views, Bachofen now sees as an unnatural degeneration a form of society that he earlier saw as a natural evolution. Late Amazonism was degenerate, but it was an understandable reaction to male degeneracy and brutality (1: 138).

The cure for Amazonian excesses was to be found, as usual, in the heroic men who fought the Amazon. In so doing, they established not only their own heroic ethos, but the paternal ethos of the ensuing cultures.

> An der Amazonen Bekämpfung knüpft sich die Einführung des Vaterrechts. Durch die Lichtmächte wird das amazonische Mondprinzip vernichtet, die Frau ihrer natürlichen Bestimmung wiedergegeben, und dem geistigen Vaterrechte für alle Zeiten die Herrschaft über das stoffliche Muttertum erworben. (1: 139)
>
> The inauguration of father right secures itself in the battle against the Amazons. The Amazonian lunar principle is eradicated through the powers of daylight. Women's natural destiny is restored to them, and spiritual father right obtains permanent dominion over material motherhood.

Bachofen invokes the usual reasons for arguing that matriarchal society may, indeed must, be destroyed. In the long run, it is unnatural.

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Amazons neglected their "natural destiny" (*natürlichen Bestimmung*, 1: 139) by neglecting the worship of Aphrodite (*Aphroditekultes*) through valuing warfare over marriage and childbearing (1: 265); they had to be restored to their "natural destiny" in the order of things. Bachofen rounds up the usual noble suspects to undertake this noble endeavor: Bellerophon, Dionysus, Theseus, Heracles, and Alexander.

Bachofen draws attention to an interesting aspect of the Amazons' conflicts with these heroes: the ancient accounts generally have the heroes completely destroy the Amazons, only to have the Amazons emerge from extinction, frequently to fight by the side of the hero who had just "destroyed" them.[9]

> Aus Gegnerinnen sind sie Kampfesgenossen geworden. (1: 98).
>
> From enemies, they have become his allies.

Bachofen explains this anomaly by arguing that the heroes' victories redeemed the women by exorcising their Amazonianism. The hero dealt the Amazon a "mortal wound" (*tödlichen Wunde*), "gave back her true nature" (*ihrer wahren Natur zurückgibt*), and "restored the limitation of female nature" (*in die Schranken der Weiblichkeit zurückgekehrt*, 1: 99). Bachofen's Amazons seem equally grateful for the enforced passivity of their "natural" social roles and the permanent

---

[9]Such was the case with Hippolyta and Theseus. More commonly, the Amazons emerged from extinction only to have another hero smite them down.

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passivity of a violent death. Apparently they have been waiting for their prince to come along and rescue them——from their own freedom.

> In dem siegrichen Helden erkennt das Weib die höhere Kraft und Schönheit des Mannes. Gerne beugt es sich dieser. Müde seiner amazonischen Heldengröße, auf der es sich nur kurze Zeit zu halten vermag, huldigt es willig dem Manne, der ihm seine natürliche Bestimmung wiedergibt. Es erkennt, daß nicht männerfeindlicher Kriegsmut, daß vielmehr Liebe und Befruchtung seine Bestimmung ist. In diesem Gefühl folgt es nun willig demjenigen, der durch seinen Sieg ihm die Erlösung brachte. (1: 99)
>
> In the victorious hero the woman perceives the higher strength and beauty of the man. She gladly submits herself to this hero. Weary of her heroic Amazonian stature, which she is able to retain only briefly, she willingly gives her allegiance to the man who gave her back her natural destiny. She recognizes that her destiny is not a man-hating war-spirit but on the contrary is love and reproduction. In this feeling she now willingly follows the one who through his victory brought her salvation.

The Amazon who secretly wishes to be conquered seems to be a product of nineteenth-century fantasy. Earlier accounts of the Amazons assumed that they would answer the Wife of Bath's query, "What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren" (Chaucer III. [D.] 905) along the same lines that she does: "Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee" (Chaucer III. [D.] 1038). In contrast, Bachofen's Amazons are more like Kleist's Penthesilea, who expressed sharp resentment when her troops rescued her from Achilles.

> Verflucht sei dieser schändliche Triumph mir! . . .
> War ich, nach jeder würd'gen Rittersitte,
> Nicht durch das Glück der Schlacht ihm zugefallen? (Kleist 19. 2298, 2301-2302)

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> Damn you, this triumph is shameful to me! . . .
> Hadn't I, according to every worthy code of chivalry, become his through the luck of battle?

Earlier Amazons sometimes acquiesced to a conqueror and perhaps even came to follow him loyally, but Kleist and Bachofen create heroines who actually long for a hero to rescue them from the Amazons and restore them to their proper place, to deliver them from wearisome heroism and supply them with sentimental domestic bliss. By introducing her to her true destiny of "love and reproduction" (*Liebe und Befruchtung*), the hero symbolically restores the Amazon's missing breast and makes her complete.

The hero's actions have implications that are not limited to domestic sexual politics but also extend abroad. As in earlier times, the Amazon myth provides ethical backing for colonial projects. Just as Columbus constructed his self-image partly in missionary terms as the one "bearing Christ" (Χρο FERENS, see p. 145 above) to those in need of him, Bachofen interprets the conquest of the Amazons (and those whom the Amazons represent) as bestowing a favor on the conquered. Though Bachofen's salvation (*Erlösung*) is secularized in comparison to that of Columbus, the motive remains the good of the conquered (1: 99). Hence Bachofen's heroes bring the *lex Romana* and civilization instead of the word of God and eternal salvation. Nonetheless these are traditional sentiments and could have come just as easily from the Romans themselves, as in the following passage from the *Aeneid*.

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> "tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
> (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem,
> parcere subiectis et debellare superbos." (Virgil 6. 851-853)
>
> "Remember, Oh Roman, to rule the nations with your power
> (for these are your arts) and to impose law with peace, to
> spare the humble and to overcome the proud."

Roman law plays such a central role in Bachofen's argument partially because it gives an ethical grounding for imperial conquests, both for the Romans and for their nineteenth-century European heirs. The hero traditionally conquered for glory (his own status as a hero), gold, and sometimes even for the moral order of the universe, however that was currently defined; with this approach, he conquers on behalf of the conquered as well.

In his historiography, Bachofen is not only reading the past in a novel way; he is also doing his part to shoulder the "White Man's Burden" of his own era. Bachofen uncritically reflects the orientalism of his era in his analysis of ancient societies, including the Amazons. He follows the tradition of dividing the Occident from the Orient and of defining the Occident as masculine and the Orient as feminine (Said 206). The Occident had to lead the way, first from hetaerism to matriarchy and later from matriarchy to patriarchy.

> Dem Occident hat die Geschichte die Aufgabe zugewiesen, durch die reinere und keuschere Naturanlage seiner Völker das höhere demetrische Lebensprinzip zum dauernden Siege hindurchzuführen und dadurch die Menschheit aus den Fesseln des tiefsten Tellurismus, in dem sie die Zauberkraft der orientalischen Natur festhielt, zu befreien. Rom verdankt es der politischen Idee des Imperiums, mit welcher es in die

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> Weltgeschichte eintritt, daß es diese Entwicklung der alten Menschheit zum Abschluß zu bringen vermochte. (1: 43)
>
> Because of the purer and chaster nature of the Occident's people, History has allotted it the task of supplying the higher Demetrian principle with the enduring victory, thereby freeing humanity from the fetters of the lowest tellurism in which the witchcraft of the Oriental nature holds it fast. Rome owes to the political idea of the imperium, with which it entered world history, that it was able to bring the development of the old humanity to its conclusion.

If Rome was the *telos*, the goal of Bachofen's personified history, the Orient was history's point of departure. As it was the place of the Occident to lead, so it was the place of the Orient to follow. "Since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple" (Said 207). Although Bachofen sees Amazonism as a universal stage of civilization, he especially associates it with the Orient (Scythia) and Africa (1: 138). Amazons thus serve to typify those areas and their peoples. The conquest of the Amazons becomes emblematic of what the West must do "for" the benighted people of the East.

In the myth of Theseus' conflict with Antiope, Bachofen sees "the first act in the war Europe fought with Asia (*der erste Akt in jenem Kampfe, den Asien mit Europa führt*, 1: 183). This view corresponds with Tyrrell's analysis of the myth insofar as Tyrrell believes that the Amazons came to represent the Persians in Athenian mythology, but Tyrrell does not hold to the historicity of the Amazons (4-6). Tyrrell would see Bachofen's use of the myth as being analogous to that of the Athenians,

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with both of them using the myth to make the East effeminate in contrast to the masculine West.

In the meeting of West and East, Bachofen thinks that Alexander is as much a locus of fantasy and legend as of history. Here Bachofen draws an important delineation between a myth's form (*Form*) and its content (*Inhalt*) or idea (*Idee*, 1: 470-471). He defines the form as the narrative of the myth, with its plot and characters. In this sense, a myth may be totally ahistoric. Nevertheless, the content, or underlying thought of the myth, is grounded in the history of the time that produced it and reflects issues that concerned that era (1: 471). Whatever the current status of Bachofen's particular interpretations, this general principle has a widespread following today.[10]

Bachofen sees in Alexander's meeting with the widowed Indian queen Candace a later fabrication which is nevertheless (or perhaps therefore) a perfect emblem of the encounter between West and East that occurred under Alexander.[11] "In this sense the Candace myth has a

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[10]William Tyrrell, for instance, makes the following statement regarding Bachofen. "His thesis, based on intuition and the eschewal of field work, is condemned by contemporary anthropologists. Bachofen gleaned his evidence mainly from myths he equated with history, an unfounded and simplistic assumption. This is particularly the case for the ancient Greeks, who regarded myths as history because they told of universal truths, not the details we deem to be historical facts" (25). Ironically, the principle Tyrrell uses to critique Bachofen, the distinction between the narratives and the underlying ideas, is almost a paraphrase of Bachofen (1: 470-471).

[11]The account is included in the *Alexander Romance* by Pseudo-Callisthenes (3. 18-23), which was written sometime between A.D. 140

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historical significance" (*In diesem Sinne hat auch der Kandakemythus hohe historische Bedeutung*, 1: 471). According to the legend, Alexander helps Candace's son, Candaules, rescue his wife from the Amazons who have kidnapped her (1: 453). Candace invites Alexander to come to her court. Alexander goes disguised as a subordinate, with Ptolemy Soter filling in as Alexander. Nevertheless, Candace recognizes Alexander, who has to admit that he has been bested by a woman. Alexander in turn must use his wits to settle a dispute between Candace's sons, thereby gaining her admiration (1: 451-454). In this story, Candace represents the matriarchal East and Alexander the patriarchal West (1: 471); Alexander's campaigns brought these cultures together. Although the account itself is fictional, it does reflect certain subsequent attitudes toward Alexander's impact on and relations with the cultures he encountered (1: 471-472).

> Die mythischen Teile der Alexandergeschichte verdienen nicht weniger Beachtung als ihre historisch genauen Angaben. (1: 527)
>
> The mythical tales of Alexander's history deserve no less attention than its historically precise evidence.

Bachofen also recounts a closer encounter with Amazons, Alexander's meeting with the Amazon queen Thalestris, who came to him

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and A.D. 340 (Dowden 650). According to Ken Dowden, the *Alexander Romance* was "antiquity's most successful novel," eventually circulating in "eighty versions in twenty-four languages" (650). The story of Alexander and Candace spread beyond the work, being "destined to become even more romantic and 'courtly' in the Middle Ages" (650).

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and "stayed with him thirteen days so she could become a mother by him" (*um von ihm Mutter zu werden, dreizehn Tage bei ihm weilt*, 1: 517; see discussion on p. 25-26 above). He also relates the response of Alexander's general Lysimachus when he first heard the tale years after Alexander's death. "Lysimachus said laughing, 'Where was I then?'" *Lysimachos lächelnd gesagt habe: «Wo war denn damals ich?»* (1: 517-518, see p. 26 above).

Bachofen adduces similar lessons from the Thalestris and Candace incidents. The two differ mainly in the focus of the comparison between the women and Alexander. With Thalestris, the focus is on physical prowess (on the battlefield and in bed), on "manly bravery" (*männliche Tapferkeit*). Apparently because the Candace myth dealt with more cerebral matters, it represents a "higher spiritual" (*hörer geistiger*) level (1: 527).

