

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

POLITICIZING THE AMAZONS: DISCERNING ANCIENT GREEK IDENTITY AND
OTHERNESS IN FIFTH-CENTURY BCE LITERATURE AND ART

HANNAH BISBING
SPRING 2018

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees
in Classics & Ancient Mediterranean Studies and Global & International Studies
with honors in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Anna Peterson
Tombros Early Career Professor of Classical Studies and
Assistant Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Mary Lou Zimmerman Munn
Senior Lecturer in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

In ancient Greek thought, the Amazons existed as an unnatural male/female hybrid whose predetermined fate was death at the hands of Greek heroes. This project will critically analyze prominent myths, historical accounts, and artistic representations of the Amazons, a mythological women warrior tribe who dwelled within the Eurasian Steppes. Specifically, I argue that the Amazon figure underwent dramatic transformations in response to significant historical events and political climates, although their ultimate extermination remained unchanged. Emphasizing the profound ideological influences that the *polis* and the Persian Wars had on Greek society – especially Athens – I examine the resulting politicization of the Amazons to embody Greek conceptions of Eastern, barbaric, and effeminized non-Greek peoples. To conclude, I briefly address modern reconfigurations of the Amazon myth, specifically addressing the comic book hero Wonder Woman.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Heroes and Amazons in Myth	7
Heracles.....	9
Shifting to Theseus.....	12
Conclusion	14
Chapter 3 Historical Accounts of the Amazons.....	16
Introduction to Herodotus’s <i>Histories</i>	17
Women in Herodotus	19
Herodotus’s Amazons and the Foundation of Sauromatia.....	25
Conclusion	31
Introduction to Diodorus Siculus’s <i>Historical Library</i>	33
The Scythian Amazons	35
The Libyan Amazons	38
Conclusion	43
Chapter 4 Amazons on Public Architecture.....	46
The Athenian Treasury at Delphi.....	49
The Stoa Poikile	51
The Parthenon	54
Centaur/Amazon Comparison and Gendered Ideologies on the Parthenon	56
Autochthony and Defining Athenian Citizenship	59
Conclusion	61
Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	68

Chapter 1

Introduction

Today when one hears the term “Amazon,” visions of a richly biodiverse tropical rainforest, an enormous river flowing throughout South America, or the ever-expanding online superstore would likely come to mind. Or, perhaps, Wonder Woman – the star-spangled, red bustier-wearing, golden Lasso of Truth-throwing female superhero of DC Comics and founding member of the Justice League. If you were to ask an Ancient Greek about the Amazons, however, none of these ideas would resonate. Rather, legendary tales about a strong, militaristically-skilled, and singularly-sexed warrior women society would be recounted.

In the Greeks’ eyes, the Amazons were a race of fierce, semi-nomadic, horse-riding women that purposefully lived secluded from men. They were often described as “man-haters” and “man-killers” based upon their conscious decision to isolate themselves and their occasional hostility toward men (Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 723-4; Herodotus, 4.110). Their homeland is most commonly cited as Themiscyra, a city of women located near the Thermodon river in Pontus, a region on the southern coast of the Black Sea to the East of Greece. Certain historians, however, geographically pinpoint another ethnic subset of the Amazons to Libya, a country on the northern coast of Africa (Diodorus, 3.52.1). The Amazons were excellent fighters who ventured across the Mediterranean world, far into Eurasia, and even through Africa on military campaigns. They shot bow-and-arrow as well as utilized spears and lances in battle and donned clothing/armor that resembled those of their male counterparts.

The Amazons, as our ancient sources imagined, possessed many interesting cultural practices, including cauterizing infant females' breasts. Some accounts state that the Amazons seared one or both breasts of females at birth to improve their shooting and throwing ability, since breasts were regarded as a hindrance in warfare (Diod. 3.53.3). These warrior women also placed heightened importance on virginity, sometimes remaining virginal for their entire lives, and spurned traditional marriage. They preferred to live independently, worshipping Artemis, the virginal goddess of the hunt, and participating in their athletic lifestyles. The domestic, docile, and subjugated livelihoods of typical Greek women and wives did not suit the Amazons, so they completely opted out of marriage (Herodotus, 4.114).

The Amazons' Eastern identity, their refusal to marry, and their divergence from the Greeks' binary conceptions of gender made them the ideal vehicle to express Greek anxieties about gender, racial, and cultural differences. The Greek mindset was severely polar in nature, viewing every identity neatly in pairs that mirrored each other, i.e. man/woman, human/animal, Greek/barbarian, etc.¹ A biologically female but masculine-engendered figure who blurred the boundaries between men and women, strong and weak, agentic and passive, etc. was outrageous and entirely incomprehensible. The cultural framework of ancient Greece contained no understanding of societies where women fought alongside men, possessed equal strength, and were active in the political affairs of their community, let alone a civilization that consisted solely of powerful, self-sufficient women. In fact, whenever women or men diverted from their gender-typical personality traits and behaviors, the results were utterly dreadful. This is the basis of classic tragic characters, like Medea and Clytemnestra whose masculine essences manifest into fatal aggression against men, specifically their husbands, or Hippolytos, the son of Theseus

¹ DuBois 1982: 4.

and an Amazon, who vows never to marry so as to preserve his virginity eternally, thus offending Aphrodite, the goddess of love and passion. Each of these characters strays from their socially acceptable gender norms and ultimately experiences violent demises. They were also quite threatening to political stability and the patriarchal system. Considering this and the Amazons' female-male hybridity, the Amazons were thus "the quintessential representation of female masculinity in ancient Greek thought."²

The Greeks were simultaneously perplexed, fascinated, and fearful about the idea of an exclusively feminine nation. These feelings persisted throughout Greek history and into Roman literature, spawning many different interpretations of the Amazons' genealogy, history, and culture based upon the particular people and time period telling them. The Amazons' cultural standard is a society consisting solely of women wholly detached from men and patriarchal systems. Whether they had always existed this way, though, is contested. Some authors, like Diodorus Siculus and Ephorus, believed the Amazons were originally of Scythian origin but eventually broke off to form their own civilization. Additionally, certain historians, like Herodotus, only considered Amazons to truly be "Amazons" when they lived sexually independent from men, neither cohabitating with or marrying them. When they married, Amazons ceased to be Amazons any longer. This contrasts with other writers, like Diodorus again, who claimed that men lived amongst the Amazons, but as dominated, sometimes crippled, inferiors who did stereotypically female labor inside the home. In this instance, the Amazonian society is rendered a perfect antithesis to patriarchal Greek civilization, especially compared to Athenian culture. In Athens, male citizens fought in wars and practiced politics, while women remained hidden from the world and were more closely associated with animals than humans.

² Penrose 2016: 2.

In modern contexts, the predominant argument surrounding the Amazons is to what extent, if any, their myths were based upon actual women warriors in Eastern cultures. Some scholars adamantly believe that the Amazons were conjured into being by the Greeks purely to represent the threat of barbarian cultures, particularly matriarchies and those with different gender ideologies, and to destroy them.³ Others claim there is a historical core behind the Amazon myths, symbolizing Scythian and other Asiatic women whom the Greeks transformed into Amazons through exaggeration. The two options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Abundant archaeological evidence that exists throughout the Eurasian Steppes for female warriors makes, at the very least, the latter theory a likely possibility.⁴ Walter Penrose claims in his publication *Postcolonial Amazons: Female Masculinity and Courage in Ancient Greek and Sanskrit Literature* that the Amazons were Orientalized versions of societies that contained women warriors, matriarchies, and/or differing ways of experiencing gender in general.⁵ Indeed, the Greeks could very arguably have been the first Orientalists in history. Edward Said, the creator of this particular term, claimed “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”⁶ The stories we read about the Amazons are written by the Greeks – or other early European nations – and through their highly ethnocentric, misogynistic, and xenophobic lenses. Thus, since these stories were not penned by the Amazons or other Eastern

³ Mayor 2014: 27.

⁴ Examining grave goods in the Steppes suggests women warriors were quite prevalent in these Asiatic societies. As great as three out of every four female graves found and excavated contained various weapons, suggesting they had served some kind of military role during their lifetimes. For a discussion of this evidence, see Mayor 2014: 11.

⁵ Penrose 2016: 6.

⁶ Said 1979: 2.

cultures themselves, they cannot be trusted as accurate depictions. Rather, the Amazons and their ways of life were most likely exoticized, hyperbolic, Orientalized versions of Eastern peoples.

Within this thesis, I examine the myths, historical accounts, and artistic representations of the Amazons. The materials utilized are predominantly written from the Greek perspective, but vary temporally. Many sources derive from the fourth-century BCE, but others date to long before the Classical Period, the first century BCE, and the first centuries CE. Chapter One will briefly cover the popular myths surrounding interactions of famous Greek heroes (Heracles and Theseus, respectively) with the Amazons. Chapter Two will discuss and critically analyze historiographies of the Amazons, paying particular attention to Herodotus, a fourth century BCE historian, and Diodorus Siculus, a first century BCE historian. Finally, Chapter Three will address Amazons on public monuments, noting the way fourth-century Athenian politics and the creation of the *polis* significantly shaped the imagery of these warrior women and other mythical creatures. Beyond being a result of Athens' political climate at this time, the shifts in the abundance, artistic themes and geographies of Amazonomachies (scenes of battle against the Amazons) also symbolized recent run-ins with a formidable Eastern enemy: the Persians. The Persian Wars, spanning from 499 - 449 BCE, took a significant physical and psychological toll on Athens. After Athens redeemed itself at the Battles of Salamis and Marathon, the city largely reinvented itself to showcase its military glory, utmost civility, and cultural dominance throughout Greece. This is also when the intense hatred toward barbarian peoples, aka any non-Greeks, furthered. The Amazons eventually came to embody the Eastern, barbaric, and effeminized figure of outside nations, particularly the Persians. The Amazons, therefore, developed into a tool of Greek – and especially Athenian – political propaganda that promoted Greek cultural identity over all others.

Conclusively, this project will wrap up with a brief overview of contemporary utilizations of the Amazon myth, namely Wonder Woman. This project was largely inspired by DC Comics' 2017 release of *Wonder Woman*, the story of an Amazon-turned-superhero from Paradise Island who fights evil and becomes an American nationalist and feminist icon. Given this movie's incredible box office performance and society's heightened interest toward female warrior figures at this moment, I sought to explore the mythological and historical bases of the original Amazons upon which Wonder Woman's identity is constructed. The final pages discuss connections between ancient Greek depictions of the Amazons and modern renditions of Amazons, female warriors, and women-only nations, noting the political forces that continually transform figures such as Wonder Woman.

Chapter 2

Heroes and Amazons in Myth

Throughout ancient Greek history, the Amazon motif dominated the artistic scene – from representations on black and red-figure pottery and shield detailing to references within epic poetry and tragic plays. Each of these sources reflect on the broader mythology surrounding the Amazons. Since the Archaic Period, the Amazons had consistently represented a looming threat both to mighty Greek heroes and to society at large. A semi-nomadic, matriarchal, single-sex nation of female warriors equivalent to men in military prowess was a foreign and frightening concept to the Greeks, a society that valued masculinity in men alone and considered itself the greatest people of the Mediterranean/known world (Homer, *Iliad* 3, 189). Therefore, encountering, fighting, and destroying the Amazons became a common trope for Greek heroes – one that legitimized their strength and cultural superiority as well as defended the Greeks’ moral code of civility and patriarchal institutions, particularly marriage.⁷

The following chapter will investigate the Amazons’ representations in mythology as a prerequisite to addressing Amazonomachies on public architecture in Chapter Three. Specifically, I will focus on myths surrounding Heracles and Theseus, two Greek heroes – one panhellenic and one Athenian – whose various mythic plotlines involve confrontations with Amazons. While both Heracles and Theseus encounter the Amazons, their individual tales vary significantly. Their differences are a result of the particular political climates that spawned them,

⁷ Mayor 2014: 11.

for “myths evolve and develop out of the needs of the society that tells them.”⁸ This is especially pertinent in regards to the myths surrounding Theseus; although the Heraclean traditions had existed since the Archaic Period and were quite well known by all Greeks, Theseus’s exploits were not formally brought together into a consolidated storyline until the Classical Period when Athens was becoming a tightly unified city-state⁹

Additionally, by the fifth-century BCE, Athens was enjoying its golden age under Cimon and Pericles – Athenian statesmen, renowned lawmakers, and patrons of the arts – and was quickly developing into the most politically powerful and culturally influential *polis* in Greece. Under Pericles, new citizenship laws were also passed in 451 BCE that drastically redefined and narrowed who could be deemed a legal citizen.¹⁰ This law had profound social influences and outlined specific Athenian values, namely its xenophobia, distrust of women, and promotion of endogamy. During this period, the figure of Theseus, a young hero who protected Athens against invading threats, was also conveniently utilized to represent the city’s influential politicians – again, Cimon and Pericles.

This is also notably the time of the Persian Wars (499 BCE - 449 BCE). Fighting several debilitating wars with Persia – an Eastern enemy portrayed as bestial, effeminate, and militarily incompetent slaves controlled by appetite, luxury, and desire – and simultaneously experiencing significant political reorganization reshaped and, in some cases, entirely transformed the Amazon mythic scheme.¹¹ Instead of characterizing a beautiful and quasi-respected foreign

⁸ Mills 1997: 129.

⁹ Francis 1990: 2.

¹⁰ Pericles’ Citizenship Law of 451 BCE confined Athenian citizenship as having citizen parents. Both the mother and the father needed to possess citizenship for their offspring to be deemed citizens (Arist. Ath. Const. 16.5). Given that women could never technically be “citizens” to the full extent of the term, the citizenship status of their fathers was utilized to confirm their own citizenship. This law also increased the punishment for having children out of wedlock (Plut. Pers. 37.2).

¹¹ DuBois 1982: 67.

enemy of equal military skill, the Amazons came to represent something much more: the collective threat of barbarian cultures – particularly the Persians – to the order of a civilized, masculine, Greek *polis* and its particular values. Furthermore, we see changes to the narratives of battles between heroes and Amazons. Amazonomachies, or fights with Amazons, transform from Homeric one-on-one combat, as evident in the Heracleian myths, to hoplite group combat as portrayed in the Thesean tale of the Amazons' attack on Athens.¹² Considering this information, I will now briefly summarize the prominent myths involving Heracles, Theseus, and the Amazons for future reference in Chapter Three.

