

The Unwanted Gaze? Feminism and the Reception of the Amazons in *Wonder Woman**

WALTER D. PENROSE JR.
San Diego State University
wpenrose@sdsu.edu

Wonder Woman, the epic block buster film of 2017, is a feast of visual delights, heroic battles, and Amazons. As the narrative unfolds, we quickly learn that the young Diana, “Wonder Woman”, is no ordinary Amazon. As Diana is a god, her superhero feats are not surprising, but even the rank and file Amazons of *Wonder Woman*’s Themiscyra live up to their ancient reputation of being smarter, better, and faster than (non-Greek) men, as the ancient Greek orator Lysias (2.4, ed. Hude) noted¹:

The Amazons were the daughters of Ares in ancient times who lived beside the River Thermodon. They alone of those dwelling around them were armed with iron, and they were the first of all peoples to ride horses, and, on account of the inexperience of their enemies, they overtook by

* — I would like to thank the *EuGeStA* editors, Jacqueline Fabre-Serris and Judith P. Hallett for their patience and assistance with this article. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers, Anise K. Strong, Yetta Howard, Vincent Tomasso, and Marice Rose for their helpful suggestions.

¹ — See further Penrose (2016) 2-4, 102-3.

capture those who fled, or left behind those who pursued. They were esteemed more as men on account of their courage than as women on account of their nature [*phusis*]. They were thought to excel men more in spirit than they were thought to be inferior due to their bodies².

In ancient Greek lore, Amazons fought like other mortals, even though they were called the “daughters of Ares”, the god of war³. And while they are represented as brave, Lysias asserts that they were successful, in part, due to the inexperience of their foes. Yet, like the Spartans, the Amazons of ancient Greek legend seemingly existed to make war, whereas their counterparts in the *Wonder Woman* film have been put on earth by Zeus for a different purpose: to bring peace by defending all that is good in the world. In fact, rather than being the “daughters of Ares”, they are Ares’ sworn enemies.

As the movie begins to unfold, the viewer is treated to Hollywood’s vision of Themiscyra, the fabled homeland of the Amazons⁴. Themiscyra is not depicted as a settlement in northern Asia Minor, as is the case in Greek authors, but rather as the chief settlement of “Paradise Island”, replete with lush landscapes, waterfalls, and battle-training for women only. Although it was not the site of Themiscyra, Apollonius of Rhodes does mention an “island of Ares” off the coast of Themiscyra that was frequented by the Amazons. According to Apollonius, the Argonauts were warned about this island by the seer Phineus, who told them to

...beach your ship on a smooth island,
Once you have driven out with all sorts of methods the ruthless birds,
Who truly in countless numbers frequent the deserted island.
There the Amazon queens Otrere and Antiope erected a stone temple to
Ares when they went to war (Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 2.382-387, ed. Fränkel).

The birds, like the Amazons, were sacred to Ares and commanded by him. In another passage, Apollonius gives further details of this island, describing a sacred black rock that the Amazons came to worship⁵. Once the Argonauts arrive at this “island of Ares” they encounter the sacred precinct erected by the Amazons:

2 — All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

3 — According to Apollonius of Rhodes (*Argonautica* 2.990-91), they were the daughters of Ares and the nymph Harmonia.

4 — The Amazons are also reported as living in various other locales, including Scythia, Libya, and the Caucasus region. See further Mayor (2014) and Penrose (2016).

5 — The concept of a sacred black rock appears in other ancient contexts, including the cult of the Magna Mater. See further Nikoloska (2012). One is also reminded of the Ka’ba in Mecca, although that would appear to be a later phenomenon.

They all assembled there between the pillars of the temple of Ares, In order to sacrifice sheep. They hurriedly gathered around the altar, which was outside the roofless temple and was made of pebbles. Inside a black stone, which was sacred, and to which all of the Amazons used to pray, stood firmly fixed (Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 2.1169-1173, ed. Fränkel).

In contrast to having a black stone sacred to Ares, Paradise Island in *Wonder Woman* has its antithesis: “the godkiller” a sword inscribed in “Amazonian script”, intended to kill none other than Ares. The godkiller is reminiscent of the Sword used by Beowulf (1687-98) to kill Grendel, which was inscribed with Runes, except that the inscription is mostly in archaic Greek lettering⁶. Furthermore, the alleged godkiller is stored in a shrine of sorts, one which, like the sword itself, resembles a medieval fortress more so than an ancient Greek temple. Indeed, it was modeled on the 13th century Castel del Monte in Apulia, Italy⁷.