> Jene huldigt der physischen, diese der erkannten geistigen Natur des Helden. (1: 527)
>
> The former [Thalestris] pays homage to the physical, the latter [Candace] to the perceived spiritual nature of the Hero.

Bachofen makes an interpretation of the Candace myth that would apply equally well to the Thalestris myth.

> In ihm erblicken wir den Kampf zwischen dem höhren männlichen und dem tiefern weiblichen Prinzip. Im Orient begegnen sich beide. Kandake ist die Vertreterin des mütterlichen Rechts, wie es zumal in Aegypten und Aethiopien Anerkennung fand; ihr gegenüber erscheint Alexander als Träger eines höheren Gesichtpunkts, dem jener erstere untergeordnet wird. (1: 470)

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> In it [the Candace myth] we see the war between the higher masculine and the lower female principles. They meet each other in the Orient. Candace is the representative of the maternal right, especially as it is recognized in Egypt and Aethiopia. In contrast, Alexander appears as the representative of a higher viewpoint, to which the first one will be subordinated.

As the West moves East, it discovers a lower culture which must be subjugated. Imperialism is a duty imposed on the West by history, a method for spreading civilization, and an opportunity for saving lower cultures from themselves. One effect of Bachofen's work was to add to what Said calls the "library or archive" that constitutes Orientalism.

> What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics. . . . [T]he essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority. (Said 42)

Said's generalizations may not apply to every Occidental who dealt with the Orient, but they do apply to Bachofen. Bachofen confirms the "ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (Said 42). He serves as an archivist in the library of Orientalism, bringing together ancient myths and nineteenth-century thought in a way that confirms the difference between East and West and that projects that difference back to the prehistoric roots of civilization. The East is what the West was. It is different in kind from the West in terms of its lingering matriarchal tendencies, and different in degree in

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that it lags behind the West on the universal, unilinear chain of evolution. With proper Western intervention, it can be brought up to date.

If Bachofen's life and work were somewhat on the periphery of Orientalism, Sir Richard Francis Burton's life and work were at its heart. Burton (1821-1890) spent most of his life, including his childhood, outside his native England. He spent time in India, the Mideast, Africa and even took time to visit America. In the world of nineteenth-century Orientalism, Burton was both "a scholar" and "a gifted enthusiast" (Said 51).

> Burton was the paradigm of the scholar-adventurer, a man who towered above others physically and intellectually, a soldier, scientist, explorer, and writer who for much of his life also engaged in that most romantic of careers, undercover agent. (Rice 1)

The nicknames and epithets applied to Burton were as colorful as his life. His favorite self-designation was "Amateur Barbarian"; others called him "that Devil Burton," "White Nigger," and "Dirty Dick" (Rice 2, Said 190). Marginalized and alienated from his own society, he spent his life exploring other cultures. He reported back to England on these cultures through narratives of his adventures, analyses of the cultures, and translations of indigenous works. His numerous works could fill a shelf in the library of Orientalism. He reflected many of the prejudices of his time against Jews, Asians, and blacks, yet he could be critical of his own culture and accepting of other cultures. His search for religious truth involved him with various sects.

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> This search led him to investigate the Kabbâlah, alchemy, Roman Catholicism, a Hindu snake caste of the most archaic type, and the erotic Way called Tantra, after which he looked into Sikhism and passed through several forms of Islam before settling on Sufism, a mystical discipline that defies simple labels. (Rice 3)

His religious experiments included the "Shī'a Muslim practice of *taqīya*——dissimulation or concealment——in which one's private religious beliefs are kept hidden" (Rice 2). Burton's habit of "dissimulation" makes it difficult to determine the degree to which many of his accounts are fabrications.

Burton's search carried him on a pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the first European white men to make the pilgrimage, he undertook this dangerous journey in the guise of an Sunnī doctor (Rice 184). His heroic venture was successful "because he had sufficient knowledge of an alien society" (196). His pilgrimage had less to do with personal piety than with his attempt to add to Europe's knowledge of the Orient, to fill in some of "the huge white blob" on maps of "the Eastern and Central regions of Arabia" and to investigate the commercial possibility of opening up commerce in horses between Central Arabia and India (Rice 179-180). Despite "the eccentricities of Burton's personal style," the effect of his adventures and discoveries was to further European domination of the Orient (Said 197). The knowledge he passed along also enhanced his own heroic stature.

> Every one of Burton's footnotes . . . was meant to be testimony to his victory over the sometimes scandalous system of Oriental knowledge, a system he had mastered by

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> himself. For even in Burton's prose we are never directly *given* the Orient; everything about it is presented to us by way of Burton's knowledgeable (and often prurient) interventions. (Said 196)

One of Burton's "prurient" interests was in the area of what Said terms "Oriental sex" (190). If Burton did not write the book on Oriental sex, he at least translated it. Burton published the *Kama Sutra* in 1883. The title roughly translates as "the Love God's Scripture," 'Kama' being the Hindu god of love and family life, and 'Sutra' being a term for scripture. "There is a lot of scratching and biting, kissing and chewing" in the book (Rice 428). The book is not simply a translation; it reflects many of Burton's own "knowledgeable (and often prurient) interventions." Indeed, much of the "translation" comes "not from Kalyana Malla's Sanskrit but from Burton's fertile brain" (Rice 428). As in many books dealing with Oriental sex, "the association is clearly made between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex" (Said 190).

> . . . [T]he Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe. Virtually no European writer who wrote on or traveled to the Orient in the period after 1800 exempted himself or herself from this quest: Flaubert, Nerval, "Dirty Dick" Burton, and Lane are only the most notable. . . . In time "Oriental sex" was as standard a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, . . . (Said 190)

Said apparently does not have in mind the missionaries who worked in the Orient, but his generalization does apply aptly to Burton and the others he mentions.

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When Burton made his way to the African kingdom of Dahomey[12] in 1863, he carried along much of his cultural and personal baggage: imperialism, racism, his interest in religion, and his "prurient" interests. He returned with this baggage and loaded it into a two-volume book, much of which is taken up by the title: *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome: With Notices of the So-called "Amazons," the Grand Customs, the Yearly Customs, the Human Sacrifices, the Present State of the Slave Trade, and the Negro's Place in Nature* (3: vii; 4: vii). Early in the book, Burton informs his audience that his trip was a formal mission conducted for the Foreign Office, the object of which was "to confirm the friendly sentiments" of the English for King Gelele and to encourage him to stop the slave trade and the practice of human sacrifice (3: xv).

But even before the readers reach the official reasons for the trip, they are presented with the Amazons of Dahomey. The frontispiece of the work is an illustration, not of King Gelele, but of an Amazon (figure 5). The same Amazonian figure is embossed in gold on the front of the black-bound book, with Burton's tent-shaped tomb embossed on the back.[13] On the first page of the preface to the 1864 edition, Burton designates Dahomey with the epithet "'Land of Amazons'" (3: xiii). Isabel

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[12]Now called Benin, it is a small country in West Central Africa with a coast on the Gulf of Guinea.

[13]I can confirm this cover design only for the second volume of the memorial edition; the only copy of the first volume to which I had access has been re-covered.

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Figure 5. "The Amazon." (Burton 3: vi)

Burton outdoes Richard on the first page of her preface to the memorial edition of 1893, by associating the Amazons with cannibalism. For good measure, she throws in cruelty to animals, human sacrifice, torture, and vivisection, all in the first paragraph of the first page.

> Thirty fears ago, no Europeans were at Dahome. None ventured into the interior to the Court of the Savage known as King Gelele. His time was spent in wars, his best troops

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> being his many thousand Amazons, women crueller and fiercer than men. Their prisoners were tortured, and their throats were cut. Whenever he required to send a telegram to his [dead] father, a man was slaughtered, and his soul was despatched with it. Women were cut open alive, in a state of pregnancy, that the King might see what it was like. Animals were tied in every agonizing position to die; impaling and cannibalism were common, and it was impossible to go out of one's hut without seeing something appalling. (3: xi)

Nor does she fail to allude to one of the links between knowledge and power, that knowledge can serve as a tool for power. "The following is his modest account of the mission, and information concerning the country, which I think and trust may prove infinitely useful to the French Army now occupying Dahome" (3: xii).

Burton's account is a combination of precise, almost pedantic, observations of the culture, stark stereotypes, and flights of fancy. Christopher Miller traces back to ancient times a tendency to view Africa as "Other-as-dream" and "Other-as-nightmare" (25). He contrasts the blessed Ethiopians of Homer to "the other Ethiopia: of virtueless slaves, of speechless savages with illicit desires, sunk below the level of humanity" (25, *Odyssey* 1. 22-25). Isabel reflects this view in her biography of Burton when she states that the people take "an animal and sensual pleasure . . . in the look of blood" (382). Burton is quite capable of juxtaposing the dream and the nightmare, the fantasy and the disappointment.

> They [the Amazons] were distinguished by scanty attire, by a tattoo extending to the knee, and by an ivory bracelet on the left arm. (4: 52)

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His description here is promising enough to evoke the old dream: scantily clad Amazons with tatoos and ivory bracelets. Yet the very next page explicitly refers to the ancient dream only to dash it, turning the fantasy into a farce, a farce with racist overtones.

> I expected to see Penthesileas, Thalestrises, Dianas——lovely names! I saw old, ugly, and square-built frows, trudging "grumpily" along, with the face of "cook" after being much "knagg'd" by "the missus." (4: 53)

After being titillated by the prefatory vision of bloodthirsty Amazons, "women crueller and fiercer than men" (3: xi), who would not share Burton's disillusionment to learn that the supposedly deadly Amazons "'manœuvre with the precision of a flock of sheep'," that they would make easy marks for "the poorest troops in Europe," and that "though affecting a military swagger, their faces are anything but ferocious——" (4: 51-52)? The ugliness of the Amazons was a relief to Isabel Burton,[14] but it was a disappointment to everybody else.

Undaunted by the ugly truth, Burton gives a detailed account of the origins and attributes of "The So-called 'Amazons'" (3: vii). He briefly sketches the Greek Amazon myth and lists other female armies and

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[14]"He [King Gelele] made my husband a Brigadier-General of his Amazons, and I was madly jealous from afar; for I imagined lovely women in flowing robes, armed, and riding thoroughbred Arabs, and opposite is the Amazon as, to my great relief, I found she was (afterwards)" (Isabel Burton 383). By "opposite," Isabel is referring her readers to the illustration facing page 383. It is the same illustration of an ugly Amazon that graced the frontispiece of *A Mission to Gelele* (figure 7 above). Her caption is more informative than is his, stating that this was the chief officer of the army and that the artist was Richard (Isabel Burton *opp.* 383).

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individual women warriors (4: 47-48). The women warriors of Dahomey were not Amazons in the classic sense of women living in a separate society or even of women in charge of a mixed-gender society. On the other hand, the women warriors were segregated from the male warriors. There were three divisions of women in the army. Burton estimated their numbers to be about 2,500, with only 1,700 equipped to fight (4: 50). He speculates that earlier estimates had been exaggerated because of a ruse wherein the women had marched out by one gate and back in by another and also because of the dreams and imaginations of the observers (4: 54).

Burton ascribes their existence to a standard Amazon etiology: the women's corps was founded in 1728 when the kingdom lost too many men in war to maintain an all-male army (4: 43). The women in the army did not follow the traditional Amazonian mating patterns. They technically belonged to King Gelele's harem and were therefore not to have sexual relations with any man other than him, although this policy was sometimes honored in the breach. Burton speculates that Gelele selected which women went into the harem and which into the army based on looks, which would explain the ugliness of the women in the army (4: 45). Adulteresses joined the service to escape the death penalty, and "the Xanthippes, who make men's eyes yellow, are very properly put in the army" (4: 46).