Heracles

One of the most renowned myths involving the Amazons is Heracles's Ninth Labor. As punishment for killing his wife and children in a fit of divinely induced rage, Heracles was sentenced to perform the Twelve Labors, an impossibly dangerous and physically gruesome set of tasks that spanned across all of Greece (Pseudo-Apollodorus, 2.4.12). For his Ninth Labor, Heracles was instructed to capture the war belt of Hippolytê, the Amazon queen, and present it to King Eurystheus of Tiryns' daughter (Pseu-Apol. 2.5.9). Many different versions of the Ninth Labor exist, evolving and adapting to the particular author and time period that was reciting them. Some depict the Amazons as an unnatural, monstrous race that unquestionably needed to be annihilated to preserve Greek culture while others describe women warriors who sought peace and compromise, only resorting to bloodshed when absolutely necessary.

¹² DuBois 1982: 60.

Despite individual authors' unique interpretations, the Amazons' fate always seems to be death at the hands of Greek heroes, suggesting that their entire society only "exist(ed) in order...to be defeated."¹³ This argument is strengthened by the Amazons' inclusion within the Twelve Labors in the first place. Considering that the other Labors predominantly involved battling frightening beasts like the Nemean Lion or the Lernaean Hydra, incorporating the Amazons into the Twelve Labors insinuates that they, too, were a threatening creature to man – one that crossed the boundaries of human and monster as well as blurred the binaries of men and women.¹⁴ Thus, like the other monsters Heracles encountered, the Amazons ultimately needed to be destroyed in order to protect Greek civilization and patriarchal values. In fact, this precise claim is made in Diodorus Siculus' account of the Amazons' history, culture, military accomplishments, and downfall – a story that will be addressed later in Chapter Two.

Well-known interpretations of Heracles's Twelve Labors include those of Pseudo-Apollodorus, a multi-conglomerated author writing around the first century CE, and Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian from the first century BCE who wrote during Rome's evolution from the Republic into the Empire. In Pseudo-Apollodorus' version, Heracles first encounters the Amazons in Themiscyra after crossing the Thermodon river from Mysia (Pseu-Apol. 2.5.9). Upon his arrival, Hippolytê greets Heracles as a welcome newcomer and inquires about his reasons for venturing into their territory: obtaining Hippolytê's war belt, which Ares had bestowed upon her for being the greatest Amazonian fighter (Pseu-Apol. 2.5.9). Pseudo-Apollodorus paints their interaction as being quite diplomatic, with both parties treating the other as a respected equal.¹⁵ Ultimately, Hippolytê agrees to forfeit her belt to Heracles without any

¹³ Mayor 2014: 27.

¹⁴ DuBois 1982: 33.

¹⁵ Mayor 2014: 250.

protest. Unfortunately, though, after their effortlessly civil meeting, Pseudo-Apollodorus claims that Hera began meddling in the situation. Disguising herself as an Amazon, she informed the other women warriors that Heracles feigned a peaceful negotiation in order to unsuspectingly kidnap their queen (Pseu-Apol. 2.5.9). In response, the Amazons attack Heracles' ship. Falsely assuming that Hippolytê had tricked him, Heracles killed the queen, stole the war belt from her lifeless body, and then immediately fled Themiscyra. In Pseudo-Apollodorus's eyes, Hera's desire to ruin Heracles caused a straightforward deal between two cultures to twist unnecessarily into conflict.

A contrasting view of this story is told by Diodorus Siculus. From the very beginning, Diodorus portrays Heracles as an individual determined to obtain Hippolytê's war belt by any means necessary. Strangely, however, Hippolytê herself never makes an appearance in this version of Heracles's Ninth Labor. When Heracles sailed across the Thermodon river and demanded this belt be given to him, the Amazons did not comply. Thereafter, a brutal and bloody battle between Heracles and "the most honoured of the women" ensued (Diod. 4.16.2). One by one, the greatest Amazonian warriors – who are each individually named by Diodorus – sought to defeat Heracles, yet all the women were slain. In total, twelve of the strongest Amazons were killed. Finally, Melanippê – the sister of Hippolytê, commander of the Amazon military, and a fighter "greatly admired for her manly courage" – confronted Heracles in battle (Diod. 4.16.3). Although Melanippê was ultimately overpowered as well, she was not killed; rather, Heracles took her captive, bargaining her freedom in exchange for her own war belt. The story of Heracles's interaction with the Amazons then abruptly comes to a close.

Shifting to Theseus

Continuing the examination of Diodorus's report of Heracles's Ninth Labor, an interesting, albeit subtle and easily unnoticeable, addition to this story is made: the inclusion of Theseus. At the very end of the tale when Melanippê's belt is seized, Diodorus notes that Heracles gave Antiope, another sister of the mysteriously absent Hippolytê, to Theseus as a war prize (Diod. 4.16.4). Later accounts of the Ninth Labor tended to incorporate Theseus into this mythic scheme in some capacity, usually as a comrade who accompanied Heracles on his journeys. This suggested a power balance between the two heroes and, thus, legitimized Theseus as an equal to Heracles. Eventually, the myths dramatically altered, claiming that Theseus visited Themiscyra on his own after Heracles's exploits. Illustrating Theseus's own campaign to the land of the Amazons, as well as a whole set of his own Labors, truly implied he was an Athenian version of Heracles.¹⁶ Despite the similarities between these two heroes, though, there are significant differences in their stories as well. For instance, the prominent myth surrounding Theseus and the Amazons occurs in Athens, not in Themiscyra as is the case with Heracles. Additionally, these two myths emphasize varying themes, mirroring the politics and social values of their time period, specifically the Archaic Period versus the Classical Period.

Plutarch's *The Life of Theseus* is a commonly referenced source that discusses Theseus's interactions with the Amazons. Initially, Plutarch cites a version of this myth that placed Theseus alongside Heracles during his Ninth Labor. He then adds, however, that "the majority of writers...say that Theseus made this voyage on his own account" numerous years later and deems

¹⁶ Like Heracles, Theseus performed various Labors. Although he only executed six tasks compared to Heracles's twelve, Theseus's Labors were essentially as dangerous and intense as the panhellenic hero's. Some of his Labors included killing the Crommyonian Sow and Procrustes, a man who would stretch people's limbs on a crude, iron bed until their bodies fit perfectly (Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, 11.1).

it more likely (Plut. 26.1). When Theseus landed at Themiscyra, the Amazons welcomed him warmly and gifted him presents for, as Plutarch states, the Amazons were “naturally friendly to men” (Plut. 26.2). Theseus, on the other hand, does not return the *xenia*.¹⁷ He immediately captures Antiope, forces her aboard his ship, and departs from Themiscyra. Plutarch also notes that Theseus was the only individual to successfully snatch an Amazon, claiming his excellent military strategy enabled him to accomplish such a difficult feat (Plut. 26.1). Again, this was a blatant ploy to showcase Theseus’s heroism.

Sources disagree about which Amazon Theseus actually kidnapped from Themiscyra. Some claim it was Antiope while others suggest Hippolytê/Hippolyta (Diod. 4.28.1; Plut. 27.4). The latter was the mother of Hippolytos, Theseus’s son who spurns marriage and pledges lifelong virginity as indicated in Euripides's *Hippolytos* (Eurip. *Hipp.* 350). Whether Hippolyta was different from Hippolytê, the standard name/spelling usually utilized to describe the Amazon queen, is uncertain, but likely based on other ancient accounts (Justin 4). Regardless, Theseus abducts one of the prominent Amazon warriors and makes her his wife. This kidnapping was the basis for what eventually became Theseus’s most famous skirmish with the Amazons: the Amazons’ attack on Athens.

In some versions of this myth, the war against Athens was fought singularly by the Athenians and the Amazons (Plut. 27.1). Other historians, like Diodorus and Justin, argue that the Scythians joined forces with the Amazons since they, too, had felt wronged by the Greeks (Diod. 4.28.2; Just. 5). Either way, the Amazon army traversed the Cimmerian Bosphorus, through Thrace and across a large portion of Europe until finally reaching Athens. Once there,

¹⁷ *Xenia* was the ancient Greek value of hospitality. This custom was associated with Zeus and highly emphasized when welcoming strangers into your home/country.

they unleashed their anger upon the Athenians for capturing and, more than likely, raping one of their fellow Amazon warriors. During the battle, both Plutarch and Diodorus claim Antiope supported the Greek cause by “fighting at the side of her husband Theseus,” thereby indicating her transformation into the model of a good wife (Diod. 4.28.4). Most sources typically come to the same conclusion that Antiope was killed in this battle, along with many other Amazons. Her death, as an ally of the Athenians, is described as “heroic” versus the Amazons fighting against the Greeks whose deaths are never even mentioned individually or in a mourning tone (Diod. 4.28.4).

Even the ultimate results of this war are disputed. Plutarch indicates that a peace treaty was eventually signed – through the captured Amazon’s agency, whether Antiope or Hippolyta/Hippolytê – since both sides had suffered severe losses and the battle had reached a stalemate (Plut. 27.4). Diodorus, on the other hand, states that the Athenians utterly destroyed the Amazon warriors and successfully forced those remaining out of Greece since “the Athenians surpassed them in bravery” (Diod. 4.28.3). He also adds that this war against Athens caused the Amazons to reintegrate back into Scythia since their numbers had depleted significantly (Diod. 4.28.4).

Conclusion

Although both Heracles’s and Theseus’s heroic exploits involve run-ins with the Amazons, their individual myths vary greatly. Heracles’s Ninth Labor takes him to Themiscyra, the Amazons’ homeland that was located far away from Greece, while Theseus’s encounter with the Amazons begins abroad in Themiscira but then continues in Athens. This shift in Theseus’s

location within his myth mimics the cultural shift that was occurring in Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. By geographically altering this battle to occur in Athens, the Amazons – and the Eastern, barbaric cultures they represent, particularly the Persians – become a more immediate threat to Greek society. As a result, the entire Amazonomachy scheme, which had largely been associated with Heracles until then, was appropriated to fit Athenian society's needs and agendas. Thus, Theseus quickly began to overshadow Heracles as the dominant hero in Athenian myth and art since the Thesean context was obviously – and quite literally – closer to home for Athens.

Additionally, the Amazons, themselves, are portrayed in numerous lights; some Amazons are named and given a bit of description while others remain nameless throughout the tale and receive little to no attention. Certain interactions between the two nations are perceived as peaceful and diplomatic while others are more violent. Furthermore, the storylines and intentions behind these two heroes' interactions with the Amazons are dramatically different. Heracles ventures to Themiscyra to obtain Hippolytê's war belt, while Theseus visits the land of the Amazons, seemingly, in search of a wife. This change could possibly represent Athens' growing emphasis on marriage as a necessary social institution for a well-functioning polis, but this theory is complicated by Pericles's Citizenship Law of 451 BCE, which discouraged marriage between male, Athenian citizens and foreign women (and vice versa). Conclusively, though, the Amazons always consistently appear to represent a foreign group of people who threatened the Greek way of life and ultimately needed to be destroyed.

Chapter 3

Historical Accounts of the Amazons

The ancient Greek mindset was extremely binary in nature. The Greeks saw the world in black and white – everything was strictly “either/or,” never “and” – which resulted in the formation of hyper-defined social boundaries, including Greek/barbarian, men/women, human/animal, Us/Other, etc. These inflexible distinctions were created and maintained through what François Hartog has called the “rhetoric of otherness,” meaning one thing could never, under any circumstance, be another.¹⁸ For instance, the Greeks characterized the East as wild, uncivilized, backwards, and culture-less, especially when compared to Greece – particularly Athens, the epitome of civilized culture.¹⁹ Thus, the East could never be like Athens due to its barbarous nature, and Athens could never be compared to the East because it was civilized. Otherness also extended to women and Greek gendered ideologies that determined social roles. Broadly speaking, women were regarded as the weaker, submissive, and irrational sex; in most instances, women could never gain citizenship, and they were only permitted to hold certain roles and to perform certain tasks – namely, to marry, to produce citizen children, and to take care of the household.

The idea of an Eastern and gender-deviant female nation who blurred several of these boundaries was quite concerning for a masculine, binary obsessed, and civilized Greek *polis*.

¹⁸ Hartog 1988: 212. Hartog postulates that two terms – *a* and *b* – can never be the same, where *a* is forever not *b*.

¹⁹ Said 1979. Such patronizing viewpoints and Eurocentric fabrications of the East is quite reminiscent of 20th century Orientalism as defined by Edward Said. Examining numerous 5th century sources, namely Herodotus’s *Histories*, suggests that Orientalism has its roots in ancient Greece, the birthplace of the West.

This non-binary and unorthodox figure, of course, is best represented by the Amazons, a “logical monster that is both man and woman at the same time.”²⁰ A self-sufficient, trouser-donning, women warrior society that was imagined to be equally skilled in battle as men was a perfect inverse to patriarchal Greek civilization – an inverse that threatened to destroy the Greek way of life by potentially inspiring rebellion within docile, domestic Greek women.

Numerous historians throughout time have contemplated the Amazons’ territory, ethnicity, and lifestyle – as well as whether the Amazons actually existed beyond myth. Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Justin, and Ephorus are just a handful of the ancient historians, geographers, and biographers that examined Amazonian culture. Within this chapter, I will turn my focus specifically to Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, two historians who composed significant and enduring accounts of the Amazons and their relationships with other nations.

Introduction to Herodotus’s *Histories*

Known as the “Father of History” – and occasionally the “Father of Lies,” Herodotus was an ancient Greek historian who lived and wrote during the 5th century BCE (Cicero, *Laws*, 1.1.5). Herodotus’ *Histories* – the first recognized historical and ethnographic investigation of the world according to the Greeks – shed light onto ancient Greek social and political thought as well as how the Greeks of the classical period saw others – that is, non-Greeks.²¹ Book IV of the *Histories* is one of the longest and most descriptive accounts of the Amazons as well as the neighboring Scythians. Fascinatingly, however, his account of the Amazons does not actually

²⁰ Hartog 1988: 220.