The godkiller is purportedly to be used to defeat Ares, the god of war, and the sworn enemy of the Amazons. Thus the Amazons, though they train constantly for war, have a paradoxical mission: to bring peace. Yet, despite their altruistic, feminist mission, the Amazons of *Wonder Woman* became the subject of controversy after the film’s release, with director James Cameron calling the film a “step backwards” for feminist cinema because it objectifies the body of Gal Gadot, who stars as the Amazon Princess Diana, “Wonder Woman”⁸. Patti Jenkins, the director of *Wonder Woman*, justified Gal Gadot’s costume, saying “That’s who she is; that’s Wonder Woman. I want her to look like my childhood fantasy”. Jenkins further responded that Cameron could not understand the film (which has been hailed by some as a “rare achievement for feminists in Hollywood”) “because he is not a woman”⁹. Indeed, Cameron seems to have missed the boat, focusing only on costumes but not on substance. By comparing the film to the ancient Greek legend of the Amazons as

6 — The inscription is not in Greek despite being in Greek lettering, with the addition of one rune (the ↑ Anglo-Saxon rune, representing a t sound), and a †, indicating a word break. The inscription is actually a quotation from Joseph Campbell. See further Vincent Tomasso, *Post #24: It’s All Greek to Her: The Inscriptions on Wonder Woman’s Equipment in ‘Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice’*, <http://www.rebootthepast.net/home/2016/9/25/post-24-its-all-greek-to-her-the-inscriptions-on-wonder-womans-equipment-in-batman-v-superman-dawn-of-justice>, Retrieved on November 17, 2019. Comparison could be made to ex-calibur as well, except that the ‘god-killer’ turns out not to be the god-killer; the power is Diana herself, not the sword.

7 — “Castel del Monte in the Apulia region was used for the interior shots of the tower where the sword is kept and where Diana retrieves the God killer sword in Themyscira”, <https://adventure-girl.com/travel-destination/18-wonder-woman-film-locations/>, retrieved on July 31, 2019. <https://www.movie-locations.com/movies/w/Wonder-Woman.php> retrieved on November 18, 2019.

8 — Freeman (2017).

9 — Chason (2017); Chow (2017).

well as the Wonder Woman comics, I will demonstrate that the film, via the comic books, does bring a feminist portrayal of the Amazons, including the star Amazon, Wonder Woman, to the forefront. Like the original Wonder Woman story developed by William Moulton Marston, in conjunction with his wife Elizabeth Holloway Marston and his mistresses Olive Byrne Richard and Marjorie Wilkes Huntley, the film deploys the Amazon myth in a feminist manner, especially when contrasted with the ancient Greek legends of the Amazons. In some ways Marston stayed true to the myths of the Amazons, while in others he inverted the legends. In so doing, he argued for women's rights, employment, and salvation from patriarchy. He used the Amazon myths as a background to bring a feminist message (and along with it, a positive portrayal of classical themes) to the masses, and this was no small achievement.

I will begin by examining the pertinent Amazon myths used by Marston and later Zack Snyder and Allan Heinberg, the author and screenwriter of the 2017 film script, noting their originary purpose in ancient Greek culture. Next, I will explore the reception of the Amazon myths in the original Wonder Woman comics, paying careful attention to the ways in which Marston adapted the legends to suit his feminist agenda, and, not without controversy, to incorporate his ideas regarding homoeroticism as well as bondage and domination into them. Finally, I will discuss the reception of the Amazons in the 2017 *Wonder Woman* film, underscoring the feminist achievement of the filmmaker and director in providing not just the first epic female superhero to hit the top of the box office, but also in incorporating a female gaze, and highlighting the physicality, autonomy, and social values of the Amazons in what may be dubbed the first world premier of Themiscyra, the legendary, utopian homeland of warrior women who freed themselves from the bonds of patriarchy.

The Amazons in Greek Lore and Iconography

The myth of the Amazons was used by the ancient Greeks for a variety of purposes, which changed over time. Like centaurs, giants, and other fantastic creatures, the Amazons functioned in myth as a means of marking cultural and sexual differences of imaginary beings from the Greeks themselves. Myth is "interpreted and reworked by every teller", and is expressed through a communication process which, as Humphreys has noted, includes symbols "the relationship of which is not explicitly made in narrative but is supplied by the social experiences of the audience"¹⁰. The Greeks considered myth to be instructive, providing "examples with

10 — Humphreys (1978) 241.

known outcomes for imitation or avoidance”¹¹. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to give an exhaustive account of the Amazon myth and its uses within Greek culture, I shall here focus on those aspects of the legends that are incorporated, in one way or another, into the Wonder Woman comics and film.