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One of the three divisions of women soldiers, the Fanti Company, served as the king's personal guards. This company formed the center column in reviews. Each of the three companies had five arms: blunderbuss, elephant hunters, razor women, infantry, and archeresses (4: 51-52). Although they would not be able to defeat even the worst European troops, they did compare favorably to the male forces, who in Burton's opinion were even worse off than the women warriors because of the unmanliness of the men (4: 55). When the Dahomey armies went to war, their object was to capture rather than kill their opponents because of the demand for slaves (4: 56).

Burton's description of the Dahomey Amazons is closely linked to his views on gender, race, religion, evolution, culture, and imperialism. He explains that the Dahomey women were quite capable of serving as soldiers because of "the masculine *physique* of the women" (4: 42, italics his). In societies "living in the so-called State of Nature," the women do the work and are not seen as the weaker sex, as in England (4: 44). Having critiqued the English preconception of women as the weaker sex, Burton soon slips back into that preconception. He speculates that one reason the women may want to serve in the military is to leave the passive half of humanity (women) and join the active half (men).

> And when the Amazons boast that they are not women but men, they stand self-convicted of the fact, that however near to equality the sexes are, there is still always a somewhat of preponderance of the active over the passive half of humanity. (4: 48-49, n. 1)

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Thus the Amazons demonstrate man's superiority (4: 48-49) (or perhaps man's superior standing in that society).

Burton decides that the existence of women warriors in Dahomey is the country's second evil, its first being its desire to conquer its neighbors (4: 49). Apparently the British desire to conquer was better than the Dahomian desire because the British ennobled the conquered while the Dahomians degraded and abused them (4: 133). The country had exhibited "a thirst for conquest, which, unlike the projections of civilized lands, impoverish and debilitate the country" (4: 49). He considers the women's place in the army to be a waste of their reproductive capacity, estimating that the 2,500 women could supply their country with 7,500 children (4: 50). They are a particular example of a general principle: the "negro" opposition to population growth and hence to progress (4: 133).

Opposition to progress was a serious charge in nineteenth-century England, for it demonstrated a failure to move up the chain of being. Burton believed Africans had rejected civilization and forfeited chances to improve (4: 120). Burton refers to the "childish African brain" in his discussion of the Amazons of Dahomey (4: 48). He returns to this theme in a chapter entitled "The Negro's Place in Nature" (4: 118). He assures his readers that he has "no 'spite' against, 'antipathy' to, or 'instinctive aversion' from, the negro, whom I regard as both useful and valuable in his proper Place in Nature. . . . These be Irishisms" (4: 120-121). Burton sees a "great gulf, moral and physical, separating the black from the

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white races" based on the inferiority of black people (4: 118-119). They were bright as children, "'turning stupid'" as adults, like a "simiad" (4: 119).

According to Lovejoy, starting in the late seventeenth century, voyagers saw in "the 'lowest' savage races" (especially the Hottentots) "a connecting link between the anthropoids and *homo sapiens*" (234). Lovejoy also notes that as early as 1842, P. T. Barnum was advertising missing links in his Museum to satisfy the public demand for such (236). Burton provides his readers with the spectacle of blacks as a link between man and beast. Isabel relays that Burton called one man "our Gorilla, or Missing Link" (Isabel Burton 350). Burton saw different races as occupying various positions on the evolutionary scale. "The pure negro ranks in the human family below the two great Arab and Aryan races" (4: 131). Since blacks are a permanently inferior "sub-species," mating between them and whites produces a high percentage of sterile offspring (4: 131) whom he elsewhere calls "mules" (4: 125).

Burton of course condemns "miscegenation, in which the white woman must succumb to the 'splendours of imperial (negro) manhood'" (3: 107). Burton does not have the same proscriptions against liasons between white men and women of other races.[15] Thus gender

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[15]According to Rice (236-238), one of Burton's methods of learning a language was "in bed" with indigenous women. Burton followed this method in Africa no less than elsewhere. Rice notes that Burton seems to have left a "half-caste" line of descendants in India: "the younger members of the family showing a striking resemblance to Richard and

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should correlate to racial relations, with the males of the dominant society having access to the women of the subordinate society. If black men had access to white women, the racial hierarchy would be subverted. Having black women in positions of authority where they could endanger white men threatens both racial and sexual hierarchies. This could help explain why Burton saw the Amazons as Dahomey's "second great evil" (4: 49) and why he felt such a need to denigrate their capabilities. Burton's concern with women cross-dressing as men (4: 48-49) and the Amazon's phallically positioned rifle in the frontispiece (3: 6, figure 5 above) also demonstrate anxiety over women acting in "masculine" ways. Previous close calls in areas where emasculation was more than just a metaphoric threat had left Burton somewhat sensitive to such issues (Rice 253-261).

Burton takes a stance that places him in a privileged position both toward the people he studies and the people back home. His knowledge enhances his ethos back home; empirical knowledge of Africa comes from "the empirical student, in other words the traveller," that is, from Burton and his ilk (4: 121). His is the kind of knowledge that for Said typifies Orientalism. "Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant" (Said 32). At points, Said's analysis of orientalist discourse sounds like a paraphrase of Burton's rhetoric.

> England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows. (Said 34)

Maria [Richard's sister] Burton (50).

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> Touching the African, it may be observed that there are in England at least two distinct creeds: 1. That of those who know him; 2. That of those who do not. (Burton 4: 122)

Knowledge is necessary to the exercise of power in a region; it is also magnified by the exercise of power.

> Once again, knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control. (Said 36)

Burton uses his superior knowledge as the grounding of his arguments regarding relations between the races. He starts with the presupposition that darker skin color "is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual difference," resulting in "the aristocracy of the skin" (4: 126). The "negro" is "bound down" "to the completely material" and exhibits a "truly savage want of veneration for God or man" (4: 132). As such, he should be "on all- fours," not just on his knees (4: 122). Burton uses this view as the basis of his argument concerning the contemporary issue of slavery. According to him, there are three approaches to the issue: the "pre-abolitionist," the "abolitionist," and the move toward "a middle and rational course" (4: 118-119). Burton is obviously in favor of the "middle and rational course"; despite his mission, which was to appeal to Gelele to stop the slave trade, Burton argues in favor of slavery.

He does note that slavery is to the benefit of the slave-holder and that the United States' South would be ruined by abolition (4: 123-124). However, most of his argument focuses on the benefits of slavery for the

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slave. He asserts that slavery is good for blacks because they will not work unless forced to, because they despise agriculture, because the men sit around while the women do all the work, and because the climate makes them listless (4: 123, 134-136). Said gives a summary of Orientalist logic that aptly describes Burton's approach.

> The argument, when reduced to its simplest form, was clear, it was precise, it was easy to grasp. There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power. (Said 36).

Slavery was also good because it would further the social evolution of Africans. People must be slaves and learn before they can be free. The West needed therefore to enslave Africans for their own good (4: 137). This is a standard Orientalist trope, one which Said summarizes in the British attitude toward Egypt: "England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government . . . Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation" (Said 34). "The so-called civilization of the negro is from without; he cannot find it within" (Burton 4: 133). Europe needed to step into the situation it found in Dahomey and teach the men to be men by enslaving them and teaching them to work, using an iron hand if necessary. Burton found the local men to be unmanly. "The women are as brave as, if not braver than, their brethren in arms, who certainly do

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not shine in that department of manliness" (4: 55).[16] Although he does not say so specifically, Burton seems to believe that the tutelage of slavery will make them more manly.

The corollary to making the men more manly would be to make the women more womanly. Just as the men of Dahomey need to learn to be active, the women need to learn to be passive (4: 48-49). While Burton does not explicitly call for the abolition of the Amazon brigade, their status as their country's "second great evil" (4: 49) makes them a prime target for reformation. Furthermore, their inferiority to "the poorest troops in Europe" (4: 52) makes them an easy target. Thus the existence of the Amazons of Dahomey tends to justify the need for European intervention in the kingdom, a standard use of the Amazon myth.

For both Burton and Bachofen, Amazons represent a more primitive level of civilization, one that needs to be transcended. For both men, it is the duty of the West to provide the patriarchal models necessary for such transcendence. Burton thought Islam would be good for Africans, but it was the "iron hand" of the West that would ultimately bring them the progress they needed (4: 133, 140), just as Bachofen thought that the rule of Roman law had brought the West the same progress. Burton's African, like Bachofen's woman, represented the material. Only the Western man could bring them the spiritual progress they so desperately

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[16]The correlation between effeminate men and masculine women goes back to Hippocrates (*Regimen* 1. 28).

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needed. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel serves as a response to this view. She takes the sexist and colonialist views of the day and confronts them with a group of lost Amazons whose material and spiritual culture is actually superior to that of Western patriarchy.

A Nowhere Land of Their Own

> Vtopia priscis dicta, ob infrequentiam, . . . Eutopia merito sum uocanda nomine. (More, *De Optimo* (b_3v)
>
> Called "Utopia" in ancient times because of my infrequency, . . .
> I am rightly called by the name "Eutopia."
>
> Me Utopie cleped Antiquitie,
> Uoyde [void] of haunte and herboroughe [harbor]. . . .
> Wherefore not Utopie, but rather rightely
> My name is Eutopie: a place of felicitie. (More, trans. Robynson, *Utopia* S. vij. a)

The lost Amazon society of *Herland*, a novel by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, epitomizes the meaning of More's "utopia," a word he coined from the Greek *οὐ τόπος* (*ou topos*), meaning "no place." More also coined the complimentary term "eutopia" from the Greek *εὐ τόπος* (eu topos), meaning "good place." (*De Optimo* b_3v, *Utopia* S vij a). Both of these meanings are often present in utopian writing, and such is the case in *Herland*, a novel about a good place for women that can only exist in the imagination. Gilman created Herland as a world for women because of her perception that her own world marginalized women. As Gubar asks, "If woman is dispossessed, a nobody, in the somewhere of patriarchy, is it possible that she might be somebody only in the nowhere of utopia?" (140). Gilman takes the ancient dystopia of Amazonia and

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makes it the basis of her utopia. Although she wrote *Herland* in 1915, I am including her in the Victorian era because, being born in 1860, she was a product of that era and because *Herland* responds to and reflects that era.

> The painful experiences Gilman describes in her autobiography——of being deserted by her father at an early age, of being brought up by an economically and psychologically impoverished mother who denied her physical affection, of severe postpartum depression, shading into madness, following marriage and the birth of her daughter——are at least partially the result of the problem sexuality constitutes for nineteenth-century women. (Gubar 146)

Gilman's Amazons, like Christine de Pizan's, serve as a model for women rather than simply as a target for men. Yet by having her nation of women invaded by three intrepid male explorers, she is able to incorporate and satirize traditional sexist attitudes toward women in general and toward matriarchy in particular. For example, her narrator describes the explorers' motivation for their expedition in the following manner: "There was something attractive to a bunch of unattached young men in finding an undiscovered country of a strictly Amazonian nature" (Gilman, *Herland* 5).

Gilman's Amazons are more lost than most. First, they are lost in the usual way of geographic remoteness, for they live in an unnamed continent above a remote jungle on a mountain accessible only by airplane. Such remote areas were popular in the fantasies of the period, and Amazons still served as one sign that the explorers had left

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civilization. In 1912, three years before Gilman wrote *Herland*, Arthur Conan Doyle created a similar remote mountain in *The Lost World*, one which he populated with dinosaurs rather than Amazons (95-97). In 1887, H. Rider Haggard placed the evil queen *She* inside a dormant volcano in Africa. By 1944, the world was running out of places "where the maps had to be made" (Gilman, *Herland* 2). Edgar Rice Burroughs had to move his *Land of Terror* with its Amazons under the earth's crust. Burroughs, who gave the world Tarzan, also gave it Amazons even uglier than Burton's.

> They were heavy-built, stocky warriors with bushy beards, a rather uncommon sight in Pellucidar where most of the pure-blood white tribes are beardless. . . .
>
> . . . I found myself lying bound in the bottom of a canoe among the hairy legs of the warriors who had captured me. .
>
> . . . and then, as I looked more closely at my bearded, hairy captors, the strange, the astounding truth suddenly dawned upon me. These warriors were not men; they were women. (9-11)

Since the Amazon myth reached its nadir with Burroughs, it had nowhere to go but up, and as adventure stories left the planet, so did the myth, as the film parody *Amazon Women on the Moon* indicates.