²¹ Hartog 1988: xxiii.

significantly describe the Amazons themselves; rather, Herodotus recounts the founding story of the mixed-race Sauromatians who were half-Scythian and half-Amazon.

Like any ancient text, one must constantly be cognizant of the biased, Greek-centric perspective inherent within Herodotus' account. Given that the Greeks deemed all non-Greeks as savage barbarians – and given that Herodotus was a Greek – obviously this tale will be only partially factual in its representations. Although bias is an unavoidable component of the *Histories*, Herodotus' account is still significant due to it being one of our earliest accounts of how the Greeks conceived of the Amazons.

Before turning to the Amazons, however, it will be useful to first examine a few descriptions of other female characters in the *Histories* as a comparative tool to discern Herodotus' opinions toward the Amazons. This is especially valuable given that limited information is presented about the Amazons' own history and culture. Herodotus primarily focuses on the Amazons' involvement in the creation of the Sauromatians, a half-Scythian/half-Amazon race. Thus, Herodotus' portraiture of other women throughout the *Histories* helps to reveal his unwritten assumptions about the Amazonian lifestyle. Interestingly, in a time where women's characters and influences were often completely excluded from historical narratives, Herodotus quite openly discusses numerous female leaders – Greek and Eastern – and their accomplishments. Throughout the nine books of the *Histories*, Herodotus details myriad different examples of strong women in positions of power who, directly or indirectly, played crucial parts in the action of the Persian Wars.²² Many women mentioned mimicked, or even countered, the power and prestige of notable Persian kings, including Cyrus and Xerxes. Examining the entirety of the *Histories*, readers would find approximately 375 passages that

²² Kennedy 2005: 9.

concern women – queens, priestesses, prostitutes, wives, etc.²³ Some women are mentioned only in brief passing and typically remain nameless, while others are granted names/titles and given several lengthy passages of detailed character description. Given this multitude of information, I will only evaluate a small handful of these women in this chapter, specifically Io, Europa, Helen, Tomyris, and Artemisia. Furthermore, my investigation will consider these women within two categories: passive women and active women. Io, Europa, and Helen of Sparta belong to the group of passive women who are abducted and traded like objects, while Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae and Artemisia, queen of Halicarnassus, exist within the active, agentic group. Where the Amazons lie on this spectrum, however, is ambiguous.

Women in Herodotus

At the very beginning of Book I, Herodotus traces the origin of West/East hostilities back to several consecutive abductions of foreign women by the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Trojans.²⁴ These women – Io, Europa, and Helen, respectively – are each abducted, rendering them an object to be traded back and forth between men. Each of their abduction stories – or, rather, brief mentions – are nearly identical, at least in Herodotus' account; the women are stolen like items from a store, are not granted a voice, and ultimately indirectly cause some form of conflict. In the tale of Io's abduction, the Phoenicians had traveled to Argos bearing a wealth of material goods from Egypt and Assyria to trade with coastal cities. One day while Io perused the trinkets, several Phoenician sailors forced her aboard their ship and smuggled her into Egypt (Herod. 1.1).

²³ Dewald 1980: 12.

²⁴ Mayor 2014: 260. With these stories, Herodotus thus blames women-stealing between Greeks and barbarians as the origin of West/East hostilities.

This event was the initial spark that began the tit-for-tat feuds between the Greeks and the Eastern peoples – feuds that culminated in the Trojan War and eventually the Persian Wars. In response to Io’s seizure, the Greeks committed an identical counter offense toward the Phoenicians. They sailed to the port of Tyre and swiftly abducted Europa – also a young princess – just as the Phoenicians had previously done to one of their Greek princesses (Herod. 1.2).

Likewise, Helen’s abduction represents a strikingly similar example of passive confiscation and transport. Paris, the young prince of Troy, decided to kidnap Helen while on a campaign in Greece and to bring her back with him to Troy as his wife. This story occurs quite a few years after the mythical tales of other women’s abductions, which suggests that the stealing and raping of women had become standard operating procedure throughout the Mediterranean world by now. Unfortunately, Paris’s irrational act of passion unleashed the bloody, decade-long Trojan War – “merely on account of a girl from Sparta” (Herod. 1.4). It is worth noting here that Herodotus’ version of events contrasts with Homer’s depiction of Helen, particularly in the moment where Helen openly discusses her own blame in the situation with Priam while walking the walls of Troy (*Iliad*, 3.467). Herodotus, meanwhile, provides no indication of Helen’s thoughts or motives surrounding her abduction, nor any indication of her agency or guilt. As Ruby Blondell has argued, Helen – and other women like her, including Io and Europa – is often denied any active exercise of free will, “reducing her to a plundered object whose subjectivity was irrelevant to the transaction.”²⁵

As readers progress through the *Histories*, however, a dramatic transition occurs. Rather than being passively exchanged amongst men, women appear significantly more agentic in their own lives and more influential in foreign affairs. This drastically different perspective of women

²⁵ Blondell 2010: 3.

consequently complicates and challenges stereotypical Greek narratives. One of the first examples of a strong, yet problematic, female leader presented in the *Histories* is Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae – a country bordering Scythia to the east, and, thus, even more Oriental and frightening. The Massagetae, historically, were a nomadic horse people. They sacrificed horses to the sun, wore helmets of brass and gold, and fought with bows, lances, and battle-axes.²⁶ Tomyris, a woman whose wit and political strategy are emphasized throughout Herodotus’s description, secured the title and duties of queen upon her husband’s death. She proved herself an equal player compared to prominent male leaders on the world stage, including the great kings of Persia. By the time of her mention at the very end of Book I, Cyrus of Persia had risen to power as the most influential and feared Eastern enemy of the Greeks. The two leaders are eventually thrown together since Cyrus desired to conquer the Massagetae along with the rest of the known world. To accomplish this task, he pretended to seek Tomyris’s hand in marriage; but Tomyris – shrewd enough to see through Cyrus’s guise and “well aware that he was wooing not herself but her dominions” – refuses, presenting herself as an intellectual and martial competitor to Cyrus himself (Herod. 1.205). When his cunning plan failed, Cyrus turned to brute force, marching to the Araxes river and starting construction of an overpass.

While Cyrus bridged the divide between the two countries, Tomyris sent him a message of advice to abandon the enterprise, boldly suggesting, “Rule your own people, and try to bear the sight of me ruling mine” (Herod. 1.206). Tomyris’s note exemplifies that men – Greek or barbarian – at this period could not comprehend or accept the notion of a woman leading a country. Although she warns him, Tomyris also realizes that Cyrus likely will not heed her advice and will follow through with his plans to attack. She then suggests Cyrus give her army

²⁶ Mayor 2014: 144.

time to retreat back into their home territory before he builds his bridge, and he agrees. This interaction not only portrays Tomyris's agency, but also illustrates compromise, well-devised military strategy, and intuitive prediction of her opponent's future motives.

Ultimately, Cyrus crosses into the Massagetae and gains a lead through trickery: he lays out a feast, gets the men drunk with wine,²⁷ and then takes most of her army as prisoners – including Tomyris's son Spargapises. In response, Tomyris issues a vengeful letter to Cyrus condemning his foul play (“Your weapon was red wine!”) and demanding her son be returned (Herod. 1.212). She also promises that Cyrus will pay for his treachery in “more blood than (he) can drink, for all (his) gluttony” (Herod. 1.212). Cyrus denies her request and Spargapises kills himself. Furious, Tomyris unleashes her anger in full force, massacring the Persians and killing Cyrus. Once Cyrus perishes, Tomyris demands his corpse be brought to her and then drowns his severed head “into a skin which she had filled with human blood” (Herod. 1.214). Thus, she fulfilled her aforementioned threat, namely, for Cyrus to pay for his misdeeds in blood.

Despite the frightening components to her identity that appear when she is betrayed, Tomyris is an outspoken woman who partakes in diplomacy and keeps her word – even if her promise equates to enacting gruesome revenge. Additionally, she was indirectly responsible for the demise of Cyrus, one of the most powerful individuals in the Mediterranean world at the time. Cyrus is killed by an army under command of a woman, and his dead body is decapitated and defamed by Tomyris's own hands. Although, Tomyris was unique in being a powerful female leader, Herodotus's depiction of her character is clearly not ideal. Her actions are blatantly perceived by audiences as grotesque and frightening, qualities that do not make for a respected and excellent leader – especially when the leader is female and a Greek audience is

²⁷ The Massagetae people did not drink wine, therefore the men became drunk quite quickly.

hearing the tale.²⁸ Tomyris's deeds are not seen as honorable or just; rather, Herodotus forces Tomyris to successfully embody the strange, unnatural, and monstrous essence of foreign, non-Greek barbarians.²⁹ This characterization is only reinforced by Tomyris's gender, which makes her appear more foreign/formidable even when compared with Cyrus's own eastern identity. As such, she is a character that epitomized the Greeks' fear surrounding figures who blur the boundaries between men and women, Greeks and barbarians, and Us/Other.

Another notably agentic woman, yet one who significantly contrasts Tomyris's character, is Artemisia. Artemisia was queen of Halicarnassus while King Xerxes of Persia was in power. According to Herodotus, the biographical information and experiences of Artemisia is a story that he "cannot omit" (Herod. 7.99). She allegedly sported attire typical of Persian men, particularly wearing trousers and carrying a dagger, which mimicked the dress of Amazons on Greek vase paintings.³⁰ Like Tomyris, Artemisia assumed the title of ruler upon her husband's death. She possessed a "spirit of adventure and manly courage," which made her stand out amongst her male peers and presented her with opportunities to become a trusted advisor of Xerxes (Herod. 7.99). She even commanded her own five-ship fleet under Xerxes' army that included men from Halicarnassus, Cos, Nisyra, and Calydna.

Herodotus also describes Artemisia as a superior military strategist to Xerxes's male generals, stating "not one of the confederate commanders gave Xerxes sounder advice than she did" (Herod. 7.99). When asked whether the Persians should attack Greeks on land or at sea, Artemisia was the only individual to dissuade a naval battle. She recognized that the Greeks were

²⁸ The ancient Greeks were fearful of female masculinity, i.e. women exemplifying stereotypically masculine traits, like strength, aggression, rationality, or holding positions of power.

²⁹ Hartog 1988: 218.

³⁰ Mayor 2014: 314.

an accomplished maritime people “far superior to (his) men in naval matters as men are to women,” and thus argued against to approach them on land (Herod. 8.68 a-b). Interestingly, within her persuasive suggestion regarding Xerxes’s potential military moves, Artemisia openly admits that women are inferior to men. This is despite the fact that she clearly was an accomplished military leader and strategist whose past feats spoke to her ability. Perhaps this deliberate self-deprecation was the only way for Artemisia not to overstep her boundaries as a female commander and for Xerxes to take her seriously.

Like the hybrid feminine-masculine nature of the Amazons, Artemisia exemplifies an important representation of female masculinity in Athenian thought.³¹ While Herodotus clearly holds a higher opinion toward Artemisia than other Eastern women, he can only maintain this opinion by denoting her as “masculine” and “manly” as well as by making her openly declare the inferiority of the female sex. According to Greek thought, it was inconceivable for a woman to be a strong, intelligent, and rational military leader. They were regarded as the intellectually and psychologically inferior sex whose biology inhibited rational thought. Greek women were also forbidden from participating in public affairs except for religious festivals, let alone commanding other men in battle. Thus, the only way a Greek could comprehend the idea of a woman holding power was to ascribe her masculinity.³² Therefore, while Artemisia’s character could be seen as a beacon of early feminism, her description is problematic since her unnatural masculinity is utilized to explain her military and governing prowess.

Overall, Herodotus holds a fairly positive view of Artemisia despite her biological sex. Her character is by far the most discussed compared to all the other independent women

³¹ Penrose 2016: 153.

³² Munson 1988: 95.

mentioned in the *Histories*, surpassing them both in length of paragraphs and in number of appearances throughout other chapters. This praise is undoubtedly due to Artemisia's Greek ethnicity. Although she lived in Halicarnassus, a Greek colony in Anatolia, and supported an enemy army, her Greekness overshadows these small hindrances. Since she was Greek, her moral character and reputation was not compromised, which exhibits the Greeks' deep-rooted xenophobia.

The remarkable aspect of Tomyris and, especially, Artemisia is that they are named, possess a developed character, and utilize their own voice. They also exhibit intelligent, rational, and strategic qualities, making them esteemed by their male counterparts. However, considering the strangeness, bloody brutality, and cannibalism included in Tomyris's story, especially compared to the glorified, esteemed, and proper Greekness of Artemisia, Herodotus blatantly possesses bias when describing Greek women versus Eastern women. If a woman was going to stray from the Greek's gender ideologies and norms, Herodotus believed it was better for a Greek woman to do so than an Eastern woman.

Herodotus's Amazons and the Foundation of Sauromatia

The Amazons finally enter the *Histories* in the middle of Book IV. Interestingly, though, Herodotus does not actually describe the Amazons' history or culture but rather their unique role in the creation of the Sauromatians, a half-Scythian (on the paternal side) and half-Amazon race.³³ Before recounting and analyzing Herodotus' story, it is worth noting that none of the Amazons in this tale are named. Keeping this in mind, as well as remembering other instances of

³³ Hartog 1988: 217.

unnamed women in the *Histories*, is necessary when attempting to develop a well-rounded understanding of this account. Herodotus begins by detailing a battle between the Greeks and the Amazons, whom he calls “oeropata,” or man-killers, near the Thermodon river in Pontus, which the Greeks ultimately win. The Greeks then capture as many Amazons as possible and force them aboard three ships bound for Athens. The Amazons eventually manage to kill their captors and gain control of the vessel, but since they possessed “no knowledge of boats and were unable to handle either rudder or sail or oar,” they sailed helplessly with the wind until hitting land at Cremni in Scythia (Herod. 4.110).