The Amazons appeared in the earliest Greek literature, including the *Iliad* of Homer and the *Aithiopis* of Arctinus. In Homer (*Iliad* 3.189, 6.186), the Amazons are called *antianeirai*, or “the equals of men”. The noun *Amazones* is thought to be an ethnic designation, which, under other circumstances, would be masculine. It is unusual in that it is treated grammatically as a plural feminine noun, being modified by the compound adjective, *antianeirai*, which, due to its unusual feminine ending (-*ai*) is unambiguously feminine¹². The Amazons of epic are a group of women only; the epithet *antianeirai* precludes any idea that this “ethnic group” included men. Whereas the gendered division of labor in epic is generally absolute (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 6.490-3), the Amazons are an exception to this rule; they fight and make war like men. As they are the equals of men, heroes “have to prove their privilege” with respect to these rivals¹³. In the Greek mindset, Amazons are women who perform the feats of men¹⁴. Arctinus’ *Aithiopis* is no longer extant, but a fifth-century summary of it by Proclus (*Chrestomathia* 2) gives us a hint of what it once said: “The Amazon Penthesilea, daughter of Ares, Thracian by race” came to the aid of the Trojans who were then besieged by the Greeks¹⁵. Penthesilea is called a daughter of Ares, thus suggesting that she is divine, or at least semi-divine, unless, of course, the phrase is metaphorical¹⁶. Apollonius of Rhodes explains that the Amazons were the offspring of Ares and the nymph Harmonia, and that they “were exceedingly savage and knew not that which is right” (*Argonautica* 2.991-2). In any event, although she acts heroically [*aristeousan*], Penthesilea is killed by Achilles. Hardwick asserts that “the Amazons had a stock role as an index of heroic achievement.

11 — Tyrrell (1982) 1.

12 — Risch (1974) 24e; Blok (1995) 158-172.

13 — Blok (1995) 173.

14 — According to Blok, the Homeric Amazons “embody an essential ambiguity in masculinity and femininity... It might even be suggested that the creation and maintenance of such an intensely ambiguous figure is only conceivable in the imaginary world of myth”. Blok (1995) 174-5.

15 — That Penthesilea is here called Thracian is of interest, suggesting that Arctinus’ understanding of Penthesilea’s ethnicity was different from the way in which Homer conceived of the Amazons themselves as an ethnic group. Amazons are shown wearing Thracian outfits and holding Thracian shields, *peltae*, in Greek vase painting. See further Shapiro (1983) esp. 105-10; Blok (1995) 148, 216-17; Mayor (2014) 96-8; Penrose (2016) 5, 8, 16, 68-9, 83, 87, 95-6, 101-2, 105, 116-7, 120, 126-33.

16 — Blok notes that the motif of the Amazon comes into much clearer focus in Arctinus, who attempts to provide the Amazons with a “clear-cut identity in terms of location and descent”. This, in turn, “reflects a desire to give the Amazon motif a more specific function in the epic material”. Blok (1995) 217.

Their figurative importance is the product of an aristocratic way of looking at the world”¹⁷.

Similarly, Heracles fought the Amazons as a mark of his *aristeia*, which translates to “excellence” or “prowess”¹⁸. The ninth of his twelve labors, which he performed to satisfy Eurystheus, was to retrieve the *zōstēr* of the Amazon queen Hippolyte. The term *zōstēr* is often translated as “girdle,” but appears to have referred more so to a warrior’s belt¹⁹. While Heracles (Hercules in Latin) forcibly takes Hippolyte’s *zōstēr* from her in many versions of the myth (e.g. Diod. Sic. 2.46.3-4; Pausanias 5.10.9; Quintus Smyrnaeus *Posthomerica* 6.240-45; Hyginus *Fabulae* 30), in other versions Hippolyte gives Heracles her belt willingly. (This she also does in the 1942 comic book *Wonder Woman #1*, as I will discuss below). In one instance, she does so to ransom another Amazon who has been captured by Heracles (Apollonius of Rhodes 2.966-69), but according to Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibliothēke* 2.5.9), she went to Heracles’ ship to greet him upon his arrival. Learning that he had come for her *zōstēr*, she offered to give it to him. But Hera, Heracles’ nemesis, sowed discord among the Amazons, who attacked the ship. Fearing that Hippolyte had betrayed him, Heracles slew her and took the *zōstēr*.