Gilman's Amazons have also lost much of their traditional identity. The women do not consider themselves to be Amazons or call their land Amazonia; it is the fantasy of the male explorers that the land is "of a strictly Amazonian nature" (5), and an exercise of the occidental explorers' right to define and label that leads them to dub the land

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"Feminisia," a name related to Chaucer's alternate name for Amazonia, "Femenye" (Chaucer I. [A.] 866), a traditional alternate name (7). The inhabitants themselves are neither warriors, nor are they exotically erotic as so many explorers assumed they would be.

Not only were Gilman's Amazons lost, but the novel itself was also. The title on the cover of the novel as it was published in 1979 underscores its previous obscurity: *Herland: A Lost Feminist Utopian Novel*. Gilman published it in 1915 as a serial novel in her monthly magazine *The Forerunner*, which is why it has twelve chapters (Lane, "Introduction" v). The novel shares the preoccupations of the magazine: women's rights and socialism (Lane, "Introduction" vi; *To Herland* 4). The novel was never published separately during Gilman's lifetime, and Gilman herself was relegated to obscurity after her death. "Gilman had an enormous reputation in her lifetime, but she is almost unknown to ours" (Lane, "Introduction" ix). The resurgence of feminism in the 1970s helped restore the reputations of earlier feminists, and Ann J. Lane's publication of *Herland* as a separate novel in 1979 finally gave the work a wide circulation. The same factors led to the publication of an English translation of Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies* in 1982.

In her own time, Gilman was as well known for her private life as for her public activism. Born in 1860, Charlotte Anna Perkins married the handsome artist Walter Stetson in 1884 and soon became pregnant. After the birth of her daughter Katharine, Gilman sank into a postpartum

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depression that was only relieved when she was away from Walter and Katharine. In 1885, she left her family in Providence, Rhode Island, and traveled to Pasadena, California. She quickly improved there, only to become depressed again when she returned home (Lane, *To Herland* 21, 98-101). "The Yellow Wallpaper," the gothic short story for which she is best known, is a fictionalized account of her postpartum depression and the "Rest Cure" prescribed for her by Dr. Silan Mitchell (Gubar 146; Lane, *To Herland* 118-121, 124).

Gilman wrote her own prescription for improvement, separating from Stetson in September 1888 and moving to Pasadena with her friend Grace Channing and her daughter Katharine (Lane, *To Herland* 141-142). Complicating matters even more, Stetson moved to Pasadena to seek a reconciliation and, when that failed, fell in love with her friend Grace (Lane, *To Herland* 148-150). Gilman's decision to let Walter and Grace raise Katharine, along with her continued friendship with them, caused a great scandal at the time. "The triangle——Charlotte, Walter, Grace——scandalized many of their generation because of the cordial relations that prevailed among them" (Lane, *To Herland* 153). Newspapers and the public took this, in conjunction with her work on behalf of women's rights, as a sign that she was an unnatural mother who "rejected woman's highest work in order to pursue, selfishly, her own interests" (Lane, *To Herland* 170). The implication was of course that her work and her life could corrupt other women into following her example. Walter

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Stetson did not help matters when he gave an interview to the *San Francisco Examiner* on December 20, 1892.

> He was quoted as saying that their married life was "quite pleasant" for a year or two, until Charlotte "espoused the Bellamy doctrine and began contributing letters on dress reform, discarded corsets, heel boots and the like, and practiced daily in a public gymnasium. She thought it her duty to sacrifice the domestic and conjugal relations for what she felt she was called to do in the cause of women's rights, dress reform, and nationalism." (Lane, *To Herland* 170)

Charlotte remarried in 1900, this time to her cousin George Houghton Gilman (Lane, *To Herland* 182, 188). Her bouts of depression had continued, but by this time she recognized that they came from within her rather than from external circumstances and that they would eventually pass. This helped her achieve a more balanced relationship with Houghton Gilman than had been possible with Stetson (Lane, *To Herland* 187, 215-216).

In *Herland*, Gilman takes three men from the United States and places them in an all-female society. Satirizing one's society by having some of its members journey to a better (or at least different) place goes back at least to Sir Thomas More and Jonathan Swift and was in current use during her own time.

> The narrative device of placing a representative from the bad old world in the new utopian world and chronicling the open-mouthed astonishment and somewhat slap-stick action that results, is another of the many clichés of the genre. (Ketterer 108)

The most influential of these works on Gilman's own writings was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*. Published in 1888, it

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was one of the three best-selling novels of the nineteenth century. She shared his desire for cooperation rather than competition and for an evolutionary rather than revolutionary growth toward socialism (Lane, *To Herland* 161-163).

Gilman's three explorers reflect what she would term "masculinist" or "androcentric" stereotypes, confronted with a society based on what Gilman would term "humanist" principles. Gilman preferred the term humanist for her approach because of her desire to make room for men as well as women in society (Lane, *To Herland* 5). *Herland* is a satire of American society, of early anthropologists, and also of the adventure novel.

Sharon W. Tiffany and Kathleen J. Adams discuss how the science of anthropology has been driven by some decidedly unscientific attitudes on the part of the anthropologists and explorers. Tiffany and Adams identify the Amazon as part of the Wild Woman romance, a system of thought and fantasy that classifies people according to gender and culture (Tiffany and Adams xi, 1). The authors demonstrate that the anthropologists who construct this taxonomy project it onto the people under consideration. This process follows a consistent pattern whether the anthropologist is working in the Orient, in Africa, or beyond. Although Tiffany and Adams primarily analyze the work of anthropologists, they assert that anthropologists are representatives of Western culture and its "'cultural baggage'"

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(4-5), baggage that Gilman exposes and debunks at great length. Like Tiffany and Adams, she is greatly interested in observing the observers.

In addition to the "factual" accounts circulating in Gilman's society, there were also adventure novels that were even more fabulous. According to Gubar, "Gilman confronted the misogyny implicit in the imperialist romance" (140). Gilman's heroes also exhibit the adolescent fantasies common to such literature. Doyle refers to these fantasies in the dedication of *The Lost World*.

> I have wrought my simple plan
> If I give one hour of joy
> To the boy, who's half a man,
> Or the man who's half a boy. (4)

Gilman's adventurers share this adolescent motivation in their expedition.

> He [the guide] could tell us only what the others had——a land of women——no men——babies,but all girls. No place for men——dangerous. Some had gone to see——none had come back.
> I could see Terry's jaw set at that. No place for men? Dangerous? He looked as if he might shin up the waterfall on the spot. . . .
> There was something attractive to a bunch of unattached young men in finding an undiscovered country of a strictly Amazonian nature. (5)

Each of Gilman's heroes has a particular fantasy about what he will find in the Land of Women, one based on his own stereotypes about women.

> Gilman presents Terry Nicholson, Jeff Margrave, and the narrator, Vandyck Jennings, as three stereotypical and faintly ludicrous specimens of masculinity, each with his own all too predictable fantasy of what to expect in a country of no men. (Gubar 141)

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The financier and leader of the expedition is the rich playboy Terry O. Nicholson, who is a "man's man" (Gilman 9) and a ladies' man. "I don't think any of us in college days was quite pleased to have him with our sisters" (Gilman 9). He expects "a sort of sublimated summer resort——just Girls and Girls and Girls" (7). Gilman's choice of a nickname for Terry, "Old Nick," is a particularly happy one, aligning him with the romantic Satanic hero and possibly with "Dirty Dick" Burton, no mean romantic explorer and "Satanic hero" himself. If Terry is a "Lothario," then Jeff Margrave is a "Galahad" who idolizes and idealizes women (Gilman 124). Gilman had had first-hand experience with such romantic notions. Jeff, "born to be a poet" (Gilman 2), could have penned the following words, but the actual author is Gilman's first husband, the artist Walter Stetson.

> "I admired them," he wrote of his long-standing view of women, "reverenced them, considered them something much nearer angels than ourselves. I believed them as a whole to be pure." (Lane, *To Herland* 84)

Vandyck Jennings, the narrator, represents a third approach to women: the scientific approach. A sociologist (Gilman 2), he has "a 'highly scientific' sociological ground from which he 'learnedly' expounds upon the innate limitations of women" (Donaldson 380).

While on a separate expedition, the three learn about "a strange and terrible Woman Land in the high distance" (2). A guide shows the three runoff from the mountain containing cloth and chemical "dyestuffs" (Gilman 4). The three resolve to return alone to keep the glory, and the

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women, to themselves. They soon return with a "big steam yacht" a "specially-made big motorboat," and a "'dissembled' biplane" (6) and set off to explore Herland.

An examination of the setting of *Herland* reveals the depths of the roots of Gilman's utopia. The setting is on the top of a mountain "up among the thousand tributaries and enormous hinterland of a great river, up where the maps had to be made, savage dialects studied, and all manner of strange flora and fauna expected" (2). Van does not give the location of the mountain because he fears outside interference (1). Nevertheless, the description of the area has a South American feel: the "great river" with its "tributaries" and "hinterland" seems, like the women of Herland, to have been purged of the name "Amazon." The terrain has "a dark tangle of rivers, lakes, morasses, and dense forests, with here and there an unexpected long spur running out from the big mountains beyond" (2). The mountain the women live on is surrounded by "poison-arrow natives down below" (144). Furthermore, the mountain itself has a "semitropical" climate, contrasting with the tropical climate of the land below (11). The South American flavor is so strong that Thomas Peyser simply assumes that the setting is "the South American jungle" (Peyser 10). On top of the mountain is what Gubar terms "Gilman's Earthly Paradise" (143-144). Thus has Gilman, perhaps unconsciously, brought us full circle back to the discoverer of America, Columbus (see p. 142 above).

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Like Columbus' Earthly Paradise (*Paraíso Terrenal*; Columbus, *Textos* 215), Gilman's utopia is located at the top of a mountain which Columbus described as the world nipple.

> . . . y qu'esta parte d'este peçón sea la más alta e más propinca al cielo. (*Textos* 215)
>
> upon part of which is the nipple, which is the highest and closest to the heavens.

Terry describes Herland as "'Semitropical. Looks like a first-rate climate'" (11). As he sailed up the gentle incline toward the *Paraíso Terrenal*, Columbus also noted a milder climate (*suave temperancia*; 215, 218). Gilman transports Columbus' Isle of Women to the top of his Earthly Paradise, but she does leave the inhabitants white. Columbus associated the milder climate with whiter (*blancos*) inhabitants (216); Gilman's women are "of Aryan stock" (54). Even if Gilman does not rely directly on Columbus, she has internalized colonial fantasies shared and popularized by him. The setting makes Herland a successful colony, "a settlement of white, European women in the middle of the South American jungle" (Peyser 10).

Gilman's utopia also reflects her own Puritan New England heritage. She was descended from the famous Beecher family. Her ancestor John Beecher arrived in Boston Harbor in 1637, only seventeen years after the *Mayflower* (Lane, *To Herland* 21). Lyman Beecher, "zealot and evangelist," was her great-grandfather (Lane, *To Herland* 21). Her great-aunt Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote the abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's*

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Cabin. Her uncle Edward Everett Hale was also an author. Best known for writing *The Man Without a Country*, he also wrote about the country without a man when he published an article in 1872 identifying Montalvo's Amazonian Queen Califia as the source of the name of California (Hale 36-37; Lane, *To Herland* 25; see above, pp. 151-154). Depending on the care with which she studied her Uncle Edward's work, Gilman could have known that Montalvo located his Californian Amazons "very close to this side of the Terrestrial Paradise" (Hale 39).

The reports of and the search for a terrestrial paradise in the New World left a lasting impact on the Puritans and through them on United States society in general.

> The Edenic myth, it seems to me, has been the most powerful and comprehensive organizing force in American culture. (Sanford, *Quest for Paradise* vi)
>
> More than almost any other modern nation the United States was a product of the Protestant Reformation, seeking an earthly paradise in which to perfect a reformation of the Church. (Sanford, *Quest for Paradise* 74)

This paradise was to be their "city on the hill," a historical realization of Augustine's originally transhistorical City of God, carved out of the wilderness.