After making it to shore, the Amazons stole a grazing herd of horses, mounted them as their own, and returned to their typical lifestyle – just in a different geographical location. Shortly afterwards, the Scythians discovered these mysterious newcomers whose clothing, language, ethnicity, and customs were unrecognizable. In fact, Herodotus claims that the Scythians initially believed the Amazons were a group of young men, given their beardless faces, strong physiques, and skilled riding ability. Only after confronting the Amazons in battle and slaying a few warriors did the Scythians discover that the newcomers were, in fact, women. Upon this epiphany, the Scythians adopted a new plan, aiming not to destroy the Amazons, but to bear children with them “to improve their own stock.”³⁴

Thenceforth, a party of young Scythian men – comparable to Greek *ephebes*³⁵ – were instructed to track the Amazons’ migrations and to mimic their every move. The Scythians did not fight with the Amazons or encroach upon their space; rather, they peacefully and quietly dwelled nearby, camping only a short distance away from their desired future companions at all

³⁴ Mayor 2014: 53.

³⁵ *Ephebes* were beardless and unmarried youths. All young, Greek men were required to serve in the military for a set period of time beginning at age 18, which usually lasted for two years.

times (Herod. 4.112). In a sense, this relationship is quite reminiscent of hunters tracking their prey, which is not the most heartwarming or feminist image. This behavior also differed greatly from standard protocol for dealing with normal male and female invaders; if the Amazons had been men, the Scythians would have killed them. Furthermore, if the Scythians had regarded the Amazons simply as average women, they would have raped them and, possibly, taken them as concubines.³⁶ But the warrior women's masculinity complicated the relationship, making a novel way of interacting with them necessary.³⁷ It is also worth stressing here that, in contrast to the example of Tomyris, the Amazons maintained a diplomatic peace with the natives. Each group lived their own lifestyle without interference from the other. Veritably, the two peoples lived very similar lifestyles anyway, both being semi-nomadic, horse-riding people.

Herodotus then begins describing how the Amazons and Scythians eventually formed a mating contract. One day, a Scythian youth stumbled upon a lone Amazon and began making advances toward her. Herodotus insinuates this encounter to be sexual in nature, especially given that the Amazon "did not resist and let him have her" (Herod. 4.113). After mating, the Amazon indicated – through hand signs and other nonverbal cues since the Scythian did not understand her language – that they should both return the following day with a companion so they, too, could have intercourse (Herod. 4.113). Thus, this fraternizing became a common custom amongst the rest of the Amazons and the young Scythian men.

These exchanges initially portray the warrior women as quite passive. Even though it was an Amazon, not a Scythian, who formed the mating alliance between the two camps, Herodotus quickly reverses the Amazon's agency by stating, "The rest of the young Scythian men soon

³⁶ Hartog 1988: 220.

³⁷ Hartog 1988: 221.

succeeded in getting the Amazons to submit to their wishes” (Herod. 4.113). He outwardly denies the Amazons’ active proposition, claiming, instead, that this agreement stemmed from the men’s minds and the women merely submitted. Furthermore, Herodotus continues his suppression of the Amazons’ agency when he says, “Every man (kept) as his wife the woman whose favours he had first enjoyed” (Herod. 4.114). This description inaccurately paints the Amazons as mere pleasure objects for the men’s enjoyment, not giving them any due credit for orchestrating this alliance.

This is where an unusual and complicated word choice comes into play. When describing the Amazons’ and Scythians’ sexual ritual, Herodotus utilizes the verb “tamed.”³⁸ This suggests that the Scythians domesticated the Amazons by having sex with them, which is a nice pat on the back for Greek arrogance and patriarchy.³⁹ Later translations of Herodotus often translate this verb as “had intercourse,” which is more agentic and far less offensive to women, generally; although, intercourse in itself can suggest a taming aspect – specifically men, the active party, taming women, the submissive party. Indeed, other authors have agreed that the utilization of “tamed” makes the term go “beyond the denotation of ‘had intercourse’ to connote something that the sexual act achieves in the Greek mind, namely, the ever renewed dominance of husband over wife.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, Herodotus’ utilization of “tamed” in regards to the Amazons’ and Scythians’ sexual relationships likely relates to the idea that Amazons ceased to be Amazons once they lived with men or, in rare instances, got married (discussed in detail below). Or, this could address the cultural practice of older Amazons – those who had already fulfilled their military rite-of-passage, i.e. killing a man – ended their adventurous, raiding lifestyles once they

³⁸ Brown 1985: 297.

³⁹ Mayor 2014: 55.

⁴⁰ Brown 1985: 297.

reproduced, reverting to raising their children and only going into battle when absolutely necessary.⁴¹

The Amazons, however, definitely do not seem “tamed” throughout the rest of their account in the *Histories*. Power dynamics and agency oscillate between the two groups as this passage progresses, ultimately culminating in the Amazons representing the more intelligent, dominant, and persuasive party. In fact, typical gender roles largely appear to reverse as the passage progresses. For instance, when the Amazons and Scythians first encounter each other, Herodotus states that the Scythian men failed in learning the women’s language, but that the Amazons quickly picked up the Scythians’ native tongue (Herod. 4.114). This illustrates the Amazons’ ability to learn and to adapt swiftly to their new surroundings as well as suggesting that these women warriors as intellectual superiors of the male Scythians. Although such a reversal is pretty unsurprising by this point in the *Histories* given that Herodotus relies on the “schema of inversion” quite heavily throughout his entire piece.⁴² He performs this from a cultural standpoint – most significantly with the Egyptians who represent a nearly perfect inversion of Greek culture – as well as from a gender perspective.⁴³

The most surprising instance of gender-bending away from stereotypical Greek norms is in response to the Scythians’ marriage proposals to the Amazons. According to Justin, a Roman historian who lived under the Roman Empire, the Amazons equated marriage to slavery (Justin, 2.4). The Scythian youths wanted the Amazons to return home with them as their wives, but the Amazons refuse. They explain:

⁴¹ Hartog 1988: 216.

⁴² Hartog 1988: 213.

⁴³ Hartog 1988: 3.

We and the women of your nation could never live together; our ways are too much at variance...our business is with the bow and the spear and we know nothing of women's work (Herod. 4.114).

Although Scythian women are historically and archaeologically understood to have been riders just like their men, the Amazons claim that Scythian women typically stay inside their wagons and only partake in “feminine tasks,” not hunting or riding horses. Instead, the Amazons make a counter proposal to the Scythians: the Amazons would wed them, but only if the men gathered their property from their fathers' homes and then abandoned their society to create a new Amazon-Scythian nation on the far side of the Tanais river.

Here we see another rather astounding swapping of normal gendered practices. In this case, the *men* leave their fathers' houses and enter the homes of their *female* spouses. Herodotus describes this transition in a way that is quite metaphorically charged. The Amazons take their new husbands across the Tanais river with them “just as a bride crosses the threshold of the house in her husband's arms.”⁴⁴ Also, after moving to a land far beyond Scythia, the Scythians and Amazons receive a new identity: the Sauromations.

To further illustrate Herodotus' utilization of gender-bending in the Scythians' and Amazons' marriages, it is the husband – not the wife, as is customary – that provides the dowry, namely whatever possessions the Scythian youths bring with them from their fathers' homes.⁴⁵ In nearly every way, the Scythians seem to adopt the feminine role within their marriages while the Amazons, presumably, embody the male role. In fact, in later accounts of the Amazons, specifically Diodorus Siculus's version, gender roles are precisely inverted; females occupy the standard roles of Greek men and males partake in characteristically female behaviors. Diodorus

⁴⁴ Hartog 1988: 222.

⁴⁵ Hartog 1988: 222.

states, “It was the custom...that the women practice the arts of war...the men, however, like our married women, spent their days about the house” (Diod. 2.45.2). However, this dramatic role reversal is not deeply explored within the *Histories*.

Furthermore, upon founding their new home, the women of the newly-renamed Sauromatians “kept to their old ways, riding to the hunt on horseback...taking part in war and wearing the same sort of clothes as men” (Herod. 4.116). The Amazons here are the active, deciding force in this instance: they successfully obtain their desired goals without succumbing to the Scythians’ wishes and manage to maintain their natural lifestyle even upon entering into partnerships with men.

It is clear from this passage that the Amazons’ and Scythians’ unions definitely do not represent the archetypal Greek marriage where women are conquered and “tamed” by men. These warrior women maintain their freedoms and their culture of riding, raiding, and hunting. Although the Amazons were initially tracked like prey by the Scythian men, the men ultimately failed at taming them because neither party entered into traditional marriages.⁴⁶ If, the sexual and social domination of women primarily occurs through marriage, then the Amazons somehow managed to finagle their way out of this trap and, invert the situation to dominate the Scythian men instead.

Conclusion

Given the Amazons’ complex feminine-yet-masculine nature and their existence within a singularly female, matriarchal society, the Amazons do not necessarily compare well to other

⁴⁶ Brown 1985: 297.

women discussed in the *Histories*. The Amazons are quite unlike the passive women described at the beginning of the *Histories* – Io, Europa, and Helen, respectively. The Amazons are agentic, strong, and persuasive. They are not treated as objects to be stolen and traded amongst men, but rather fight for themselves and protect their best interests. The Amazons are also never blamed for causing feuds between men like Io, Europa, and Helen.

Additionally, instead of abducting and raping the Amazons, as would be the case with normal women, the Scythians respectfully approach them and eventually enter consensual, egalitarian relationships with them. Moreover, the Amazons embody the deciding party within their marriages – instead of the husbands, as was Greek custom – and maintain their old ways of life even after marrying the Scythians. While possessing both masculine and feminine traits, a quality not usually viewed positively in Greek culture, the Amazons are both powerful and desirable.

Furthermore, unlike Tomyris who is clearly painted as the terrifying, backwards, and threatening woman, the Amazons never receive such scrutiny. In fact, they are praised by both Herodotus and the Scythians. The Scythians actively seek out mating alliances and marriage with the Amazons, illustrating their praiseworthy perspective. The Scythians are even willing to leave their homes and old ways of life to form a new livelihood with these warrior women in Sauromatia. Herodotus's Amazons also do not hurt, kill, or desecrate the bodies of any of the Scythian men like Tomyris does to Cyrus. Rather, they live peacefully and equally with their Scythian neighbors and partners.

The woman that the Amazons are most comparable to is ultimately Artemisia, queen of Halicarnassus. Herodotus holds a very positive and esteemed opinion of Artemisia, likely because he also reigned from Halicarnassus. He “proudly recounted Artemisia's illustrious

deeds,” portraying her as a cunning and strategic woman skilled in maritime affairs and worthy of the respect of kings.⁴⁷ In a way, Artemisia is comparable to an Amazon.

Ultimately, though, these warrior women of the East do not align exactly with any of the women included in the *Histories*. No other women mentioned in this text command such overwhelming respect and deference. Likewise, no other women exemplify such inverse mirrored practices compared to the Greeks while also maintaining the Greeks’ admirable opinion. As such, the Amazons exist as their own unique kind of women, representing a category all their own.

Introduction to Diodorus Siculus’s *Historical Library*

Historians’ fascination with the concept of warrior women societies continued well beyond the time of Herodotus and extended to areas outside of Greece, particularly Rome. Another prominent historian who documented the lives, customs, and accomplishments of the Amazons was Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus was a Greek historian who wrote in the first century BCE, a turbulent time when Rome had established imperial rule over Greece and was in the process of transitioning from a republic into an empire.⁴⁸ He was a successor of Herodotus who composed history in a similar fashion, yet the two historians differ greatly in several significant ways. An obvious explanation of their differences is due to the distinct periods of time Herodotus and Diodorus worked within: Herodotus lived and worked in 5th century BCE Greece when the *polis* system of government was highly prevalent versus Diodorus, who lived abroad centuries later, experienced life under Roman rule. Herodotus’s world placed more value on strengthening

⁴⁷ Mayor 2014: 314.

⁴⁸ Muntz 2017: 2.

a unified city-state, while Diodorus's valued expansion and foreign rule throughout the globe. It is important to note, as well, that Diodorus relied extensively on previous writers' accounts of the stories he reiterates in *Historical Library* and, therefore, possibly inherited some flawed information. Filtering through his work to discern accurate versus false descriptions, though, is nearly impossible unfortunately if the original sources were fallacious from the start.

Additionally, Herodotus provides no cultural context of the Amazons and only briefly mentions them in connection to Sauromatia's founding story. Diodorus' account, however, is an example of a "full-blown Amazonology," an extensive examination of the intricacies surrounding the Amazons' past, development into a nation, and ultimate decline.⁴⁹ He also outlines the unique histories and lifestyles of two distinct groups of Amazons who lived in separate parts of the globe: Scythia in the Eurasian Steppes and Libya on the northern coast of Africa. The earlier, more thoroughly discussed, yet significantly less famous race dwelled in Libya while the younger, yet more highly renowned, race reigned from Themiscyra on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Diodorus also strays dramatically away from other standard accounts of the Amazons that insisted this culture was singularly female. He claims that men lived amongst the Amazons but as subordinates to women.⁵⁰ Diodorus's Amazons represented an inverse society to that of the Greek patriarchy, especially when compared to the Athenian *polis* and its values. This completely contradicts the argument that Herodotus supports, which believed Amazons ceased to be Amazons when they lived in civilizations with men or once they married. This is why Herodotus's Amazons become the Sauromatians, an entirely different ethnicity, when they form a new society with the Scythian youths.⁵¹ Finally, Diodorus's passages on the

⁴⁹ Blok 1995: 128-129.

⁵⁰ Penrose 2016: 126.

⁵¹ Penrose 2016: 3.

Amazons are quite militaristic in nature, focusing greatly on their campaigns and martial successes. This is likely a result of experiencing life under the Romans, a people known for combat who aimed to conquer the entire world.

The Scythian Amazons

Transitioning smoothly from Herodotus's account of the Scythians, Amazons, and Sauromatians, in Book II of *Historical Library* Diodorus commences his first of two distinct Amazon ethnographies in an area nearby Scythia. Chronologically, however, Diodorus's tale begins long before the precise events Herodotus recounts: the initiation of the Amazons' demise once Heracles enters their country in search of Hippolytê's belt and the eventual creation of the Sauromatians. Although Diodorus follows Herodotus's lead by not naming a single Amazon, not even the leaders, the rest of his account diverges considerably from Herodotus's version.⁵² According to Diodorus, the Scythian Amazons did not always exist as a separate, exclusively female society; rather, they developed out of a nation filled with strong, women sovereigns who practiced the arts of warfare alongside men and were just as skilled in fighting (Diod. 2.44.1). The Amazons were created when the strongest and martially-skilled female sovereign breaks away from this unnamed land and establishes her own separate civilization consisting solely of fierce women. She founds Themiscyra, the city most people associate with the Amazons, near the mouth of the Thermodon river in Pontus and constructs a grand palace (Diod. 2.45.4). In Themiscyra, all the women undergo disciplined military training and then proceed to conquer surrounding nations (Diod. 2.45.1). The newly-formed Amazons' so-called "manly valor" and

⁵² Diodorus does name and vividly describe numerous different Amazons within his recounting of Heracle's Ninth Labor at the beginning of Book IV, however.