Whether Heracles’ intention was to seduce Hippolyte, force her to sexually submit to him, or simply to kill her and bring the belt back as proof, depends upon which version of the myth one subscribes to. Although the literary sources on Heracles’ Ninth Labor date from the Classical, Hellenistic, or later periods, the combat between Heracles and the Amazons is depicted on numerous archaic Greek vases²⁰. Whereas a number of scholars assert that Heracles sought to take Hippolyte’s *zōstēr*, and her virginity along with it, Bremmer asserts that a translation of “girdle” for *zōstēr* is imprecise²¹. According to the *LSJ*, a *zōstēr* is both “a warrior’s belt, probably of leather covered with metal plates” and, later, the equivalent of a *zōnē*, a woman’s belt, which is defined as “the lower girdle worn by women just above the hips”²². The *zōnē* was “a much lighter and more decorative attribute” than the *zōstēr*²³. At the temple of Athena Apatouria, young girls would offer their *zōnai* to the goddess before marriage (Paus. 2.33.1). When the young women became preg-

17 — Hardwick (1990) 15.

18 — *LSJ* s.v. *aristeia*.

19 — *LSJ* s.v. *zōstēr*; Mayor (2014) 254.

20 — Devambez (1981) esp. 587-94 nos. 1-110, 634, 639; An Etruscan mirror depicts an encounter between Hercle (Heracles) and Heplenta (Hippolyta), in which Heplenta looks down sadly while Hercle clutches her arm. Mavleev (1981) 657 no. 15.

21 — Bremer (2000) 53.

22 — *LSJ* s.v. *zōstēr*, *zōnē*.

23 — Bremmer (2000) 53.

nant, they would in turn be offered *zōstēres*. Thus the *zōnē* would appear to have been the “chastity belt” of a virgin, but a *zōstēr* could be worn by a chaste wife, at least in certain contexts.

While the two terms may have been used interchangeably in other contexts, it would make more sense for Hippolyte, a warrior woman, to wear a *zōstēr*. Regardless, wearing such protective armor *and* fighting would protect her chastity from invaders. Bremmer notes, however, that Heracles never approaches, and hence never penetrates Hippolyte in extant vase paintings²⁴. Dowden, more convincingly, suggests that rape could have been part of the conquest²⁵. The loosening of the “girdle” or “belt” (however one chooses to translate *zōstēr*) is suggestive of a sexual act.

Heracles had been accompanied by Theseus in some versions of the myth, and Theseus was known for his capture of and marriage to the Amazon Antiope (though in some versions Hippolyte takes Antiope’s place). There are two versions of the tale of Antiope and Theseus of which I am aware. In one version of the myth, Antiope is abducted by the beguiling Greek Theseus, but in another she falls in love with him. (Wonder Woman’s departure to the “world of men” is a modern version of the tale of Antiope, the Amazon who leaves Themiscyra, albeit one which gives women more agency, a point to which I will return below). Pausanias (1.2.1) relates both traditions: “Pindar says that this Antiope was abducted by Peirithous and Theseus, but Hegias of Troezen writes an account of her as follows: Heracles was besieging Themiscyra on the Thermodon but he was not able to take it. Antiope, however, having fallen in love with Theseus – for Theseus was at that time campaigning with Heracles – surrendered the city”. In Pindar’s version, Antiope is a helpless captive (though the Amazons do attack Athens in retaliation), whereas in Hegias’ version, she is a traitor to her sister Amazons. Wonder Woman takes bits from Hegias of Troezen’s account, and that of Bion as preserved by Plutarch (Theseus 26.2): “And Bion says that even this [Amazon: Antiope] he [Theseus] took by deception: for the Amazons being by nature friendly to men did not flee from Theseus when he landed on their shores, but sent him gifts; he summoned the one who brought the gifts to board the boat; she embarked and he put out to sea”²⁶.

24 — Bremmer (2000) 53.

25 — “Perhaps the view that Leto undid her *zōstēr* for childbirth (Pausanias 1.31.1) should encourage us not to be too pedantic about any differences between *zōstēr* and *zōnē*”, Dowden (1997) 100.

26 — According to Isocrates (*Panathenaicus* 193-4), it was Hippolyte, not Antiope, who transgressed the norms of the Amazons by falling in love with Theseus and following him to Athens. Their offspring was thus named Hippolytus (Eur. *Hippolytus*).