> The first colonists, especially in the North but also in the South, were, if we are to believe their leaders, intent upon founding a second Jerusalem in the New World. They called their symbolic city "a city on the hill" because it was supposed to crown the Mount of Paradise. (*Quest for America* 23)

Cotton Mather describes this city on a hill in his *Theopolis Americana*. *Theopolis* is a term formed from the Greek words *θεός*

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(theos), meaning "God," and *πόλις* (polis), meaning "city"; his title thus means "The American City of God." For Mather, New England could be "*The City of Righteousness, The Faithful City*" (116, italics his). America should be "diverted" from "the New Popish *Babylon*" so that it can "serve the *City of God*" (118). Yet actual American cities proved to be a disappointment to this dream.

> . . . American cities were centers of congestion and turmoil, and farmers as well as city-dwellers often pictured their cities as places of vice where materialism was rampant and European fashions and follies paraded shamelessly. (Sanford, *Quest for America* 23)

The paradigm for this "city on a hill" has focused on the American small town instead of the American city, on Mayberry instead of New York City. But in actual small towns, the dream proves elusive. "Frequent crop failures, depressions, fluctuations in population, and conflicts over school, church, and civic administration have been endemic to Main Street, U.S.A." (Jewett and Lawrence 170-171). Nevertheless, the dream of the American utopia has persisted. Jewett and Lawrence have identified several characteristics of this utopia.

> It is neither the pure state of nature, the pastoral world of small farms and plantations, nor the urban metropolis. It is a small, well-organized community surrounded by a pastoral realm whose distinguishing trait is the absence of lethal internal conflict arising from its members. The citizens are law-abiding and co-operative, without those extremes of economic, political, or sexual desires that might provoke confrontations. A cheerful atmosphere pervades the homogeneous populace, and there is no hint of a tendency on the part of the majority toward evil. (170)

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Herland is a fulfillment of every element of this American utopia. Gubar notes the pastoral setting when she states that Gilman's "Earthly Paradise banishes wilderness, replacing it with cultivation" (143-144). The explorers find that the land is "in a state of perfect cultivation, where even the forests looked as if they were cared for; a land that looked like an enormous park, only it was even more evidently an enormous garden" (Gilman, *Herland* 11). The Herland plateau has no lions and lambs to lie down together (Isaiah 11:6), but Gilman does have the cat lie down with bird. The Herlanders have bred their cats to hunt mice and moles as a protection of the food supply but to leave birds alone (49). Apparently the birds of Herland pose no threat to the food supply.

The changes in cats parallel the changes in Gilman's Amazons. Gilman's Amazons are not the "soldiers" of tradition; they have become "sturdy burghers." Like the cats, they retain the ability to attack when necessary. On one level, the transformation of cats is a manifestation of Gilman's belief in eugenics. On another level, the transformation reflects Gilman's secularized belief that the millennium would be established through social and technological advances. Peyser notes the small-town feeling of Gilman's utopia. "The resemblance of Herland to a well-ordered, extraordinarily clean, extraordinarily picturesque country town signals a nostalgia for a rather dehistoricized version of the American past" (13). In their first flight over Herland, the explorers fly over "clean, well-built roads," "attractive architecture," and "the ordered beauty of the

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little town" (Gilman, *Herland* 11). The explorers find the town even more idyllic when they enter it.

> Everything was beauty, order, perfect cleanness, and the pleasantest sense of home over it all. As we neared the center of the town the houses stood thicker, ran together as it were, grew into rambling palaces grouped among parks and open squares, something as college buildings stand in their quiet greens. (19)

The inhabitants of Herland are as peaceful, cooperative, and homogeneous as Jewett and Lawrence could expect.

> You see, they had had no wars. They had had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies. They were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together——not by competition, but by united action. (Gilman, *Herland* 60)
>
> "Don't they cooperate pretty well? You can't beat it." (67)

All this harmony and cooperation produces a society as socialist as Gilman could desire. Gilman was a Darwinist who did not adhere to the conservative social Darwinism that focused on the survival of the fittest individuals. Her narrator Van struggles to explain this view to the Herlanders.

> . . . I explained that the laws of nature require a struggle for existence, and that in the struggle the fittest survive, and the unfit perish. In our economic struggle, I continued, there was always plenty of opportunity for the fittest to reach the top, . . . (63)

For Gilman, true evolution comes not through individualistic competition but rather through cooperation. Just as early creatures evolved when individual cells joined together to form "a complex bundle of members and organs in indivisible relation," so social evolution is the

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process of individuals joining to form societies (Gilman, *Reader* 95). "The course of social evolution is the gradual establishment of organic relations between individuals, and this organic relation rests on purely economic grounds" (Gilman, *Reader* 95). Gilman's Herlanders are such paragons of cooperation that they do not understand the men's assertion that without competition "'there would be no stimulus to industry'" (Gilman, *Herland* 60).

> "No stimulus to industry," they repeated, with that puzzled look we had learned to know so well. "*Stimulus? To Industry?* But don't you *like* to work?"
> "No man would work unless he had to," Terry declared.
> "Oh, no *man!* Is that one of your sex distinctions?" (60)

This passage resembles an exchange in More's *Utopia* in which the narrator questions Peter Giles' assertion that the country of Utopia has placed strict limits on private property, favoring the communal sharing of goods.

> At mihi inquam contra uidetur, ibi nunquam commode uiui posse, ubi omnia sint communia. Nam quo pacto suppetat copia rerum, unoquoque ab labore subducente se? utpote quem neque sui quaestus urget ratio, & alienae industriae fiducia reddit segnem. (More 4: 106)
>
> I said, "But it seems the opposite to me. Life could never be lived satisfactorily where all things are common. For how can there be an adequate supply of things when everyone withdraws from work? For the reason of one's own profit will not urge him, and reliance on another's industry will make him slothful."

Giles is a sanguine about the perfectability of human nature as Gilman, as are all true utopians (More 4: 106).

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The dark side of all this cooperation is a subsuming of the individual to the Herland society, an "erasure of the boundary between the me and the not-me" (Peyser 12).

> For Gilman, collective action that overrides any individual objections, or rather collective action that arises spontaneously from rigorously like-minded citizens, has an unquestioned value. . . .
>
> Gilman clearly favors reliance on authority to independence of thought, and, indeed, values conformity for its own sake, even in matters of no social concern whatever. (Peyser 11-12)

The Herlanders have formal and informal mechanisms for insuring "that consciousness is the right kind" (Peyser 12). There is but a thin line between the utopic conformity of Gilman's *Herland*, a conformity that has its roots in Plato's *Republic*, and the dystopic conformity of Big Brother and the thought police in Orwell's *1984*; even Orwell's Newspeak, the simplified English being introduced to his dystopia, has its analogue in *Herland*. "The language itself they had deliberately clarified, simplified, made easy and beautiful. . ." (102). Indeed, Terry at least finds Gilman's utopia to be his own dystopia.

Nor do the inhabitants exhibit "those extremes of . . . sexual desires that might provoke confrontations" (Jewett and Lawrence 170). In fact, when they were cut off from the outside world and lost all their men two thousand years ago, the women survived by evolving the ability to become pregnant by parthenogenesis (45, 56). They get pregnant through "concentrated desire" for a baby (70). Gilman's solution to the problem of reproduction among her women reflects the contemporary

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feminist "retreat from sexuality" and "the Victorian notion of themselves [women] as asexual angels" (M. Miller 193). Gilman herself elsewhere warned against "sex-license" in terms stern enough for the Puritan pulpit.

> Among these abuses the most regrettable are to be found in that small but quite audible group of Feminists who mistake the old evil of sex-license for a new freedom. . . . This is called by its supporters "the New Morality," yet it is hardly to be distinguished from the old immorality. (*Reader* 186)

Gilman regards human sexuality as over-developed because of "thousands of generations of over-indulgence" (*Reader* 253). Her solution is "to breed out the tendency to excessive indulgence" through eugenics, resulting in a race that mates during one period every year, like animals with similar gestation periods (*Reader* 253), or like traditional Amazons. The Herlanders have successfully practiced eugenics "to breed out, when possible, the lowest types" (*Herland* 82). Gilman's advocacy of eugenics, her racism, her anti-Semitism, and her xenophobia are some of the more troubling elements of her thought, elements she absorbed uncritically from her culture (Lane, *To Herland* 16-19). Parthenogenesis serves an important function in the book, finally releasing the Amazons from the need either to have an annual mating ritual with outside men or to have degraded men in their own society for "love slaves." The removal of these salacious elements from the myth has its own cost, however. The alteration of biology and the use of eugenics takes us again to within striking distance of the dystopic vision, this time of Aldous Huxley's *Brave*

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New World, with its factory-produced babies who have pre-determined physical and mental attributes.

Gilman's *Herland* fulfills her own understanding of the Puritan dream of a city on a hill. The inhabitants are a successful European colony, being "of Aryan stock" (54), living literally on a hill that cuts them off from the savagery of the natives below and from corrupting influence of the Old World (54-55). Just as Christine de Pizan transformed the City of God into the City of Ladies, so Gilman has transformed Mather's Theopolis, itself a descendent of Augustine's City of God, into Theapolis, the City of the Goddess. The religion of Herland is "a sort of Maternal Pantheism" (59), a polar reversal of the transcendent paternal monotheism of Gilman's ancestors.

The arrival of the three explorers in Herland gives Gilman the opportunity to distinguish between the virtues of her ideal society and the vices of contemporary American society. Gilman also shows the difficulty the explorers have in moving beyond the sexism and imperialism of their interpretative grids to reach an understanding of the culture they have encountered. It is in the pre-encounter fantasies of the three male explorers that Gilman puts most of the material derived from the Amazon myth, myths popular with earlier explorers also. Gilman's uncle Edward E. Hale had already noted the influence of the Amadís romances on the dreams of early explorers.

> The romance had said, that, in the whole of the romance-island of California, there was no metal but gold. Cortez,

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> who did not find a pennyweight of dust in the real California, still had no objection to giving so golden a name to his discovery. (38)
>
> I have translated this passage at length, because it gives the reader an idea of the romantic literature of that day,——literally its only literature, excepting books of theology or of devotion. Over acres of such reading, served out in large folios,——the yellow-covered novels of their time,——did the Pizarros and Balboas and Cortezes and other young blades while away the weary hours of their camp life. Glad enough was Cortez out of such a tale to get the noble name of his great discovery. (48; see above, pp. 151-154)

Like the later feminist writer Abby Kleinbaum, Gilman recognizes that the "Amazon is a dream that men created, an image of a superlative female that men constructed to flatter themselves" (Kleinbaum 1). Although they remain somewhat skeptical of the old stories, our heroes set off with their heads filled with a "lot of traditions as old as Herodotus," a clear reference to Herodotus' account of the Amazons (Gilman, *Herland* 58; Herodotus 4. 110-117). When they hear about the "strange and terrible Woman Land in the high distance," the three men laugh. "Naturally I did myself. I knew the stuff that savage dreams are made of" (3).

Apparently savage dreams are made of the same stuff as civilized dreams, for these dreams of Amazons were apparently some of the earliest European exports to the New World. As they prepare to explore the country, they engage in more of what Purchas had termed the "*Amazonian Dreames*" of earlier explorers (Purchas 18. 59). For instance, what would Amazons be without cannibals?

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> "We'll start our flier from the lake and leave the boat as a base to come back to."
>
> "If we come back," I suggested cheerfully.
>
> "'Fraid the ladies will eat you?" he scoffed.
>
> "We're not so sure about those ladies, you know," drawled Jeff. "There may be a contingent of gentlemen with poisoned arrows or something." (6)

Van, the narrator, tries to explain to the others what they will probably find based on his sociological training and his grounding in classical mythology.

> "If there is such a place——and there does seem some foundation for believing it——you'll find it's built on a sort of matriarchal principle, that's all. The men have a separate cult of their own, less socially developed than the women, and make them an annual visit——a sort of wedding call." (7)
>
> I held a middle ground [between Terry and Jeff], highly scientific, of course, and used to argue learnedly about the physiological limitations of the sex. (9)

If Terry is somewhat of a caricature of the explorer in the Richard Burton mode, and if Jeff is a caricature of the "Southern" gentleman "full of chivalry and sentiment" (9), then Van is a caricature of the social theorist in the J. J. Bachofen mode. When Van speaks of the "stage of culture" of women organized according to "a sort of matriarchal principle," the implication is clearly that they belong to an inferior stage of social evolution. This is a sentiment Bachofen himself voiced. In addition to the annual mating visit and the cannibalism dating back to the classical era, the explorers indulge in fantasizing about the sexual orgies somewhat like those Ariosto introduced to the myth in the Renaissance (154-158 above).