“manly prowess” enabled them to gain control over much of Europe and Asia, establishing themselves as a formidable foe within the Mediterranean world and beyond (Diod. 2.44.1-2).

Interestingly, Diodorus subverts the traditional narrative that the Amazons always existed as a singularly-feminine society. In his eyes, the Amazons became a single-sex nation, but did not always exist as one like the standard, historical motif implied.⁵³ Furthermore, Diodorus significantly diverges from the typical depiction of the Amazons by asserting that men lived amongst them as subordinates. The self-proclaimed leader of the Amazons, who dubbed herself the Daughter of Ares based on her excellence in battle, intelligence, and military strategy, created a set of laws that relegated all the domestic duties to men, including spinning the wool, rearing children, and tending to the home, as well as “fastened humiliation and slavery” upon males (Diod. 2.45.2). Meanwhile, the women fought in wars and participated in political life. Thus, the Amazon society functioned as a perfect inverse to the patriarchal Greek *polis*. Unlike Herodotus, who believed Amazons ceased to be Amazons once they mated/cohabitated with men, or Strabo, a Roman geographer who believed the Amazons only interacted with men in neighboring tribes when they desired to reproduce,⁵⁴ Diodorus believed the Amazons dwelled in a mixed-gender society. A clear hierarchy of power existed, however, with the women “dominating the men in a matriarchal fashion.”⁵⁵

Even the physical bodies of men and women were adapted to embody this particular Amazonian nation’s gender roles and values. At birth, male children’s arms and legs were mutilated to disable them from participating in warfare, while the female children’s right breasts

⁵³ Blok 1995: 129.

⁵⁴ The Amazons would mate with the nearby Gargarians, having intercourse with any man who happened to be available in a darkened room. Then the Amazons would take the female babies back with them to Themiscyra and give the male babies to the Gargarians to raise as their own.

⁵⁵ Penrose, 2016: 133.

were cauterized so they “would not project when their bodies matured and be in the way” when fighting (Diod. 2.45.3). Mutilation ensured that men could not rise up in rebellion against the Amazons and breast cauterization further strengthened the women’s shooting and throwing ability with their right arms. These cultural practices also reinforced exactly what roles each gender was meant to fulfill and the identities they were meant to inhabit: crippled sex slaves who performed domestic labor or powerful, disciplined warriors who ruled men. Additionally, this custom of damaging the tissues of one breast and halting its development explains the reasoning behind the Amazons’ name; the terms “a” (without) and “mastos” (breast) were combined to create “Amazon,” or “without a breast” (Diod. 3.53.3).

Eventually, after a successful career of conquering many nations throughout Eurasia, the great, unnamed queen of the Amazons was killed in an unnamed battle, dying heroically (Diod. 2.45.5). Her daughter, who “emulated the excellence of her mother, and even surpassed her in some particular deeds,” then assumes the position of leader (Diod. 2.46.1). She continues and expands her mother’s military training program, urging young girls to begin studying martial arts as early as possible and drilling them every day. She also manages to conquer surrounding nations stretching as far as Syria and most of Asia. Diodorus also emphasizes the daughter’s piety, describing how she built shrines to the Amazons’ two patron deities – Ares and Artemis – with the spoils she acquired from subduing other nations as well as created grand festivals for their gods (Diod. 2.46.2).

In a matrilineal fashion, the Scythian Amazons’ queenship continued to pass down through other female family members for many generations. Additionally, all the Amazons came to be known as Daughters of Ares, not just the original queen. By this time, Diodorus claims that rumors of the Amazons’ excellence had spread throughout the world. This is where the popular

myth regarding Heracles and Hippolytê, the Amazon queen, intersects with Diodorus's ethnography. For his Ninth Labor, Heracles was required to steal Hippolytê's war belt/girdle (Pseu-Apol. 2.5.9). Diodorus states that once Heracles landed at Themiscyra, he immediately obtained Hippolytê's war belt/girdle by force and slaughtered the rest of the Amazons. Upon learning about the Amazons' genocide, surrounding nations that had previously been subdued by the Amazons took advantage of their weakness; they waged wars against the Amazons until their entire race ceased to exist – except for the last remaining Amazon warrior: Penthesileia (Diod. 2.46.4). According to Diodorus, Penthesileia had been exiled from Themiscyra for killing a fellow Daughter of Ares. She went on to fight in the Trojan War alongside the Trojans where she was ultimately killed by Achilles (Diod. 2.46.5). With her death, the Amazon race dwindled out and their glory faded away into history, leaving people of Diodorus's time to question whether they ever truly existed.

The Libyan Amazons

Moving ahead into Book III, Diodorus recounts the history of the second group of Amazons – those reigning from Libya. His description of the Libyan Amazons is the most extensive mythic passage within the first three books of *Historical Library*.⁵⁶ When starting his tale, Diodorus first addresses the largely-held misconception that the Scythian Amazons were the only Amazon ethnicity that ever existed. While the Amazons from Themiscyra are typically regarded as the cultural standard, the Libyan Amazons actually predate the former. Diodorus claims that their race diminished long before the Trojan War, unlike the Scythian Amazons who

⁵⁶ Muntz 2017: 107.

were thriving at this point, with the long lapse of time being the reason they were forgotten (Diod. 3.52.2). He also believes that the Scythian Amazons gained their worldly fame due to inheriting the Libyan Amazons' glory. The earlier Amazons accomplished many great feats throughout their lifespan and – based on the vast similarities between these two groups – appear to have significantly influenced the Scythian Amazons' development and customs (Diod. 3.52.1).

Like the Scythian Amazons, the Libyan Amazons originated from a society where skilled female warriors were prevalent. Diodorus also indicates that this ethnicity of Amazons lived somewhere near the Gorgons – a race of monster-like women, with the snake-headed Medusa who turned men to stone simply by gazing upon them being the most famous example. Although associating the Amazons with the Gorgons is problematic since it insinuates the Amazons possessed a dreadful quality, Diodorus was attempting to prove the fierceness of these women. He claims that the great Greek hero Perseus's most difficult Labor was fighting the Gorgons, and since the Amazons were comparable to them in certain ways, "the pre-eminence and the power" of the Amazons is validated (Diod. 3.52.4).

Interestingly, the Libyan Amazons never separated from their original matriarchal society that contained both men and women but rather were always known as Amazons within this context. They lived on an island called Hespera near Ethiopia, subsisting off fruit as well as the milk and meat of goats and sheep like the pre-civilized, pre-agrarian Homeric Cyclops (Diod. 3.53.6). Like the Scythian Amazons, Diodorus explains that the Libyan Amazons also inverted the gender and societal norms of Greek civilization, having the women participate in military campaigns and the men tend to domestic duties, particularly raising children (Diod. 3.53.1). All women were required to serve in the military for a fixed amount of time and remained virginal

during this period – which is quite reminiscent of the Greek *ephebeia*, young, unmarried men who served in the military for two years beginning at age of eighteen. Meanwhile, Diodorus claims that, like the married women of his society, the men of this Amazonian civilization were not permitted to fight in battles or to participate in political affairs. The women kept strict control over the government and social spheres to disable men from potentially rising up against them (Diod. 3.53.2). Furthermore, similar to the Scythian Amazons, the Libyan Amazons also cauterized the breasts of infant females but insisted that both were seared. Given the high value placed upon fighting and campaigning, Diodorus argues that these Amazons believed “breasts, as they stood out from the body, were no small hindrance in warfare” and, thus, were removed (Diod. 3.53.3).

Finally, Diodorus delves into a lengthy discussion about Myrina, the Amazon queen at the height of the Libyan Amazons’ empire. Throughout Book III’s analysis of the Libyan Amazons, Myrina is the only Amazon warrior who is named out of the entire race. With her description, we also finally catch a glimpse of the Amazons’ fighting style as well as acknowledge their cultural affinity for riding horses into battle. Diodorus claimed the Libyan Amazons were “a race superior in valour and eager for war” who fashioned the skins of enormous snakes into armor and other protective gear and fought with swords, lances, and bows and arrows (Diod. 3.54.2). Under the leadership of Myrina, 60,000 Amazon foot soldiers and cavalry subdued every civilization on the island of Hespera, except for the sacred city of Menê, and then proceeded to brutally attack the Atlantians at the city of Cernê. As Diodorus recounts, Myrina slaughtered all the men, forced the women and children into slavery, and then burned the city to the ground. After this massacre, the rest of the Atlantians willingly surrendered to Myrina and the Amazons, who promise peace and friendship with the remaining Atlantians as long as

they remained under the Amazons' control. Myrina then rebuilds the city she razed and names it after herself. She even forms an alliance with the Atlantians pledging to protect them against invaders, specifically the Gorgons. Diodorus then goes into detail about Myrina's complete genocide of the Gorgons, denoting that she killed them all first and that Perseus, the son of Zeus, slaughtered them for a second time many years later (Diod. 3.55.2-3).

After destroying the Gorgons, Myrina continued to campaign throughout the world. Diodorus indicates that she visited Egypt where she signed a friendly treaty with Horus, the King of Egypt. She then conquered Syria, killing many Arabian people in the process, subdued the Taurus region, traversed through Phrygia, and seized several islands as well (Diod. 3.55.4-7). Beyond overpowering nations, though, Diodorus also makes sure to showcase Myrina's desire to build new cities and to illustrate her individual piety. For instance, on the island of Lesbos, Myrina founded the city of Mitylenê, which she named after her sister (Diod. 3.55.7). Likewise, after getting stranded on an island during a storm, Myrina renamed the island Samothrace (translating to Sacred Island), constructed altars to the Mother of the Gods, and made generous sacrifices to her thereafter (Diod. 3.55.8).

Throughout this mythic section, Diodorus clearly emphasizes the militaristic nature of Myrina. Interestingly, his particular account also paints Myrina's life and exploits in a rather similar manner to other great conquerors throughout time, namely Alexander the Great. Numerous scholars have noted this portrayal, including Charles Edward Muntz who claims Diodorus' depiction of Myrina "follows a route strikingly similar to that of Alexander the Great."⁵⁷ Just like Alexander, Myrina founds cities in various parts of the world and names them after herself (i.e. Alexandria in Egypt). She also campaigned far to the East, which is quite

⁵⁷ Muntz 2017: 117 and 164.

reminiscent of Alexander's desire to invade India, and practiced piety in addition to destruction throughout her life. This insinuates a historical preference toward politics of the Hellenistic Age. Kenneth Sacks comments on this claim, agreeing that *Historical Library* largely reflected the "intellectual and political attitudes of the late Hellenistic period."⁵⁸ Thus, it seems like Diodorus definitely drew comparisons between Myrina, an accomplished conqueror albeit female, and Alexander, the conqueror from whom the Hellenistic period received its name.

Myrina is eventually killed in a battle against the Thracians alongside many of her fellow Amazons and dies a glorious death (Diod. 3.55.11). According to Diodorus, her death ushered in the beginning stages of the Libyan Amazons' decline. First, the Thracians rose up against the remaining Amazons and gained the upper hand, causing them to flee back into Libya. Then, like the Scythian Amazons of Book II, Diodorus asserts that Heracles also destroyed the race of Libyan Amazons. During Heracles's quest to set up his Pillars, he stumbled upon this unique Amazon nation in modern-day Africa. Believing himself to be the protector of civilization and mankind, Heracles claimed it was against his values to allow "any nations to be under the rule of women" and, therefore, exterminates them (Diod. 3.55.3). Finally, the marsh in which the Amazons' island of Hespera was located completely disappeared into the ocean after a severe earthquake, taking the Amazons' history, material remains, and glory down with it (Diod. 3.55.3).

In Diodorus's eyes, two distinct Amazon cultures – one in Eurasia and one in Africa – once existed as glorious, yet doomed, nations. Both societies were matriarchal and matrilineal. Unlike most scholars who examined the Amazons, Diodorus believed that men dwelled amongst the Amazons, but fulfilled submissive, domestic roles to the dominant females. Diodorus

⁵⁸ Sacks 1990: 5.

therefore imagined the Amazons' matriarchal lifestyle as an inverse to patriarchal Greek civilization. Both the Scythian Amazons and the Libyan Amazons are painted as strong, independent, militaristically skilled, diplomatic, and pious individuals. They were also undefeatable in their quests for expansion and world domination – until the Greeks encounter them. Once Heracles enters their homelands, both the Eurasian and the African ethnicities of Amazons inevitably suffered their demises. Yet again, the Amazons successfully represent the barbaric, Eastern, non-Greek peoples that ultimately needed to be destroyed to enable civilized Greek society to prevail.

Conclusion

The end of Diodorus's account is where Herodotus's narrative about the Amazons begins, linking the two authors together nicely. Although their storylines share certain key events, Herodotus and Diodorus differed greatly in their depictions of these women. While Diodorus extensively examines both the Scythian Amazons' and the Libyan Amazons' histories, cultures, and accomplishments, Herodotus provides limited insightful information about the Amazons. Describing the Amazons' unique ways of life was not his primary prerogative. His inclusion of the Amazons within the *Histories* mainly served as connective tissue between his account of the Scythians and his tale of the Sauromatians, a half-Amazon/half-Scythian race. In the *Histories*, only snippets of information are given to help understand Amazonian culture. The passage that reveals some of the Amazons' characteristics as well as differentiates them from "typical" women is their exchange with the Scythian men regarding marriage. According to Herodotus, the Amazons explain they could never become the Scythians' wives because their

women's domestic lifestyles did not align with the Amazons' own athletic, semi-nomadic, warring ones. Comparing the Amazons with other women mentioned within the *Histories* also assisted in outlining the Amazons' identity. Distinguishing between various passive and active women, namely Io, Europa, Helen, Tomyris, and Artemisia, revealed the Amazons as a different type of individual altogether. They crossed the boundaries of femininity and masculinity, but were not depicted as frightening, unnatural figures.