As a result, the Amazons attacked Athens to recover Antiope. The Amazons were ultimately either defeated by the Athenians, as in Lysias (2.5), or unable to take the city, and signed a truce, as in Plutarch (*Thes.* 27). Whereas the purpose of the Amazons in heroic episodes was to “embellish the virtues and achievements of the heroes”, once they left their homelands and marched upon Greece, their purpose seemingly morphed into serving as an outside other against whom Greek superiority could be measured²⁷. Yet, from the perspective of the Amazons, the account of the invasion depicts the importance of sisterhood among the Amazons, a theme that would be reiterated in the Wonder Woman comics and 2017 film, both literally and figuratively. According to Pausanias (1.16.7), Antiope’s sister, Hippolyte, led the Amazons to Athens to fight for the return of Antiope. Having been defeated by the Athenians, Hippolyte escaped with the few remaining Amazons to Megara and there died of a broken heart. Furthermore, according to Lysias (2.4-5), although the Amazons were successful in subduing barbarian men – largely because they had invented the use of iron weapons and were the first of their kind to ride horses – they were ultimately defeated by the Athenians. Lysias asserts that “when they encountered noble men, they acquired spirits like their nature; and... they appeared to be women”²⁸. Whereas the Amazons prior to defeat “serve to expose tensions within the societal division between the sexes in terms of roles and attributes”, after defeat, “their weak, feminine nature is paramount”²⁹.

The Amazonomachy, the battle between the Amazons and the Greeks, was an important decoration on both vases and public monuments, especially after the Persian invasion of Greece³⁰. The details of the Amazon invasion are similar to those of the Persian invasion; hence the latter account may have inspired the former (Paus. 1.15.3; Hdt. 8.52)³¹. Amazons are sometimes depicted wearing Persian trousers in vase painting, though this may occur before the Persian invasion, ca. 500 BCE³², although perhaps not before the Ionian uprisings in 499/98 BCE, supported by the Athenians, that precipitated the Persian invasions of Greece.

Whether Amazons in Greek myth should be treated as an external threat, as analogous to barbarians (especially after the Persian invasions of 490 and 480/79 BCE), or as an internal threat, analogous to Greek or

27 — Hardwick (1990) 23.

28 — Trans. Penrose (2016) 2.

29 — Deacy (1997) 155, 157.

30 — See further Devambez (1981) 586-624, 636-53, nos. 1-571; on Etruscan Amazonomachies, see Mavleev (1981) 654, 658-62, nos. 27-51.

31 — Hall (1993) 115.

32 — Vaness (2002) 99.

Athenian women, is a matter of much debate³³. The frequency in which Amazons are “vanquished” on Attic vases may have some correlation with the declining status of women in Athens during the 6th century BCE, as Athens transitioned from being an oligarchy to a democracy³⁴. In Greek art, the Amazonomachy reinforced patriarchy’s assessment of women as inferior to men. On an Attic red-figure volute krater, dated to ca. 470-460 BCE and attributed the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs, an Amazon who is about to be killed has an exposed breast (**fig. 1**). The revealed breast indicates her vulnerability³⁵.



Fig. 1 – Amazonomachy on a red-figure volute krater attributed to the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs. The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rogers Fund, 1907; 07.286.84. Retrieved on August 1, 2019 from https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS7731421_7731421_11655928

33 — See e.g. Goldberg (1998); Vaness (2002).

34 — Goldberg (1998) 89-100.

35 — Cohen (1997) 73-79.

Similarly, one breast is exposed on the Landsdowne Amazon, and her chiton is drawn up (**fig. 2**). Stewart asserts that her depressed demeanor indicates that “she has clearly been raped”³⁶. Havelock argues that the message to women was “behave like an Amazon and you will be overcome”³⁷. From a male perspective, such depictions probably had an erotic significance³⁸, although the sensitivity of expression suggests that we look beyond the eroticism.

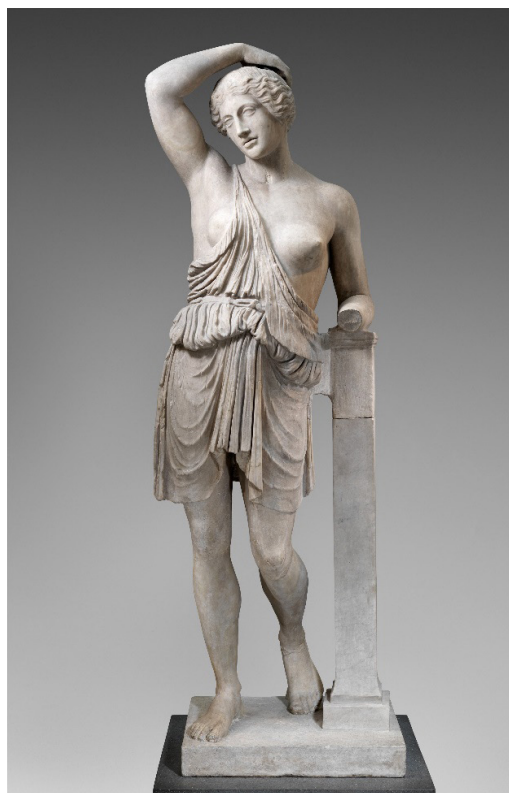


Fig. 2 – The Landsdowne Amazon. Marble; 1st-2nd century A.D. The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932; 32.11.4. Retrieved on August 1, 2019 from https://library.artstor.org/asset/SS7731421_7731421_11780326

³⁶ — Stewart (1990) 162.