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> We joked Terry about his modest impression that he would be warmly received, but he held his ground.
>
> "You'll see," he insisted. "I'll get solid with them all——and play one bunch against another. I'll get myself elected king in no time——whew! Solomon will have to take a back seat!"
>
> "Where do we come in on that deal?" I demanded. "Aren't we Viziers or anything?" (8)

The men think that they will be very much in demand as the only three men in a land of women. As the most manly man on the expedition, Terry assumes he will be the most in demand.

The three voice other stereotypes regarding women that are not derived from the Amazon myth *per se* but which fit within its framework. They disagree about the amount of social organization and technology they will find. The romantic Jeff thinks the society "will be like a nunnery under an abbess——a peaceful, harmonious sisterhood" (8). Terry and Van disagree.

> I snorted derision at this idea.
>
> "Nuns, indeed! Your peaceful sisterhoods were all celibate, Jeff, and under vows of obedience. These are just women, and mothers, and where there's motherhood you don't find sisterhood——not much."
>
> "No, sir——they'll scrap," agreed Terry. "Also we mustn't look for inventions and progress; it'll be awfully primitive."
>
> "How about that cloth mill?" Jeff suggested.
>
> "Oh, cloth! Women have always been spinsters. But there they stop——you'll see." (8)

While these sentiments apply to women in general, they have a particular applicability to the Amazon myth, which has often been used to signify the natural barbarity and/or the animality of women. The matriarchal society will be either unstable or hyper-stable, either exhibiting no

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organization or the all-encompassing organization of the "hymenoptera" (67), the matriarchates of the insect world.

> "This place is just like an enormous anthill——you know an anthill is nothing but a nursery. And how about the bees? Don't they manage to cooperate and love one another?" (67)

Whatever its level of social development, the Amazon society has generally represented a threat to patriarchy that must be corrected either by exterminating the Amazons or by Terry's preferred method, that of becoming their king and turning them into a giant harem (8). If Terry's beautiful Amazon invites conquest by her looks, then Burroughs' ugly Amazon necessitates it by hers.

> If these women were the result of taking women out of slavery and attempting to raise them to equality with man, then I think that they and the world would be better off if they were returned to slavery. (Burroughs 20)

Beautiful or ugly, organized or anarchic, advanced or primitive, Amazons must be conquered because they represent a threat to the civilization of patriarchy, or a lapse from patriarchy, or at best a prelude to patriarchy (Bachofen 1: 134, 138; see p. 254 above). Gilman's use of the traditional American "city on a hill" as the model for her utopia is pivotal to the rhetoric of the novel. She is trying to show that humanist values that allow women to achieve as much as men do in her own culture will achieve this traditional goal while androcentric values cannot. "The satiric critique generated from the utopian reconfiguration here means that the better Herland looks as a matriarchal culture, the worse

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patriarchal America seems in contrast" (Gubar 141). Herland is not a threat to civilization; it is the next stage in the evolution of civilization, the next link up the great chain of being. As is often the case in such satires, Gilman successively contrasts the various imperfections of her own culture to the perfections of the utopia. In this way she critiques the theory and practice of child-rearing and education, the economic system, the legal system, the impractical types of clothing women wear, the prejudices toward women, and the restrictions placed on them.

Gilman uses humor and foreshadowing to show the limitations of the masculinist stereotypes of her heroes.

> We talked and talked.
>
> And with all my airs of sociological superiority I was no nearer than any of them.
>
> It was funny though, in the light of what we did find, those extremely clear ideas of ours as to what a country of women would be like. It was no use to tell ourselves and one another that all this was idle speculation. We were idle and we did speculate, on the ocean voyage and the river voyage, too. . . .
>
> We were not in the least "advanced" on the woman question, any of us, then. (8-9)

The men's misperceptions continue as they fly over and then land on the Herland plateau. They take the cultivation of the countryside, "the clean, well-built roads," and the beauty of the first town they see in Herland as confirmation that the country must have men.

> "But they look——why, this is a *civilized* country!" I protested. "There must be men." (11)

They can accept that the cloth they found might have been made by women because women "have always been spinsters" (8), but they

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cannot accept that women alone managed to build the rest of the civilization.

> What we think of as "masculine" traits, she [Gilman] said, are human traits that men have usurped as their own and to which women have been denied access. One sex has monopolized virtually all human activities, and then called them male. (Lane, *To Herland* 5)

When the men enter the town and meet the local women, they are in for a sizable culture shock. They are soon trapped between two bands of women. The women initially seem somewhat Amazonian as the men see "before us a band of women standing close together in even order" and behind them "another band, marching steadily, shoulder to shoulder" (19). Yet the Amazon analogy soon breaks down as the women fail to fit into the stereotypes.

> They were not young. They were not old. They were not, in the girl sense, beautiful. They were not in the least ferocious. (19)

That is, they were not Amazons, or at least not the Amazons of male fantasies, dreams and nightmares. While "male fantasies not infrequently centered on women," "women's fantasies have frequently been feminist in nature" (Gubar 139-140). The heroes have stumbled out of their masculinist fantasy into a feminist one whose inhabitants do not center their lives around men. "Their [the Herlanders'] vigorous beauty was an aesthetic pleasure, not an irritant. Their dress and ornaments had not a touch of the 'come-and-find-me' element" (Gilman, *Herland* 128). The heroes are discomfited to find their "virgin land" patrolled by "Maiden

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Aunts" (59). And patrol the "Aunts" do. When they direct the men to enter a building, the men try to bolt.

> Instantly each of us was seized by five women, . . .
>
> We were borne inside, struggling manfully, but held secure most womanfully, in spite of our best endeavors. (23)

According to Donaldson, "In this ridiculous scenario, Gilman 'sticks out her tongue' at those characteristics of 'masculine' and 'feminine' which have become embedded in a destructive pattern of dominance and submission" (380).

As the men struggle to verbalize their cognitive dissonance over this turn of events, they "describe the women's authority and their reactions to it through analogies drawn from their own world" (M. Miller 192). Their analogies amount to a catalogue of marginalization. One comparison is of themselves to cattle. As the women signal that the men should enter a building, Terry objects. "I'm not going to be——herded in——as if we were in a cattle chute" (23). Usually the animality is ascribed to the female and to the alien, as when Kleist identified Penthesilea with her dogs (p. 232 above); for the Western male to turn this analogy back on himself shows a crisis of confidence and a loss of his identity as the more "human" one in encounters with other cultures (30-32 above). Another comparison is between themselves and children, humans of diminished capacity.

> And yet, as I looked from face to face, calm, grave, wise, wholly unafraid, evidently assured and determined, I had the

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> funniest feeling——a very early feeling——a feeling that I traced back and back in memory until I caught up with it at last. It was that sense of being hopelessly in the wrong that I had so often felt in early youth when my short legs' utmost effort failed to overcome the fact that I was late to school. (19)

The comparison does not stop with the tardy schoolboy/angry schoolmarm analogy, but continues to regress until the men reach the baby/nurse level. After being captured and anesthetized, the men awaken to find they are locked in a comfortable room but without their clothes.

> Terry was grinning at us. "So you realize what these ladies have done to us?" he pleasantly inquired. "They have taken away all our possessions, all our clothes——every stitch. We have been stripped and washed and put to bed like so many yearling babies——by these highly civilized women."
>
> Jeff actually blushed. (25)

This repeated reference to childhood is perhaps due to the lack of a model for relating to women in authority from their adult lives.

> With no experience of a relationship between an adult male and a more powerful female, Van is forced to look to his childhood to find a situation in which he has had an experience of female authority. (M. Miller 192)

Now in a powerless minority, the men become like a disenfranchised minority from their own society: women. "Then we found ourselves much in the position of the suffragette trying to get to the Parliament buildings through a triple cordon of London police" (23). Gubar notes how "feminized" the men become through their new social situation, indicating that for Gilman many of the negative characteristics her society perceived in women actually came from their inferior status.

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> Considered inferior for their secondary sexual characteristics, they become petulant, irritable, jealous, vain of their physical appearance, in need of reassurance, rivalrous for approval, as Gilman humorously diagnoses the faults ascribed to her own sex as symptoms of a disease called "marginalization." (141)

The men struggle with their stereotypes in the face of this new culture. Jeff, the romantic doctor, has the easiest time adapting and "settles happily into the country once he gets over his annoying habit of trying to carry things for people" (women) (M. Miller 191). Terry, the "man's man," has the most difficulty adapting to the new culture. He holds on to his stereotypes and refuses to be confused by the facts.

> "It's impossible!" he would insist. "Women cannot cooperate——it's against nature."
>
> When we urged the obvious facts he would say: "Fiddlesticks!" or "Hang your facts——I tell you it can't be done!" (67)

As soon as he gets a look at the welcoming committee in the first town they enter, he labels the women the "old Colonels" (20). "His view of their authority as male, military, and despotic rather than female, maternal, and benevolent is the key to his inability to accept it" (M. Miller 192). For all of his popularity with women back home, Terry objectifies them to the point that he can hardly admit they are people.

> "Confound their grandmotherly minds!" Terry said. "Of course they can't understand a Man's World! They aren't human——they're just a pack of Fe-Fe-Females!" (80)

He is accustomed to a culture where the term "man" can refer to the male gender or to humans in general. But, as Van notes, "when we say *women*, we think *female*——the sex" (137). The Herlanders think in

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opposite terms; for them, "woman" and "women" are the universal terms, "and the word *man* meant to them only *male*——the sex" (137).

The Herlanders are human and female. They are Amazons as remade by Gilman, Amazons devised not as objects for male conquest but as examples for both women and men to emulate. Yet Gilman definitely constructs the Herlanders from the Amazonian model. A chapter entitled "A Unique History" (49) gives the usual history. They began with a fairly standard social structure that included polygamy, slavery, "ships, commerce, an army, a king" (54). In accord with "the aristocracy of the skin" (Burton 4: 126) and culture that Gilman shares with Burton, she states that "these people were of Aryan stock, and were once in contact with the best civilization of the old world" (54), making her women representatives of civilization rather than barbarity.

The country lost most of its male population through war, and the army was defending the passes when a "volcanic outburst" filled the pass and killed the army. The slaves "now seized their opportunity, rose in revolt, killed their remaining masters even to the youngest boy, killed the old women too, and the mothers, intending to take possession of the country with the remaining young women and girls" (54-55). The "infuriated virgins" refused to submit to "these would-be masters" and instead "rose in sheer desperation and slew their brutal conquerors" (55), which led to the necessity of parthenogenesis. This latter detail is perhaps an oblique reference to Gilman's racism, provided that she was

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assuming that the slaves were not "of Aryan stock" like the masters (54-55). Kleist's Amazons also come into existence when they slay their Ethiopian captors rather than share their "vulgar beds" (*schnöden Betten*; 15. 1918-1930). Gilman was not always so oblique in her racism. "If the dangerous negroes of the black belt knew that every white woman carried a revolver and used it with skill and effect there would be less lynching needed" (*Reader* 217). Her reference to the "young women" not "submitting" to the "would-be masters" certainly fits in with her views on miscegenation and is even reminiscent of Burton's definition: "miscegenation, in which the white woman must succumb to the 'splendours of imperial (negro) manhood'" (3: 107).

For Gilman, the "blending of races" occurs through warfare, with the victorious army "killing the men and marrying the women" (*Reader* 291). Such a process is not good to Gilman. "We are perfectly familiar in this country with the various blends of black and white, and the wisest of both races prefer the pure stock" (*Reader* 291). Her terminology again parallels Burton's when she refers to the "mongrelization" of races; he refers to the product of a mixed marriage as a "mongrel," while she compares such a person to mixed-breed dogs, who "tend to revert to the 'yaller dog', the jackal type so far behind them." (*Reader* 291; Burton 4: 125). Gilman's Amazons once again form the pattern for the way in which she thought women should behave, using violence when necessary to protect themselves and their honor (*Reader* 217).