Beyond the differences in cultural description, Herodotus and Diodorus also held different opinions about the idea of Amazons living with men. Possessing a rather unconventional viewpoint, Diodorus believed that men existed in Amazon society, but as dominated inferiors, thus making the Amazon society matriarchal and not single-sexed. Meanwhile, Herodotus believed that once the Amazons lived with men, they ceased to be Amazons any longer. This is proven by the Amazons' decision to marry the Scythian youths. Although the Amazons married the Scythians on their own terms, enabling themselves to continue their active horse-riding and hunting lifestyle, they transformed into the Sauromations upon marriage. The Scythian youths also became this separate Sauromation ethnicity. Herodotus clearly believed that the Amazons were only truly "Amazons" when their society remained exclusively feminine in nature. Thus, when the Scythian men started living amongst them, the Amazons had to morph into a different identity.

Regardless of these individual details, both Herodotus and Diodorus claimed that the Amazon race was destined to be eliminated, specifically by men and patriarchal institutions. In Diodorus's recounting, the Scythian Amazons and the Libyan Amazons both suffered their demises once Heracles – the hyper-masculine, barbarian destroying, Greek protector – entered the scene. Likewise, Herodotus begins his description of the Amazons with the Greeks' defeat

over them – a battle in which both Heracles and Theseus, two of the most famous Greek heroes and civilizing forces, were participants. While the Amazons and their inverse, gender-deviant, and matriarchal livelihoods existed, Greek society was threatened. Therefore, the Amazons always had to be killed off to allow the patriarchal Greek *polis* to survive and to flourish.

Chapter 4

Amazons on Public Architecture

Having discussed the myths and histories surrounding the Amazons, we will now return to the analysis of Heracles and Theseus from Chapter One. The mythological shifts evident within these heroes' stories are quite pertinent to a particular transformation in Greek art: the sudden utilization of Amazon figures on public monuments. By the fifth century BCE, Athens had developed an artistic obsession with Theseus, especially as a civilizing force, while the city reshaped its identity around the recently established *polis*. Theseus was initially compared to Heracles, the greatest panhellenic hero and destroyer of barbaric beings, but Athens steadily began to replace Heracles with their Athenocentric savior. Given that Theseus was a hero specifically associated with Athens – as well as one that protected an endogamous, xenophobic city against uncivilized outsiders/cultural practices – the Athenians obviously placed heightened value upon him. Eventually, Theseus began to outshine Heracles. From this point onward, Theseus was portrayed in myth as being Heracles's equal in strength and valor in addition to being a righteous citizen. Additionally, the number of artistic images associated with Theseus, especially in Athens, also came to eclipse Heracles's icons.

This abrupt change of mythic emphasis stemmed directly out of the post-Persian War political climate. After a series of triumphant defeats over the Persian Forces, most notably at Marathon (490 BCE) and Salamis (480 BCE), the Athenian identity was largely reinvented and glorified through public art and tragedy.⁵⁹ Theseus, the refined Athenian hero, was crucial in this transformation, being utilized as a physical embodiment of Athenian values of democracy,

⁵⁹ Bremer 2000: 55.

civility, and masculinity. Since the Persians had destroyed much of Athens and the city was enjoying a period of financial prosperity under Pericles, Athens had the opportunity to completely rebuild not just its public monuments, but also its public image in general. Through this revitalization program, Athens successfully began establishing itself as the dominant cultural and political center in Greece.

The exploits of Theseus – founder of Athens, *synoikist* of Attica, and protector of democratic civilization – became an extremely popular theme within Greek art (vase paintings, architecture, tragedy), especially on public monuments. Although he was often still depicted alongside Heracles in some capacity, Theseus repositioned into the principle role, displacing Heracles as a Greek savior against barbarian cultures.⁶⁰ Thus, Heracles was relegated to the archaic past, while Theseus stood as a powerful symbol of the democratic, civilized Athenian present. Simultaneously, Theseus was embedded into the mythic past alongside other great heroes and his legitimacy as a capable leader was proven.

This is also when Amazons enter the Athenian public art scene in astounding prevalence. Amazonomachies in relation to Heracles's and Theseus's exploits began appearing throughout Athens on monumental architecture – especially at sites associated with democracy, most notably the Athenian Agora and the Acropolis.⁶¹ Scenes of battle with Amazons – or other barbarian equivalents, including the Centaurs, half-man/half-horse creatures, and Geryon, the three-bodied monster that Heracles fought during his Tenth Labor – also became a popular theme. This was especially true in areas that displayed Athens' wealth and military successes, like the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Through these monuments' metopes, different scenes are

⁶⁰ Mills 1997: 140.

⁶¹ Shapiro 1998: 129.

portrayed on each side of the building, often depicting various mythical and historical events and then stylistically tying them together in some fashion. Due to the aforementioned shifts in myth, Theseus's Amazonomachy on the Athenian Acropolis artistically dominated Heracles's Amazonomachy in Themiscyra. Again, since Theseus was an Athenian hero and his battle with the Amazons took place in Athens, Athenian artists primarily utilized Theseus's particular encounter with the Amazons over that of Heracles.

We also see that, over time, shifts in the monuments' themes occur, including the transition of individual combat to group battle. This represented contemporary military changes, i.e. the utilization of hoplites and the phalanx in exchange for individual Homeric sparring that occurred during and before the Archaic Age. More importantly, though, the prominent analogous relationship between the Persians, the Centaurs, and the Amazons eventually appears, spawning in response to the Greco-Persian Wars and Greece's negative perceptions toward Eastern, barbaric cultures.⁶² With these mythical, single-sexed, unmarried warriors, themes of civilization and barbarity are explored and performed through art. Thus, the Centaurs and Amazons become metaphorically aligned with the collective threats of outsiders and difference.

There are numerous excellent examples of buildings that prominently display heroic exploits and Amazonomachies throughout Greece. For my purposes within this chapter, though, I will mainly focus on the artistic themes included on the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, the Stoa Poikile within the Athenian Agora, and the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis. Additionally, for clarity's sake as well as to investigate the effects of time on architectural subject matter, I will present these individual buildings chronologically from their estimated dates of construction.⁶³

⁶² DuBois 1982: 57.

⁶³ Disputes over dating are common and too vast to compare. Thus, I will just rely on approximations.

The Athenian Treasury at Delphi

According to Pausanias, the Athenian Treasury at Delphi was built in approximately 485–480 BCE with the spoils gained at Marathon (Paus. 10.11.5). This monumental structure was the first Athenian-dedicated building included in a panhellenic sanctuary as well as the first piece of architecture where Theseus appears.⁶⁴ Like many of the buildings I mention here, themes of juxtaposition dominate this particular monument, specifically in regards to Heracles and Theseus, the two most famous Greek saviors and civilizers. Originally, the treasury had thirty metopes: nine metopes on the north/south faces and six on the east/west faces.⁶⁵ On the south side of the building, which looked toward the Sacred Way, the exploits of Theseus, the Athenian hero, were depicted. Likewise, the north side's metopes showcased the adventures of Heracles, the panhellenic hero. Then, both the east and west faces featured battles against barbaric enemies: the east portrayed an Amazonomachy, while the west displayed a Geryonomachy.⁶⁶ At this point in time, the iconography mainly depicted Greeks, broadly, destroying barbaric creatures that existed outside of Greece, namely the Amazons and Geryon, a three-bodied/four-winged giant that combined man with beast. The imagery and its placement on public architecture was clearly designed to showcase Greek values, specifically xenophobia, powerful masculinity, and the defeat of non-Greeks.

Additionally, this is the building where themes of the Labors and Amazonomachy are transferred from Heracles over to Theseus. Dietrich von Bothmer's evaluation of the Athenian Treasury within *Amazons in Greek Art* postulates that its Amazonomachy illustrates Heracles

⁶⁴ Before this, Theseus and his adventures had been a very popular theme within vase painting, but not in architecture. These prominent public displays were a completely new concept that spawned during the fifth century.

⁶⁵ DuBois 1982: 57.

⁶⁶ Francis 1990: 15.

stealing Hippolyta's belt in Themyscira with the help of Theseus.⁶⁷ If von Bothmer is correct in assuming Theseus' inclusion, both heroes are granted nearly equal praise, each occupying two sides of the building as the scenes' protagonist(s). Furthermore, incorporating Theseus into the mythological scenery of an Athenian-dedicated building appropriated this Amazon myth into Athenian repertoire *and* paved the way for Theseus' own encounters with the Amazons, particularly the battle for Athens, to displace Heracles' in artistic popularity.⁶⁸ This purposeful incorporation of Theseus into the well-known mythic past was also a method of promoting growing Athenian presence throughout Greece, given that Athens was in the early phases of creating and expanding its empire. Constructing an Athenian-funded treasury within a distinguished panhellenic sanctuary was clearly a political gesture. Since the Athenian Treasury was built with spoils pillaged after the Greeks' defeat of the Persians at Marathon – a success largely achieved because of the Athenians – it indicated Athenian wealth and military ability. An Athenian presence in such a renowned panhellenic location – a place that included dedications from all other major Greek *poleis* – physically proved Athens' increasing worth and importance.

The other main takeaway from the Athenian Treasury at Delphi is the clear shift away from Homeric one-on-one combat toward battling against an entire army.⁶⁹ The metopes featuring Heracles all portray one hero fighting with one monstrous foe, like Geryon, while the Theseus-centric metopes illustrate Theseus engaged in battle against a group of Amazons. Simultaneously, this transition represented Athenian's social transformation from a fragmentary, hierarchical collection of people into a democratic polis, as well as the establishment of a tax-funded hoplite army. More importantly, however, this decision to artistically move away from

⁶⁷ Bothmer 1957: 118.

⁶⁸ DuBois 1982: 58-59.

⁶⁹ DuBois 1982: 60.

single-combat in exchange for army battles, specifically with mythical Amazons here, symbolized the recent conflicts with Persian forces, another *real* Eastern enemy.

The Stoa Poikile

This theme of linking Amazons with Persians, either as direct representations or as juxtaposing scenic plotlines on different sides of buildings, continues throughout later works of monumental architecture. The Stoa Poikile, otherwise known as the Painted Stoa is no exception. Located on the northern boundary of the Athenian Agora and built in the 470s/460s BCE, the Stoa Poikile was painted with images from both Greece's mythic and historic past. On two sides of the building, great mythic victories are illustrated (the fall of Troy and Athenian success over the Amazons). The other two faces demonstrate recent Athenian military victories (the Battle of Marathon and a battle with the Spartans near Oinoe).⁷⁰ While establishing similarities between the past and the present, this association of mythical and historical successes also insinuates a relationship between individuals who fought in these battles. It compares "the fame of those who fought at Troy with those who fought the Persians at Plataea," thus placing the Athenians on the same level as great mythic heroes.⁷¹ When standing inside the colonnaded building, Athenians observed these scenes side-by-side, thus symbolically combining the imagery to showcase Athenian values, as well as "military and political obligations of citizenship."⁷²

Like the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, the Stoa Poikile also displayed an Amazonomachy.⁷³ This time, though, the Amazonomachy illuminated a struggle between the

⁷⁰ Holscher 1998: 166.

⁷¹ Boedeker 1998: 193.

⁷² Martin-Mcauliffe 2012: 351.

⁷³ Bremer 2000: 55.

Amazons and the Athenians, not Heracles' Ninth Labor of capturing Hippolyta's belt. Shifting away from the Heraclean storyline toward the battle for Athens, a myth associated with Theseus, is hugely symbolic. Beyond making the Amazonomachy locally relevant, it signified the outstripping of a panhellenic hero by the savior "of a city which was trying to achieve panhellenic domination."⁷⁴

The main intriguing element of this building, though, is its linkage of Amazonomachies with battles with Persians, or "Persianomachies" as Adrienne Mayor puts it. The Stoa Poikile was one of the first monuments to solidify the Athenian artistic trend of mythicizing the Persian Wars, which this building accomplished through scenes of Amazon and Trojan destruction. In his article entitled "Feminizing the Barbarian and Barbarizing the Feminine," David Castriota eloquently observes that the Stoa "explore(d) what would eventually become a dominant strategy of fifth-century Athenian public art: the use of mythic themes or imagery as a means of celebrating victory over the Persian Empire."⁷⁵ Typically, these "mythic themes" were images of Centaurs, a half-man/half-horse conglomeration, or Amazons, a half-woman/half-man race that tiptoed dangerously in between the realms of stereotypical femininity and masculinity. This comparison will be re-evaluated further below.

The Athenians also constructed narratives that placed Athens at the forefront of Persian or alternative barbarian defeat. This was largely due to Athens' "highly charged political context" at the time under Cimon, an Athenian general and statesman who was integral in achieving Greek success at the Battle of Salamis.⁷⁶ Cimon's role in building this stoa also further explains the scenic inclusion of Marathon, a victorious battle that was led by his father Miltiades.

⁷⁴ Mills 1997: 136.

⁷⁵ Castriota 2005: 90.

⁷⁶ Castriota 2005: 90.

Interestingly, this particular building also dared to assert Athenian superiority over not just the Persians but other Greek *poleis* as well. This helps to explain why the battle with the Spartans, a city-state known for its fighting ability, is also included. The Stoa Poikile, thus, had a primary goal of establishing and affirming Athenian power and domination.⁷⁷

The location of this Amazonomachy inside the Athenian Agora and its placement on a stoa are also significant. According to H. Alan Shapiro, “the Agora is the physical setting of democracy.”⁷⁸ Democracy was the foundation of the Athenian *polis* and this city’s claim to fame, if you will. Choosing to display this Amazonomachy within the heart of Athens versus inside a panhellenic sanctuary located far away from Athens (Delphi) was meaningful; it literally stood where democracy flourished. All Athenians passed through and spent time in the Agora – no matter if they were philosophers, politicians, or laypeople. Thus, the Stoa Poikile had a clear purpose of promoting Athenian/Greek propaganda, artistically flaunting Athenian values (civilized, masculine, anti-barbarian, anti-women) and performing the particular public image and history Athens had curated.⁷⁹ This is especially true when examining the individual scenes included on this monument, namely the Amazonomachy between the Athenians and the Amazons on one side and then the Battle of Marathon between the Persians and the Greeks on another. Including battles against Eastern enemies – mythical or historical – in the hub of Athenian democracy crystallized the Athenians’ main prerogative of destroying all barbaric beings that threatened democratic society and order.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Holscher 1998: 169.