³⁷ — Havelock (1982) 47.

³⁸ — See further Cook (1975) 8; DuBois (1982) 54; Blundell (1998) 62; Blanshard (2010) 20-21; Penrose (2016) 16, 68, 82.

In Herodotus (4.114), whose interests were geographical and ethnographic in addition to historical, the Amazons are represented as the polar opposites of Scythian women, who, in turn, are seemingly projections of Greek women³⁹. Herodotus (4.110-113) tells us that after capturing the Amazons at Themiscyra, in retaliation for their attack upon Athens, the Greeks set sail to take the captive Amazons back to Greece. The Amazons, however, mutinied and killed all of the Greek sailors. As they did not know how to sail, being equestrian, not maritime women, they drifted to Scythia. Not knowing how to return to Themiscyra, they set up camp on the shores of Scythia. The Amazons next encounter young Scythian men, and the two groups decide to partner with one another. As they discuss the terms of their unions, the Amazons assert that they cannot live with the Scythians, because Scythian women live in wagons and perform only “women’s work”, whereas the Amazons shoot the bow, throw javelin, and have never learned said “women’s work” (4.114)⁴⁰. Thus, they convince the Scythian men to leave their families of origin, and to form a new tribe, the Sauromatians. The Amazons’ assertion places them in “direct opposition to the then developed conventions of the Greek *oikos*”⁴¹. They were thus an “other” through which the Greeks defined their own norms.

In Greek “literary discourse, the metaphor of marriage, as a founding and sustaining act of culture, was set against that of war, *polemos*. Equals were to exchange women; those outside the circle existed in an agonistic relationship to the body of citizens”⁴². Women were necessary to reproduce the *polis* but were not allowed to participate fully in the political process. Part of the project of the Greek *polis* was to control women’s reproduction. This was fully realized with the passage of Pericles’ citizenship law of 451/50, which allowed Athenian men to marry only Athenian women whose fathers were Athenian citizens and mothers daughters of Athenian citizens. Aeschylus calls the Amazons “*parthenoi* fearless in battle” [*machas atrestoī*], “man-hating” [*stuganores*] and “manless” [*anandroi*] (*PB* 416, 723-4; *Suppliant Women* 287)⁴³. They reject marriage, the ultimate destiny for a Greek woman, thus defining her through opposition. In Greek patriarchy, marriage was used to control the sexuality of women and ensure the legitimacy of offspring⁴⁴. Marriage was associated with

39 — Hartog (1988) 216-8; Hardwick (1990) 17; Penrose (2016) 114-5.

40 — According to Diodorus (2.44) Scythian women did make war “like men”. Diodorus’ assertion is supported by burials of women with weapons discovered in Scythian kurgans. See further Penrose (2016) 4, 67, 101, 105-6, 108-115.

41 — Hardwick (1990) 17.

42 — DuBois (1982) 5.

43 — *Parthenoi* were unmarried girls or women. The term *parthenos* is often translated as “virgin” but was used of unmarried females who had experienced intercourse. Sissa (1990) 73-123.

44 — Tyrrell (1984) 31, 52.

civilization and hence culture by the Greeks; those who refused it were not civilized, not cultured, and, ultimately, not Greek⁴⁵. The Amazons are vanquished in Greek literature and art because they refuse marriage⁴⁶. They control their own bodies, and do not allow men to do so for them⁴⁷.

In fact, the first-century BCE historian Diodorus presents the Amazons not as a single-sex, separatist society but rather as the dominators of men in a matriarchal setting⁴⁸. Diodorus (2.45.1, 3.55.1-2) calls the Amazons an *ethnos gynaiokratoumenon*, or a “nation ruled by women”⁴⁹. Diodorus elaborates upon this idea, asserting that the Amazons took the roles of men in their societies, and broke the legs of their male relatives, thus forcing them to be domestic laborers. Thus the roles of both women *and* men were reversed in this later version of the myth. It is not apparent why the Amazons morph from a single-sex society of women only into a matriarchy, although Ken Dowden suggests that “without men at all, they are an un-society, an impossible society, which it is the job of ethnographers to convert into viable (but unattested) matriarchies. From the perspective of actual societies, Amazons are only part of a society masquerading as a whole”⁵⁰. That women might rule over men was appalling to Heracles, thus he attacked and defeated the Amazons according to Diodorus (3.55.3)⁵¹. Hence, the Greeks saw the Amazons as a threat to patriarchy.