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Gilman extends the woman's right to say no to the marriage bed itself. When the three men eventually marry Herlanders, the women are reticent regarding sex. The ever-impatient Terry tries to rape his wife Alima. He is thus following in the venerable footsteps of Heracles and Theseus in choosing the bed as the field of battle to conquer his Amazon. The ensuing battle is a first in the Amazon saga, for his wife Alima responds in kind to his aggression.

> "She kicked me," confided the embittered prisoner. . . . I was doubled up with the pain, of course, and she jumped on me and yelled for this old harpy . . . and they had me trussed up in no time. I believe Alima could have done it alone," he added with reluctant admiration. (143)

Alima can probably hold her own against Terry by herself, but in this cooperative culture, she does not have to because several women rush to her aid when she calls for help. "In a court in our country he would have been held quite 'within his rights', of course. But this was not our country; it was theirs" (132). In a country centered on women, rape, even marital rape, is an enormous offense. It would be another sixty years before the American legal system began to catch up with that of the Herlanders in regard to a married woman's right to say "No" to her husband. Gilman's civilized Amazons do not kill and eat him, however. The judge simply sentences Terry to expulsion from Herland (133). Gilman is fully aware of how avant-guard such a turn of events is, especially "to have the sturdy athletic furious woman rise up and master him" (142).

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> Come to think of it, I [Van] do not recall a similar case in all history or fiction. Women have killed themselves rather than submit to outrage; they have killed the outrager; they have escaped; or they have submitted——sometimes seeming to get on very well with the victor afterward. (142-143)

When they ask Terry and the others to promise as gentlemen ("they knew that word was held a title of honor with us") not to reveal the location of the country without the permission of the Herlanders, Terry balks and announces his intention to do to the country what he tried to do to his wife (145-146). He and the others have even at this point been talking "about coming back, about establishing a connecting route by water; about penetrating those vast forests and civilizing——or exterminating——the dangerous savages" (144). Terry tries to hold on to his imperial dreams.

> "Indeed I won't [give my word]!" he protested. "The first thing I'll do is to get an expedition fixed up to force an entrance into Ma-land." (146)

The Herlanders begin "calmly" discussing whether it would be better to keep Terry "'an absolute prisoner, always'" or to anesthetize him (146). At this point Terry capitulates and gives his word, forestalling his imperialist enterprises. This is a clear reversal of the average use of the myth to incite men to sexual and territorial conquests.

Gilman reverses other elements of the Amazon myth also. Where the Amazons typically represented passion, these women are almost always calm and are exemplars of reason.

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> To us, at first, these women, unavoidably ignorant of what to us was the basic commonplace of knowledge, had seemed on the plane of children, or of savages. What we had been forced to admit, with growing acquaintance, was that they were ignorant as Plato and Aristotle were, but with a highly developed mentality quite comparable to that of Ancient Greece. (85)

Thus Gilman's version of the Amazon cannot be dismissed as Other as they were in ancient Greece; they have moved to the center of civilization with their calm rationality. "[W]edded to the construction of a fully rational human being," "Gilman was wary of passion" (Lane, *To Herland* 305). She understood that women were labeled as irrational and emotional as a way of marginalizing them, and sought to avoid the label in her book.

One of the problematic areas of the book is that "*Herland* is a book about a woman's world without passion or intimacy" (Lane, *To Herland* 305). Gilman was unable to incorporate intense personal relationships into her ideology and hence into her utopia. As we have seen, Gilman reverses the predatory sexuality of traditional Amazons through parthenogenesis and the atrophy of the desire for sexual intercourse. She replaces the woman-man relationship with the mother-daughter relationship, around which the society is built. Van's instructor explains that "'education is our highest art, only allowed to our highest artists'," and that only the "'most fit'" are allowed to tend babies in their version of daycare (82-83). This dedication to mothering is in sharp contrast to the usual care Amazons give their children, killing or giving away the boys

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and mutilating the girls. In fact, Gilman's Herland resembles only one other previous version of the Amazon tale, that found in Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*. Christine does not make as many changes as Gilman, but she does place them in a city headed by another virgin Mother, Mary (3. 1. 1-3). However, the two women differ sharply in their parenesis.

Where Christine counsels patience for her women readers when they are paired with abusive spouses (3. 19. 2), Gilman sees such advice as the docile acceptance of a "popular prejudice" forbidding women to use violent means to protect themselves (*Reader* 214). This prohibition is merely a way of keeping woman in "'her place'" of submission (*Reader* 216). "In plain fact there is no reason whatever why the female of genus *homo* should not use violence whenever it is necessary. . ." (*Reader* 217). She recommends "small firearms," "ju-jitsu," "wrestling and boxing" to women as ways to defend themselves (*Reader* 217) and followed this advice in her own trips to the gym (Lane, *To Herland* 170).

In general, the men in Herland find themselves overwhelmed physically by the women around them. They are prisoners until the women trust them enough to allow them out, and thereafter can be subdued at any time. In the particular case of domestic violence, Gilman presents an example of personal, corporate, and legal defense of the woman, of fighting back against the assailant, tying him up, anesthetizing him, threatening him with euthanasia, and expelling him. She even

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includes the dreaded kick to the groin (143), playing on the average male's "deep seated terror" "that sometime, somewhere, somehow, women *might* 'hit back'" (*Reader* 216). This terror, of course, lies at the heart of the Amazon myth.

Having evoked this terror, Gilman dispels it through humor, the way she dispels other fears and prejudices in *Herland*. Terry, the would-be Achilles, is sulking in his tent over his defeat at the hands of women, explaining to his friend why he lost, and seeking his sympathy.

> "And of course a man's helpless when you hit him like that. No woman with a shade of decency——"
>
> I had to grin at that, and even Terry did, sourly. He wasn't given to reasoning, but it did strike him that an assault like his rather waived considerations of decency. (143)

Instead of commiserating with Terry, Van laughs at him. Donaldson calls such humor in *Herland* "subversive" and "carnivalesque" (382). A carnival is usually a temporary "*authorized transgression*" that ultimately reinforces the rules (382, italics his). However, "her utopian emphasis on the transformation of character makes returning to the *status quo* extremely difficult, if not impossible" (382). At least for Van and Jeff, the sojourn in Herland has changed their perspective. And as for the unreformed Terry, the brutality and misogyny underlying the veneer of his chivalry have been exposed. Even worse, he has been made to look ridiculous. Win or lose, earlier heroes at least maintained their heroic status in their encounters with Amazons. For instance, even when Kleist has Penthesilea eat Achilles, his body may not be intact, but his status is.

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His death is the occasion for Penthesilea's suicide and *Sturm und Drang* ("storm and stress") all around. Terry's defeat leaves his body intact but dismembers his heroic status and his masculine ego. His ex-wife does not immolate herself over him; she simply moves as far away from him as possible and returns to work in the forests. Furthermore, his best friend laughs at his plight (143).

Gilman takes the Amazon myth and uses it in two basic ways. First, she uses it to expose the fantasies that men project onto women and that explorers project onto the cultures they are "penetrating" and "civilizing——or exterminating" (144). She shows the men using the myth to enhance their heroic status and to incite themselves to action. Second, she uses the myth as the basis for her own "humanist" utopia. The nation has the usual etiology, but the women evolve in a new direction. They create a society based on cooperation, corporate evolution, peace, and reason. Gilman then juxtaposes the prejudices against women with the possibilities of what women can accomplish when freed from those prejudices, and with the possibilities of what men can become when freed from their own prejudices. She uses the myth to create a society of "New Women" (56), of free women, as she defines freedom.

> A woman's wardrobe contains many images from which she can choose: she is the Smiths' daughter, John's wife, or Billy and Susie's mother. But in the Amazon image she can be herself, and the property of no one else: in this dream, she can fly. (Kleinbaum 226)

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Conclusion

In the Romantic and Victorian eras, the Amazon myth still served many of its traditional functions. Amazons continued to serve as a mark of the exotic, the uncivilized, and the barbaric. They continued to serve as a challenge for male heroism, and sometimes as heroes in their own right. They continued to serve as a breach of the established order, for good or for ill depending on the author's viewpoint. As had happened before, these traditional functions were pressed into the service of current trends. Such trends in the nineteenth century included Romanticism, evolution, orientalism, imperialism, socialism, and feminism.

In Kleist's *Penthesilea*, the Amazons and the Greeks are no longer opposites but analogues; each group exists as a rationalized state, a product of the Enlightenment. While the two states are contradictory and their viewpoints mutually exclusive, each is internally coherent. No absolute position is available for deciding between the two. Penthesilea and Achilles find they cannot adhere to the expectations of their societies. Together they are fatal heroes who, by saying no to their legal and moral duties, represent the irruption of a Dionysian passion that cannot exist within or be contained by their rational societies. No such irruptions disrupt Gilman's rational society in *Herland*. Any disruption comes from outside the community, and her hardy Herlanders handle such situations with aplomb. Perhaps Gilman can be more sanguine about her society because it is by definition open to change. The static, vertical hierarchy

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of the traditional chain of being allowed for no progress. Rather than the inhuman legalism of Kleist's Greeks and Amazons, who are refractions of the Napoleonic state, Gilman's Herlanders have a morality based on a temporal "web of relationships" (Donaldson 378). In contrast to English common law and to the Napoleonic Code with its basis in Roman civil law, Herland does not have an ancient system of laws; their focus on progress means all their laws are less than one hundred years old, with most less than twenty years old (Gilman, *Herland* 63). Thus for Gilman, the rational state is not static but kinetic, and in theory there should be no need for the irruption of passion that rocks the Greek and Amazon states in Kleist's *Penthesilea*.

In contrast to Gilman and Kleist, Bachofen sees the Roman civil code, along with its descendants, as the pinnacle of civilization. The Amazonian society is a step up from hetaerism in the evolution of society, but in the end it must give way to the male hero who saves the Amazon by returning her to her natural place of love and motherhood. Bachofen demonstrates that the horizontal, temporal, evolutionary incarnation of the great chain is as effective in relegating women to their place as the vertical, static chain had been. Assigning Amazonian matriarchy a lower position in the evolution of society than patriarchy, Bachofen can once again align women with the feral and the barbaric, maintaining a function of the myth that had existed even prior to the development of the idea of the great chain of being (duBois 3-12). For him Roman legal patriarchy

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was the teleology of social evolution. By identifying the Amazons and matriarchy with the East and patriarchy with the West, especially Greece and Rome, Bachofen endorses the contemporary hierarchy of cultures that makes the West more developed than and hence superior to all the others.

Burton, one of the most famous orientalists, follows this pattern also, using the "Amazons" of Dahomey to support his argument that the nation was morally, socially, and racially inferior. His construction of the ugly Amazon is his own contribution to the myth; before this, Amazons had been universally beautiful. The ugly Amazon is an emblem of barbarity and inferiority.

Gilman protests against contemporary hierarchies that relegated women to second-class status. "Women must not 'rebel' against their owners and masters. . . . because it is not 'her place' to answer back" (216). She reverses Bachofen's treatment of the Amazon myth as an inferior stage of social evolution, making it represent instead the next stage that supplants patriarchy. Her next stage is based on equality and mutual respect rather than a hierarchy of men over women or women over men. However, while she rejects the misogyny of imperialism, she accepts its racism and ethnocentrism. She avidly endorses a hierarchy of culture and race that places white Westerners at the pinnacle of development. Like Burton, she participates in an "essentializing of races that underwrote the imperialist ventures of European powers" (Peyser

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10). Even in the *Herland* utopia, "some . . . are more equal than others" (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 123).

Kleist's Penthesilea, Bachofen's Amazons, and Burton's Dahomians need to be defeated for their own good. Their conquerors would redeem them, not into the Kingdom of God as in the time of Columbus, but into a life of sentimentalized domestic bliss in the case of Kleist, into a life of bearing sons for fathers in the case of Bachofen, and into the level of civilization that they could receive for Burton. Burton's ugly Amazons were part of his proof that black Africans could not attain civilization on their own but needed it imposed through the Westerner's iron hand and the Easterner's Koran. Gilman has her own view of such redemptive conquerors.