⁷⁸ Shapiro 1998: 129.

⁷⁹ Shapiro 1998: 129.

⁸⁰ Mayor 2014: 26.

Even the orientation of the Stoa Poikile within the Agora was significant. Facing southeast, the Stoa Poikile looked toward the Acropolis – the lofty citadel of Athens that contained numerous important religious and military victory monuments, including the Parthenon and the Temple of Athena Nike, that also featured Amazonomachies, Centauromachia, and Gigantomachia. The Stoa Poikile’s positioning thus established a relationship between the Agora and the Acropolis, “the locus of Athens’ imperial self-image,” and reaffirmed the building’s purpose of promoting Athenian values of civility, masculine humanity, and anti-barbarism.⁸¹

The Parthenon

Finally, arguably the most magnificent example of the mythologizing of Persian, and other barbarians occurs atop the Acropolis through the Parthenon’s ninety-two metopes. Built in 447–442 BCE under Pericles – the great Athenian statesman, general, orator, and author of the Citizenship Law of 451 BCE – the Parthenon continued the artistic trend of comparing the mythic past with contemporary history. As such, it “summarized and celebrated Athens’ pride and sense of herself.”⁸² The Parthenon, itself, was a physical embodiment of democracy; Pericles included regular, everyday citizens in the artistic decision-making process that led to this particular structure’s creation. Standard with other public monuments that advertised particular propaganda agendas, like Cimon’s motivations for the Stoa Poikile, the Parthenon represented Athens’ current political leadership and philosophies, particularly “the kind of democracy in

⁸¹ Shapiro 1998: 129.

⁸² DuBois 1982: 61.

which Pericles believed.”⁸³ Additionally, the building’s location on the Acropolis – Athens’ citadel that contained the city’s most majestic temples and victory monuments – as well as its particular imagery illuminated Athenian identity and values. Specifically, there was heavy emphasis on the Greek values of endogamous marriage, hatred of non-Greeks/barbarians, and legitimization of Athenian dominance within the Greek world.

Like the other monuments mentioned so far, the Parthenon was also emblazoned with scenes of battle between Athenians and Amazons but also included Greeks fighting Trojans, Centaurs fighting Lapiths, and Gods fighting Giants. Once again, the metopes on each side of the building demonstrated a different mythological struggle between Greeks and barbarians, or good versus evil – some of which had already been explored on different buildings (i.e. the Stoa Poikile’s use of the Trojan War and the Amazons’ attack against Athens). The west metopes illustrated the Amazons’ attack on Athens; the east, the frontal facade, showed Gods destroying Giants; the north metopes depicted the Trojan War; and the south portrayed Centaurs raiding a Lapith wedding and forcefully abducting women. Note that, like the Stoa Poikile, the Parthenon’s particular Amazonomachy showcased the Athenians’ protection of their city (under the command of Theseus and atop the Acropolis) against the invading Amazons, not Herakles’s Ninth Labor at Themyscira. Thus, by now, the Amazon myth had been wholly relegated over both to Theseus and to Athens.

⁸³ Webster 1973: 259.

Centaur/Amazon Comparison and Gendered Ideologies on the Parthenon

The striking element of this public building is the incorporation of Centaurs as a mythical representation of the Persians, especially in juxtaposition with the Amazons. The association of Centaurs and Amazons and their inclusion on the Parthenon as archaic, perpetually defeated enemies illuminates Greek social values by contrasting undesirable, barbaric livelihoods against the civilized background of Athenian life. As Page duBois notes about the Greeks' tendency to define themselves in terms of difference, "speculation about them constitutes part of the Greek's thinking about sexual, cultural, and species boundaries."⁸⁴ With this comparison of two different mythical halfings that both violate boundaries surrounding gender and humanity – the Centaurs' existence as half-man/half-horse and the Amazons being masculinized women – the Amazons eventually symbolize more than just an analogue for barbarians, generally, and/or Persians; they become a "gendered figuration of the Other."⁸⁵ Throwing gender into the association of mythical beings and Persians adds an entirely new level of insult to the Greek's Eastern foe as well as makes a statement about the Greeks' perception of the female sex/gender. Given this gendered element, it is imperative to consider the external social factors that shaped the Parthenon's imagery, namely the Greeks' societal value of marriage and Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451 BCE that etiologically and legally denied woman both citizenship and true Athenian identity. Thus, the Parthenon artistically explores themes of difference, but also thoroughly investigates varying *kinds* of difference, specifically gender.

Before examining the specific effect of Amazons on the Parthenon, it is necessary to first discuss the Centaurs in more detail, and then to compare and to differentiate them in regards to

⁸⁴ DuBois 1982: 27.

⁸⁵ Stewart 1995: 571.

Amazons, another barbarian race. Endemic to Mount Pelion near the coast of Thessaly, the Centaurs were half-man/half-horse descendants of Ixion, the Thessalian king. According to the founding myth, Ixion caught fancy of Hera and eventually made sexual advances toward her. In a fit of jealousy, Zeus created a cloud (Nephele) in likeness of Hera, with whom Ixion then had intercourse. Out of this union, a son named Centaurus was born, who later mated with wild mares and generated the first Centaurs.⁸⁶

Within Greek mythology – with the exception of Chiron, the benevolent and wise tutor of the greatest Greek heroes (Achilles, Heracles, Odysseus, etc.) and the only Centaur known to have been married⁸⁷ – the Centaurs are characterized as untamed, aggressive, and sexually-unrestrained creatures known for displaying public drunkenness, raping women, violating *xenia*, and negating marriage.⁸⁸ Their half-equine nature – existing as “more beast than man” – reinforced the Centaur’s metaphorical representation of savage, barbarian cultures as well as unrestrained male sexuality.⁸⁹ That they were conceived as a solely male nation furthered their hyper-masculine, sexually-charged, barbarous nature and placed them outside the normal realm of Greek humanity. Thus, the Centaurs became a prime vehicle for emphasizing difference, promoting refined Greekness over barbaric Eastern cultures, and arguing in favor of the domesticating effects of traditional marriage.

Like the Centaurs, the Amazons also represent a wild and untamed culture that existed outside the Greeks’ ideological binaries and boundaries of civility, chiefly because they were a singularly *female* ethnicity that rejected marriage. The Amazons were simultaneously overly-

⁸⁶ Lawrence 1994: 58.

⁸⁷ This important detail illuminates the Greek’s societal value of marriage as a necessary part of living a truly civilized existence.

⁸⁸ DuBois 1982: 28-29.

⁸⁹ Stewart 1995: 580.

masculine and overly-feminine; they crossed into the domain of men by riding horses, fighting with double-edged axes, and wearing masculine clothing, yet their territory was wholly, homogeneously female.⁹⁰ No men ever graced the land of Themyscira for long. According to Strabo, a Greek geographer from the first century CE, when the Amazons desired to procreate, they would venture into nearby tribe lands and mate with whatever man happened to show up in the dark. Then, if any male babies were born, they would either be killed or returned to a neighboring tribe to raise (Strabo 11.5.1). Therefore, the Amazons represented a double-threat: a self-sufficient, Eastern nation ruled solely by women and the refusal to enter into marriage, a practice that partly defined what it meant to be Athenian and kept woman in their subjugated places within a patriarchal society.

We can see numerous parallels between the Centaurs and the Amazons. They both existed as single-sex races, spurned marriage, and had violent encounters with famous Greek heroes. Accordingly, these mythic figures were also quite appropriate to include on public monuments that differentiated Greek/Athenian civilization and barbarian cultures. But, why does the Parthenon insist upon using *both* the Centaurs and the Amazons to illustrate Athenian values? Examining the specific imagery in which the Centaurs and Amazons are featured reveals a connection between the west and south sides of the Parthenon: the protection of Athens from a foreign enemy and the protection of marriage ceremonies, an important Athenian rite of passage necessary to cultivate more Athenian citizens. The Amazonomachy portrays the safeguarding of Athens, itself, while the Centauromachy depicts the defense of Athenian social traditions. Importantly, the Persians – the Greek’s recently defeated Eastern enemy and violators of Greek civilized norms – were symbolic of the desecration of both the Athenian *polis* and its values of

⁹⁰ DuBois 1982: 34.

social exchange, which included marriage.⁹¹ The Persians were also likened to women, specifically the Amazons, because they blended aspects of femininity and masculinity: they were biologically men, but adopted female characteristics by dressing fancifully and, supposedly, possessing unrestrained appetites and wild cultural practices.⁹² It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that these ideas about stereotypical femininity and masculinity as well as the Persian image and identity in general was completely based upon the Greek standards and their own Western/Athenocentric perceptions of their Eastern neighbors. Thus, a truly objective portraiture of the Persians is impossible to discern from Greek sources.

Autochthony and Defining Athenian Citizenship

Regardless of how accurate the Greeks' descriptions of the Persians were, blatantly feminizing the Persians was certainly meant to be an insult to Persian culture – one that also denigrated its power and position in the Mediterranean world, especially compared to Greece. Creating a negative, gendered analogy between the Persians and the Amazons makes a statement about Athenian conceptualizations of gender as well, specifically its tendency to devalue, to ignore, and to demonize the female sex/gender. Misogyny and sexism against women was not only extremely commonplace in Greece, but also an inherent component to Athenian identity as described and legitimized through Athenian myth and history. Autochthony, the Athenian race's founding myth that claimed Athenian men were born from the earth, was a solely masculine concept. It explicitly pertained to men and purposefully excluded women, whose existence was explained through the Pandora myth. The Pandora origin myth asserted that the first woman was

⁹¹ DuBois 1982: 56.

⁹² Castriota 1995: 37.

created by the gods to unleash evils onto the world of men (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 600).

Simultaneously, this etiological story differentiated women as their own unique race that could never truly be Athenian.⁹³ Thus, autochthony explained and perpetuated the quintessential Athenian prototype of masculinity, misogyny, citizenship, and collective brotherhood – factors that, together, resembled a shared bond among all Athenians that enabled a strong, centralized polis to form and to sustain itself.

Autochthony, shared bloodlines from a common mother (Mother Earth), and the continuation of an endogamous society were the fundamental bases for Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451 BCE, which defined Athenian citizenship through an individual's parents and, possibly, grandparents. The Law required both one's mother and one's father to be full Athenian citizens, meaning their parents were both Athenians, etc. (Aristotle, *Politics*, 53.1). Since women could technically never be Athenian citizens, at least never to the extent of their male counterparts, their identities were determined by their fathers' citizenship statuses.⁹⁴ The sexist undertones to this law surely existed, no doubt, but there were nuances to it as well. Most significantly, "Athenian" women – or, rather, female *astoi* (people of the city, or native Athenians) – possessed a much higher status, level of respect, and meaningful place in society than foreign women. In fact, a primary goal of this law was to further criminalize and to condemn outsiders – especially women, since they could potentially reproduce illegitimate children with Athenian men and contaminate the Athenians' pure bloodedness.⁹⁵ Given this, it is quite unsurprising that Amazons graced the metopes of the Parthenon, as well as other famous public monuments and temples at

⁹³ Loraux 1993: 10.

⁹⁴ Loraux 1993: 17.

⁹⁵ Stewart 1995: 578.

this time; they perfectly represented the threat not just of foreigners, but of foreign *females* against a male-dominated, democratic, and endogamous society.

Conclusion

Collectively, the associations drawn between Heracles and Theseus as well as the numerous juxtapositions (Centaurs/Amazons, humans/animals, Greeks/barbarians, Persians/Centaurs/Amazons, and men/women) that frequently appeared on fifth-century Athenian buildings defined Athenian identity, the Greeks' ideologies about boundaries, and Greek/Athenian beliefs – about themselves and about Others. The Athenian building programs under Cimon and Pericles publically flaunted these ideas and moral codes through detailed, metaphorically-charged artwork. The utilization of Amazons, as well as Centaurs, as images on public architecture to which every Athenian citizen was exposed had multiple implications. They represented barbarian nations, particularly the Persian enemy that the Athenians had recently fought; the strangeness and danger of not conforming to societal rituals, namely monogamous marriage and stereotypical gender roles/performance; and the threat of foreign women – especially women who potentially did not follow strict Greek gender roles – polluting Athenian blood.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the Amazon motif – especially Amazonomachies that portrayed the women warriors' defeat – began appearing in astounding quantities in the fifth-century, a period where dramatic political reform was occurring. These nomadic, horse-riding, pants-wearing women stood as the antithesis to a democratic, tightly knit *polis* that valued masculinity, citizenship, *synoikism*, marriage, and anti-barbarian sentiments. Thus, the Amazons

came to exemplify the wild, unrestrained, and barbaric past that the Athenians evolved beyond through civilizing forces, i.e. marriage, the foundation of city-states, the writing of legal codes, the creation of distinct gender categories, etc. The public rejection and overwhelming disgust toward Amazonian culture ultimately served a political purpose: to further glorify and legitimate Athens as the greatest polis in all of Greece.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Although the poets and historians who originally penned the Amazons' tales are long gone, the Amazon myth itself has endured. Throughout time and amidst countless political, technological, and social advances, people's fascination toward an exclusively female nation of beautiful, strong, and militaristically skilled warriors continues. Different generations have birthed varying versions of the ancient Amazon figure and myth, adjusting the storylines and portrayals of these warrior women to suit the needs of that particular historical moment. During the late nineteenth century, suffragists rediscovered and reinvented the concept of a matriarchal, independent, Amazonian nation of women. Writers and feminists toyed with the idea of what a singularly feminine society would look like and how it would function, utilizing ancient frameworks of various Amazon accounts as the foundation for such inquiry.