Although the Amazons are dressed as men on many Greek vases, their Greek opponents are often nude, both on vases and in reliefs. Nudity expresses heroism and invulnerability, and is seemingly suggestive of Greek male superiority⁵². Whether the Amazons shunned men or dominated them, the Greek myths seemingly present them as a menace. The Greek male was centered in the Amazon myths and art; he was the subject whereas Amazons were objects, so to speak. Yet there is also potentially a message of female independence and empowerment that lurks under the

45 — DuBois (1982) 39-42.

46 — E.g. Hardwick (1990) 21; Blundell (1998) 55-6; Blondell (2005) 198.

47 — According to Tyrrell, the two imperatives of patriarchy are marriage and the bearing of legitimate offspring. “The reverse situation – women in charge of their own bodies – makes it impossible to identify the son with the father, a situation which in Greek polar thinking is deemed sexual abandon and bestiality”. Tyrrell (1984) 31.

48 — Blok (1995) 172 n. 71 notes that “Ephoros (ad. Steph. Byz. s.v. Amazones) is the first known source to present the Amazons as women belonging to a ‘normal,’ mixed group, who eventually reduce the male youths to the status of dependent men and fulfil traditional male roles themselves”. In this passage of Stephanus, however, the Amazons are considered ‘the race of women’ who are ‘now’ called Sauromatides.

49 — Diodorus locates the Amazons both along the Thermodon (2.45) but also in Libya (3.53). He describes their migration from Libya to Asia Minor.

50 — Dowden (1997) 97-8, citing Dowden (1992) 152-4; Tyrrell (1984) ch. 2.

51 — Deacy asserts that “Like the numerous other prodigies that Herakles encounters and defeats, the Amazons are inimical to civilization. They have an organized society, but a perverted one governed by women”. Deacy (1997) 155.

52 — Bonfante (1989); Blondell (2005) 201; cf. Bassi (1995) 5-8.

surface of the Amazon legends, if only these women could resist defeat and survive⁵³. William Moulton Marston, the creator of Wonder Woman, would tap into that potential in his later repurposing of the Amazon myths.

William Moulton Marston and the Women Who Influenced his Feminism

In the comic books that he wrote, Marston used both the Amazons, and, of course, his own creation, the Amazon Diana who becomes Wonder Woman, to illustrate his theories of female superiority. Marston was a first-wave feminist, at least in the sense that he ascribed to essentialist notions of gender⁵⁴. He argued that peace would only be possible when men learned to submit to a loving authority: women⁵⁵. He further suggested that the world would ultimately become a matriarchy, although he predicted this would only happen 1,000 years into the future⁵⁶. Only women had the temperament to create peace; men were too prone to competition, anger, and ultimately war. Before detailing how Marston used the Amazons to illustrate his theories in the Wonder Woman comics⁵⁷, I will briefly discuss Marston's career prior to Wonder Woman, and his personal life. Both of these factors were important influences in his adaptation of the Amazon myths and his creation of the Wonder Woman character. Although Marston is given all the credit for creating Wonder Woman, the idea for her originated with his wife, Elizabeth Holloway Marston, according to their son⁵⁸. Furthermore, Marston and Holloway lived in a polyamorous relationship with two other women: Olive Byrne Richards and Marjorie Wilkes Huntley. These women also seem to have contributed to the creative process of developing Wonder Woman, and also served as inspirations for Marston's stories.

William Moulton Marston was born and raised in Massachusetts, as was his wife Elizabeth Holloway. The couple met at a grammar school in

53 — Musonius Rufus (apud. Stobaeus 2.31.123=150A-151B), a Roman contemporary of Diodorus who wrote in Greek, asserted that women should be educated to obtain *andreia* in order to defend their chastity, using the Amazons as an example of courageous women that others could imitate. See further Penrose (2016) 50-2.

54 — The term "feminism" has changed over time. Whereas first wave feminists largely sought suffrage and other rights, the idea that there should be no hierarchy of gender roles, and that men and women are inherently equal, is more of a second wave feminist ideal. I say this at the risk of oversimplification; the definition of "feminism" has varied greatly. Lepore asserts that "the fight for women's rights hasn't come in waves" — it has been a continuous struggle. Lepore (2014) 296.

55 — Richard (1942).

56 — Marston (1937).

57 — The Wonder Woman story was published in three different comic books: *All Star Comics*, *Sensation Comics*, and *Wonder Woman*.

58 — Lepore (2014) 186-7; 367 n. 12.