> Jeff asserted confidently. . . . "I believe we are going to be treated as guests."
> "Hailed as deliverers, I think," said Terry.
> "Studied as curiosities," I told them. (*Herland* 26-27).

Gilman's famous short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" shows her unsentimental reaction to domestic bliss; the narrator, a young mother who bears a close resemblance to Gilman, does not feel so much domesticated as trapped. Her three "deliverers" in *Herland* quickly find themselves trapped and closely monitored. In order to be integrated into the Herland society, they must learn not to be heroes but instead to be people. They must outgrow their adolescent fantasies and cultural stereotypes and learn to treat women as people.

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Gilman's Amazons are models of women who can take care of themselves, and also models for women who wish to do so also. *Herland* reflects Gilman's socialist and "humanist" ideology. Perhaps most importantly, *Herland* satirizes the Amazon myth and the fantasies it has sparked. After millennia of pulled hair, ravished maidens, hewed limbs, savage cannibals, fabulous riches, fantastic beasts, and exotic sex, the Amazons finally get a revenge in Gilman's *Herland* that the male writers, for all their vivid imaginations, had found unimaginable: a sharp kick to the groin.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Amazon myth originated before the time of Homer and continues to be used in the present. During its existence, it has developed a range of functions. The myth has no single function that is present in all of its occurrences. Instead, the myth has functioned in different ways depending on the outlook of the times when it was used and the temperament of the authors who used it. Nevertheless, the myth has had a limited range of functions, some of which are contradictory, revolving around issues of gender identity, cultural identity, and social mores. These are issues that arise around stories of exotic women who do not follow standard models of female behavior. One of the enduring functions of the myth is the way in which the myth identifies women with foreigners and animals.

From horses to griffins to dogs, from Scythians to Persians to *Caníbales*, Amazons have long been associated with animals and foreigners. The linking of Amazons (and women in general) with animals and foreigners dates back to the "analogical" (duBois 3) thinking of Greeks before the fifth century B.C. The Greek male defined himself

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through a series of polarities: "not-animal, not-barbarian, not-female" (duBois 4). Such thinking linked women to barbarians and animals by analogy. The links between Amazons and Centaurs in myth and art exemplify this analogical thinking. Amazons and Centaurs each refused to recognize the cultural endogamy by which Greek men defined themselves (41-42), and hence were "other." Amazons in later eras continued to be associated with animals. Because of their use of the horse in warfare, they were frequently associated with the horse. Even their names can reflect this association: for example, the names "Hippolyta" and "Melanippe" are based on the Greek word for horse, *hippos* (ἵππος). The association of Amazons with animals continued in the magic griffins of Spanish romances and the elephants and dogs of Kleist's *Penthesilea*. Such associations emphasize the feral nature of the Amazons and the potential ferality of women in general.

Amazons also emblematized foreign peoples and customs. Their customs were the polar opposite of the customs of "civilized" people. A person applying the label of Amazon to another culture could superimpose this Amazonian negation of the home culture onto that culture and obscure the real differences between the cultures. Furthermore, the Amazons could serve as an analogy for another culture, an analogy showing the inferiority of that culture. They thus symbolized the barbarity of the Scythian, the effeminacy of the Persian (and other orientals), and the effeminacy and barbarity of the native American. Such

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Amazonian cultures were not just different; they were inferior. In eras that held to the concept of a vertical chain of being, the Amazon society was one in which women usurped the position of men in society, making the Amazons inferior to societies based on the proper hierarchy. They were also an appropriate target for conquest by the society with the correct hierarchy. When the linear, temporal chain of being replaced the vertical, static one, Amazons were inferior because they belonged to earlier, more primitive societies. In this system, the Amazons were still an appropriate target for conquest by the more developed society. Nor was it only the culture that was inferior; the people of the culture were by their very nature inferior. This is an attribute of the Amazon myth that persists from ancient Greece down to the racial "science" of Bachofen and Burton, and it serves to reassure those who are members of "civilized" cultures that they are indeed more civilized than others. As people from other societies became more familiar to the Greeks and to their cultural heirs, the Amazons tended to move farther and farther away into the unknown. This distant target has often deflected attention away from anxieties regarding the cultural center.

Treatments of Amazons frequently include their topographical and/or temporal distance from the perceived center of the culture defining them. Jonathan Smith's model of the center and the periphery applies to the Amazon myth. "The king especially guards the center and the borders" (4). Amazons not only threaten the borders, they also threaten

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the "center" by negating the patriarchal authority of men over women, no matter how remote they may be. When strong women appear in a culture, they provoke anxieties that can be projected onto Amazons.

William B. Tyrrell has identified one early function of the Amazon myth that is important in other eras also. I call this the shield effect because an early occurrence of this function was on the shield of Athena in the Parthenon. The Parthenon had two Amazonomachies; one on the west metope, another on the outside of the shield of the Athena Parthenos (Tyrrell 19). The Amazons' "defeat in the west metope contrasts with Athena's victory in the pediment. One warrior-maiden successfully gives her name to the city, while the annihilation of the others affirms that it is under male control" (Tyrrell 20). Periclean Athens assuaged its anxiety about worshiping its matronymic goddess by a nearby representation of the victory of Athens over unruly women.

The shield effect tends to become important when women move into positions of power in patriarchal systems. The reign of Queen Elizabeth I was the most important example of such a situation. Elizabeth presented herself as a supporter of traditional patriarchal values rather than as a threat to those values. Direct attacks on the propriety of women rulers in general and Elizabeth in particular were possible but not necessarily judicious. The politically maladroit John Knox had issued *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* in 1558, just before the Protestant Elizabeth replaced the Catholic Mary

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Tudor, the real object of Knox's ire (Breslow 24). *The First Blast* "enlarged his [Knox's] fame, angered his opponents, and embarrassed his friends" (Breslow 23).

Those with less religious fervor and more political acumen projected their anxieties onto targets that were more politically acceptable, like Spenser's Radigund, who was overcome by the good woman warrior Britomart. Spenser had asked Elizabeth "In mirrours more then one her selfe to see" (III. Pr. 5); he wanted her to see herself reflected in his good heroines Gloriana and Belphoebe. Britomart, who enters the narrative shortly after Spenser's request in Book Three, is another flattering mirror. She demonstrates her virtue first by defeating Radigund, the evil Amazon queen who enslaves and humiliates men, and second by restoring a patriarchal system. Once again, the powerful woman establishes herself as not being a threat by presiding over the destruction of the powerful Amazon who is. In like manner, Spenser's patron, Sir Walter Raleigh, openly encouraged Elizabeth, the "Lady of Ladies," "to possesse" the land of Guiana, including the "Dominion and Empire of the *Amazones*" (*Discoverie* 101). If she was not so inclined, he hoped she would at least send "those men worthy to be kings thereof" to "undertake it [the conquest] of themselves" (101). Raleigh's fantasy of finding Amazons just over the next mountain or across the next river was not restricted to him; it is one of the most common attributes of the Amazon myth in that era.

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The Amazon myth has frequently been a fantasy projected into the void. The peripatetic nature of Amazonia is one of its most persistent characteristics. From early Greek myths that located Amazons both in Libya and in Asia Minor, people have perceived Amazons in widely divergent places, usually just beyond explored territory. Explorers have left the mark of this fantasy on the map. Columbus identified the Island of Women on his first voyage in 1493. In 1542, they named the Amazon River for the "Amazons" who lived there and named California for Califia, Queen of the Amazons (Kleinbaum 118). Christine de Pizan located her City of Ladies in the spiritual realm of the City of God; Gilman placed her Amazons on the top of a mountain; Burroughs' hairy Amazons inhabit the *Land of Terror* under the earth's surface. In modern science fiction stories and movies, Amazons continue to appear in outlandish places and costumes.

> The Amazons most often written about today are from outer space, and their abrupt appearance in the known world duplicates the incursions of their sisters of antiquity, whose homeland lay ever beyond the horizon of civilization. (Sobol 10)

Explorers tend to carry preconceptions of what they will find and to find just that. They look at things in ways that "[control] what seems to be a threat to some established view of things" (Said 59). Said calls this "a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing" (58). Explorers strained to describe the places and peoples they encountered, and the Amazon myth

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was just one category they used to impose order on the chaos they perceived. Women who had taken up arms to defend themselves from explorers and conquerors could appear to be "Amazons." Such reports have tended to incite men back home to join the search for glory, gold, and girls.

The desire to conquer Amazons has frequently paralleled the conquest of territory. This Amazon fantasy glamorizes the task of conquest. Kleinbaum notes the tendency for men to see the conquest of Amazons as a transcendent act. "Thus men told of battling Amazons to enhance their sense of their own worth and historical significance" (1). Overcoming Amazons would fulfill a fantasy, and cause a dream to come true. To master an Amazon is to construct oneself as a hero (Kleinbaum 1) and thus to become a superlative subject of one's own actions. This is a use of the myth in the ethical sphere; overcoming formidable opponents is an important part of the heroic ethos. The dream of the glamour, sexual indulgence, and riches to be had through the conquest of Amazons has encouraged young men to be the footsoldiers of colonialism. Thus the Amazon myth can be a tool of discipline, encouraging the warrior to follow his commanders with the promise of adventure as his reward. The slogan "Join the Navy and see the world" serves a similar function.

If one use of the Amazon myth has been to encourage men to adventure and explore, it has usually functioned to keep women at home. The certified interpretation of the Amazon myth has seldom issued a

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challenge to women for them to emulate the Amazons. On the contrary, Amazons were a negative model for women to shun, not follow. If Amazons lived outside, women were to live inside. If Amazons were independent, women were to be submissive. Each vice of the Amazon negated a corresponding virtue of the good Greek wife. When Vergil's Latin women emulated the Amazon-like Camilla, they did so only from sheer desperation (11. 891-895). Quintus' Trojan women started to emulate Penthesilea and her Amazons but were dissuaded by Theano, who, "thinking wisely" (*πύκα φρυονέουσα*), advised them to return to their looms, their accustomed "work" (*ἔργον* 1. 449, 467-468).

The term "Amazon" has often been a negative epithet, providing yet another scarlet "A" to use against the woman who has dared to transgress her traditional roles. Furthermore, once women had been identified by this label, men were released from whatever obligations they otherwise owed them. Thus Boccaccio's Theseus felt no compunction about using unchivalrous tactics against the Amazons, who deserved no better in his estimation (*Theseid* 1. 104-111). Nevertheless, the myth was always a potential role model for women who were searching for alternatives to traditional values and traditional models of behavior, and women from Christine de Pizan to Charlotte Perkins Gilman to some modern feminists and lesbians have seen the Amazons as positive role models.

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Christine de Pizan was the first woman to present the Amazon myth as a positive model to emulate, converting what had been the scarlet "A" of "Amazon" into a positive role model. Amazons and not Augustine's City of God provide her the model for the sexual segregation of her City of Ladies. Pizan has not been the last woman to reinterpret the Amazon myth to the advantage of women, for the myth can denaturalize gender roles and make them social in nature. Modern feminists sometimes appropriate the Amazon model, but with some restrictions. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example, has her male explorers search for "an undiscovered country of a strictly Amazonian nature" (5), but find an all-woman society that has evolved from Amazonian roots into a utopian humanistic society.

Kleinbaum points out the drawbacks of women using the myth as a model (224-226). Since feminism is not "a program to exterminate, or even to hate men" (224), feminists who use the myth must be careful not to give the impression that they do hate all men. Kleinbaum states that in general, "The image can itch and feel like a hair shirt on the woman who is an Amazon because she is, from a male point of view, oversized, aggressive, competitive, or gay" (226). As a myth that reflects axiological tensions underlying patriarchy, the Amazon myth provides the opportunity for subversive interpretations. As the negation of patriarchy and not a truly independent model, the opportunity the myth provides can prove illusory. Even Kleinbaum, however, concludes by writing, "But in

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the Amazon image [a woman] can be herself, and the property of no one else: in this dream, she can fly" (226).

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