By far the most well-known modern conceptualization of the Amazon figure is Diana Prince, an Amazon-turned-superhero, within DC Comics' *Wonder Woman*. Born on Paradise Island, a secluded utopian land where no men lived, Princess Diana – later known by the world as Wonder Woman or Diana Prince, her alter ego – is the daughter of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons.⁹⁶ *Wonder Woman's* creator William Moulton Marston, an American psychologist who wrote under the pen name Charles Moulton, borrowed much of Wonder Woman's character and history from the Greeks' narratives of the Amazons. Like the Amazons described by ancient

⁹⁶ Lepore 2014: 14.

authors, Diana and her fellow Amazons are strong, beautiful, and fearsome warriors who rode horses and existed as a singularly female society. The 2017 film release of *Wonder Woman* portrayed the Amazons as intelligent and cultured women as well, fluent in hundreds of languages, well-read, and extensively knowledgeable about other civilizations throughout the world.⁹⁷

Moulton also adapted the *Wonder Woman* comics' storylines around the original myths' frameworks. Consistent with the ancient mythic and historical accounts, Moulton referenced an historical encounter between Hercules and Hippolyta.⁹⁸ Staying true to the story, he described Hercules's desire to obtain Hippolyta's belt, which is referenced here as a magical girdle that bestowed the Amazon queen with special powers.⁹⁹ In the comics, though, this girdle was a gift from Aphrodite, the goddess of love, not a token from the war god Ares as indicated in Greek accounts. Moulton also claimed that the Amazons' prosperity came crashing down upon Hercules's visit to their country. In *Wonder Woman's* version, however, Hippolyta defeats Hercules in battle, angering Hercules to the point of stealing Hippolyta's girdle and stripping her of her powers.¹⁰⁰ The loss of Hippolyta's girdle forced the Amazons to become slaves to men, a punishment they could only escape by forming their own exclusively-female nation on Paradise Island discreetly hidden from the world.

Moulton's version of the Amazon myth offers an alternative outcome for the Amazons – one that the Greeks purposefully avoided. Instead of being wholly exterminated by Hercules, the Amazons manage to escape a bleak, subservient demise. They continued living their athletic,

⁹⁷ Jenkins 2017.

⁹⁸ The *Wonder Woman* comics refer to the Greek Heracles under the Roman name Hercules, but the two names refer to the same hero's identity.

⁹⁹ Hanley 2014: 20.

¹⁰⁰ Lepore 2014: 14.

warring, and exclusively-female lifestyle by hiding on a secret island unbeknownst to the world. While the Greeks insisted the Amazons' fate must be death at the hands of a patriarchal society, Moulton allowed the concept of matriarchal civilization to survive.

Like the Amazons of ancient Greece, the figure of Wonder Woman has been politicized in numerous different ways throughout her lifetime, particularly as a tool of feminist and nationalist causes. *Wonder Woman* originated from the era of women's suffrage and the World Wars – and her creator was quite aware of this political climate. William Marston was inspired by the feminist women in his life, particularly his wife Sadie Holloway, and based Wonder Woman's character on them and other suffragettes of the early 20th century. Holloway's influence is especially evident in the comic strip. She studied Classics at Mount Holyoke, where she became quite fond of Sappho's poetry. Wonder Woman's famous explanation "Suffering Sappho!" and her habit of writing shorthand in ancient Greek is a fictionalized version of Holloway's past.

Wonder Woman was created by an individual with a feminist mindset and was specifically designed to serve a feminist purpose. Wonder Woman's feminist agenda is evident all throughout her stories. In fact, her main objective as a superhero was to preserve justice and to fight for equality – particularly equality between the sexes. This goal is stated within All-Star Comics' 1941 publication of "Introducing Wonder Woman," *Wonder Woman's* very first comic. Upon the plane crash of Captain Steve Trevor, a US Army spy, onto Paradise Island, Diana is chosen to represent the Amazons' values of peace, justice, and parity abroad where she becomes known as Wonder Woman. She ventured away from her idyllic and secluded life on Paradise Island to America in order "to fight the forces of hate and oppression."¹⁰¹ With her Amazonian

¹⁰¹ Lepore 2014: 15.

roots and abolitionist nature, Wonder Woman quickly became a feminist icon that bolstered the suffrage movement.

Beyond being well-suited for feminist causes, Wonder Woman is also a character who embodied patriotism and nationalist values. Created in the midst of World War II, Wonder Woman flaunted a red, white, and blue star-spangled uniform and possessed a menagerie of magical armaments, including golden bulletproof bracelets, a glowing Lasso of Truth, and an invisible plane. She fought the forces of evil, protected democratic values, and advocated for righteousness in the world. Even Wonder Woman's secret identity was associated with the military. When not defending society, Wonder Woman existed in the real world as Diana Prince, a bespeckled secretary who worked in a US intelligence office. Her 1942 induction into the Justice League of America alongside classic superheroes, including Superman, Batman, the Flash, and Green Lantern, further strengthened Wonder Woman's image as a proponent of nationalism. Team effort and community were huge premises behind the Justice League's formation. These superheroes could only defeat villains by working together, much like a military unit would.

Both the ancient Amazons and Wonder Woman have evolved and molded to fit the precise needs of society at any given time. Society's enduring intrigue toward exclusively feminine nations and the adaptability of the Amazon figure itself has enabled the Amazon myth to survive throughout history. Many regenerations of the original Amazons have been developed, with *Wonder Woman* being the most famous. While the ancient Amazons represented doomed figures in Ancient Greek literature, Wonder Woman exists as a modern-day Amazon who uses her powers to fight evil. Like the original Amazons, Wonder Woman's character has also evolved and molded to fit the precise needs of society at any given time. Although her outfit and

missions may alter, Wonder Woman consistently represents a feminist icon regardless of changing feminist trends. Likewise, while the intense patriotism evident during the World War I/II era has passed, Wonder Woman will always remain a star-spangled hero who protects peace, justice, and equality from forces of corruption. Through this contemporary reworking of ancient myth, the Amazons' unique, glorious, and influential legacy lives on, continuing to inspire spectacular stories of struggle and adventure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aeschylus. *Persians. Seven against Thebes. Suppliants. Prometheus Bound*. Edited and translated by Alan H. Sommerstein. Loeb Classical Library 145. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Aristotle. *Athenian Constitution. Eudemian Ethics. Virtues and Vices*. Translated by H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library 285. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935.
- Blok, J. H. 1995. *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth*. Leiden.
- Blondell, R. 2010. "Bitch that I Am: Self-Blame and Self-Assertion in the Iliad." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. 140: 1–32.
- Boedeker, D. 1998. "Presenting the Past in Fifth-Century Athens," In *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens*, edited by D. Boedeker and K. A. Raafaub, 185–202. Cambridge and London.
- Bremer, J. M. 2000. "The Amazons in the Imagination of the Greeks." *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*. 40: 51-59.
- Brown, F. S. and Terrell, W. B. 1985. "Ektilosanto: A Reading of Herodotus' Amazons." *The Classical Journal*. 80: 297–302.
- Castriota, D. 1995. "Barbarian and Female: The Other on the West Front of the Parthenon." *Notes in the History of Art*. 15: 32–38.

———. 2005. “Feminizing the Barbarian and Barbarizing the Feminine: Amazons, Trojans, and Persians in the Stoa Poikile.” In *Periklean Athens and Its Legacy: Problems and Perspectives*, edited by J. M. Barringer and J. M. Hurwit, 89–102. Austin.

Dewald, C. 1980. “Biology and Politics: Women in Herodotus’ *Histories*.” *Pacific Coast Philology*. 15: 11–18.

Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History, Volume I: Books 1-2.34*. Translated by C. H. Oldfather. Loeb Classical Library 279. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933.

DuBois, P. 1982. *Centaur and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being*. Ann Arbor.

Euripedes. *Hippolytos*. Edited by J. Michael Walton. Translated by Kenneth McLeish. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Random House, 1997.

Francis, E. D. 1990. *Image and Idea in Fifth-Century Greece: Art and Literature After the Persian Wars*. London.

Hanley, T. 2014. *Wonder Woman Unbound: The Curious History of the World’s Most Famous Heroine*. Chicago.

Hartog, F. 1988. *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*. Berkeley.

Herodotus. *The Histories*. Revised by John Marincola. Translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt. London, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972.

Hesiod. *Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia*. Edited and translated by Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library 57. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

- Hölscher, T. 1998. "Images and Political Identity: The Case of Athens," In *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens*, edited by D. Boedeker and K. A. Raaflaub, 153–183. Cambridge and London.
- Homer. *Iliad, Volume I: Books 1-12*. Translated by A. T. Murray. Revised by William F. Wyatt. Loeb Classical Library 170. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.
- Jenkins, Patty, dir. *Wonder Woman*. 2017; Warner Bros. Pictures. DVD.
- Justin. *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*. Translated J. C. Yardley. Oxford, MA: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kennedy, R. 2005. "Trusting Herodotus about Ancient Women." *Historically Speaking*. 6: 9–10.
- Lawrence, E. A. 1994. "The Centaur: Its History and Meaning in Human Culture." *Journal of Popular Culture* 27: 57–68.
- Lepore, J. 2015. *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*. New York.
- Loroux, N. 1984. *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas About Citizenship and the Division Between the Sexes*. Princeton.
- Martin-Mcauliffe, S. L. and Papadopoulos, J. K. 2012. "Framing Victory: Salamis, the Athenian Acropolis, and the Agora." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. 71: 332–361.
- Mayor, A. 2014. *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women Across the Ancient World*. Princeton.
- Mills, S. 1997. *Theseus, Tragedy, and the Athenian Empire*. Oxford.
- Munson, R. V. 1988. "Artemisia in Herodotus." *Classical Antiquity*. 7: 91–106.
- Muntz, C. E. 2017. *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Roman Republic*. New York.

- Penrose Jr., W. D. *Postcolonial Amazons: Female Masculinity and Courage in Ancient Greek and Sanskrit Literature*. Oxford.
- Plutarch. *Lives, Volume III: Pericles and Fabius Maximus. Nicias and Crassus*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Loeb Classical Library 65. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916.
- Plutarch. *Lives, Volume I: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Loeb Classical Library 46. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- Sacks, Kenneth. 1990. *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century*. Princeton.
- Said, E. 1979. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. New York.
- Shapiro, A. H. 1998. "Autochthony and the Visual Arts in Fifth-Century Athens." In *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens*, edited by D. Boedeker and K. A. Raaflaub, 127–151. Cambridge and London.
- Stewart, A. 1995. "Imag(in)ing the Other: Amazons and Ethnicity in Fifth-Century Athens." *Poetics Today*. 16: 571–597.
- Von Bothmer, D. 1957. *Amazons in Greek Art*. Oxford.
- Webster, T. B. L. 1973. *Athenian Culture and Society*. Athens.

Academic Vita

HANNAH BISBING

(717)-601-0070 | hbisbing929@gmail.com | <http://bisbingportfolio.weebly.com>

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University | The Schreyer Honors College **University Park, PA**
College of the Liberal Arts | The Paterno Fellows Program Graduation: May 2018

- Bachelor of Arts | Classics & Ancient Mediterranean Studies
- Bachelor of Science | Global & International Studies (Health & Environment focus)
- Minors in History and Psychology

Honors Thesis advised by Dr. Anna Peterson:
“Politicizing the Amazon: Discerning Ancient Greek Cultural Identity and Otherness in Fifth-Century BCE Literature and Art”

The Athens Centre **Athens, Greece**
Study Abroad Spring 2017
Studied Minoan and Mycenaean history, the archaeology of Ancient Greece and Troy, and Modern Greek language and culture, as well as traveled comprehensively throughout Greece for classwork

Honors & Awards:

- Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society (Spring 2017)
- The President’s Freshman Award (Spring 2015)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Daily Collegian **State College, PA**
Features & Culture Reporter August 2017 – December 2017

- Crafted 4 broad-ranging journalistic stories per month within this beat, including, but not limited to, those related to politics, environmental justice, and student veteran experiences.
- Analyzed current regional, national, and global events through a culture-focused lens to inform and to engage target audiences, namely students and the local community.

Interdisciplinary Social Psychology Lab **University Park, PA**
Undergraduate Research Assistant August 2017 – Present

- Worked alongside Dr. Stephanie Shields, 4 graduate students, and 2 undergraduate students during the 2017-2018 academic year to perform and to synthesize intersectional research, specifically regarding unconscious bias.
- Conducted 7 hours of in-lab research weekly, including data entry, statistical analysis, qualitative coding, audio interview transcription, and human-participant study administration.
- Created a database of literature produced by the lab, as well as discovered and organized relevant research articles for the WAGES project, an experiential learning activity that educates individuals about the cumulative effects of unconscious bias, particularly in the workplace.

Barash Media **State College, PA**
Executive Editor/Writer of *Lunch with Mimi* publication May 2016 – January 2017

- Collaborated in writing an interview-based book detailing Penn State's and State College's history that incorporates personal anecdotes from influential individuals of the community as well as the author, a 50-year resident of the area, herself.
- Edited 28 interviews, wrote 23 biographical sketches, composed the book introduction, conducted fact checking and research, transcribed handwritten material, organized images, and chose final materials for the publication.

LEADERSHIP

Schreyer Honors College Mentor

Spring 2017 - Present

- Contribute valuable academic and emotional support to a second-year honors student with comparable scholarly foci and career goals by assisting in class selection, resume crafting, and work-life balance tips.

Stand for State Ambassador

Spring 2016 - Present

- Spearhead educational, on-campus activities for Penn State's bystander intervention initiative dedicated to teaching prevention strategies against sexual assault and relationship violence.

College Democrats of America | Penn State Chapter

Fall 2014 - Spring 2017

- Served as Events Chair (2016-2017) and Outreach Committee member (2015-2016) whose duties included coordinating voting drives, guest speakers, promotional tabling, and volunteer opportunities for campaigns.
- Volunteered at the State College headquarters for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, participating in intensive voter registration, phone banking, and canvassing efforts.

INTERESTS

Competitive figure skating • Classical ballet • Yoga • Hiking • Feminist literature • Travel •
 Photography • Spicy food • Positive psychology • Coffee shops • Sketch/improve comedy •
 Environmental protection • Meaningful conversation