Clifftondale, and were married in 1915⁵⁹. Elizabeth earned a bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College, a progressive women's institution, where she studied Greek and was particularly fascinated by the poetry of Sappho. At Mount Holyoke, she was exposed to cutting-edge ideas and became both a suffragist and a feminist⁶⁰. Suffragists sought the vote for women (a singular goal), whereas feminists sought broader rights for women, including full political rights but also the right to work⁶¹. Feminists rejected the idea that women had no sexual appetite and sought the right to use birth control, thus keeping sex separate from reproduction. The term feminist had come into wide circulation by 1913, and overlapped with the concept of a modern "Amazon". The term "Amazon" was used to describe women who left home to seek higher education, thus positioning themselves to later become part of the work force⁶². In the nineteenth century, J. J. Bachofen had included the concept of the Amazons in his description of prehistorical matriarchy, a promiscuous phase that preceded the development of patriarchy. These theories appealed to suffragists and feminists, and were used as evidence that women were as capable as, or even more capable, than men⁶³. First-wave feminists modified the myth of matriarchy, however, to remove the promiscuity from the matriarchal phase of civilization⁶⁴.

Marston was also a suffragist; in fact, he was a member of the Harvard Suffragists' club. He and Holloway went on to law school after completing their bachelors degrees, and he obtained a Ph. D. in Psychology from Harvard as well. He is credited by some as being the inventor of the lie detector test, which shows up in the Wonder Woman comics both as itself, and as Wonder Woman's golden lasso, which is more than a lie detector test⁶⁵. It compels the person it binds to do whatever the binder commands, including – but not limited to – telling the truth⁶⁶. After his marriage to Sadie Elizabeth Holloway, who changed her name to Elizabeth Holloway Marston, William Moulton Marston met a young woman named Olive Byrne while teaching at Tufts University⁶⁷. She was a student in his class. Byrne became Marston's research assistant and lover. She was the niece of the renowned suffragist, birth-control activist, and

59 — Lepore (2014) 3–44.

60 — Lepore (2014) 13–23.

61 — Lepore (2014) 19.

62 — Lepore (2014) 16–17.

63 — Eller (2011) 15, 99, 117–27; Lepore (2014) 16.

64 — Eller (2011) 121.

65 — See further Call (2013) 27–8; Lepore (2014) 35–6, 56–72, 77–8; Berlatsky (2015) 7, 189–90.

66 — In later versions of the *Wonder Woman* comics, it only compels the bound to tell the truth. Berlatsky (2015) 7, 217 n. 5.

67 — See further Lepore (2014) 110–118.

author, Margaret Sanger, and daughter of the famous Ethel Byrne, who had almost died from engaging in a hunger protest while imprisoned in New York State for her role in opening a birth control clinic in Brooklyn. Marston introduced her to Elizabeth, and ultimately insisted to Elizabeth that he wanted Olive to move in with them. When Elizabeth said no, he threatened to leave and divorce her, so she finally gave in. In the 2014 biographical film, *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women*, the relationship between the two women is depicted as a lesbian love affair, or, perhaps better stated, as a menage-a-trois with William Marston. Elizabeth's initial reluctance to have this polyamorous, live-in relationship is attributed to fear of gossip and societal, homophobic reprisal. The evidence does not necessarily support this "reading", though it remains a possibility⁶⁸. Elizabeth desired to continue working, but also wished to have children. By agreeing to bring Olive into the relationship, she was able to continue her career after giving birth, because Olive stayed at home to care for the children⁶⁹.

Olive wore bracelets, which were surely the inspiration behind Wonder Woman's bracelets that repelled bullets⁷⁰. Her aunt and mother, both staunch feminists, surely were inspirations for Wonder Woman as well⁷¹. Although she falls in love with Steve Trevor, Wonder Woman resists his seductive efforts, and embodies economic self determination by working to support herself as Diana Prince (in addition to disguising herself).

Marston left Tufts at the end of the spring semester in 1926. It is not known whether he was fired, but this seems highly probable. He took a position as a lecturer at Columbia University, but learned in early 1928 that his position would not be renewed for the following academic year. He applied for a position at Harvard, but a damning letter of recommendation sealed his doom, preventing him from ever holding a regular academic appointment again⁷².

Either Marston's investigations into bondage/domination practices at a sorority, or his polyamorous personal life (which involved students, such as Olive Byrne, clearly), or both resulted in his being blacklisted from future academic appointment(s)⁷³. In the 1920s, Marston, his wife Elizabeth, their live-in partner Olive, and Marjorie Wilkes Huntley, a third woman who sometimes stayed with the Marstons and seems to have been involved with them, attended a sex cult in Boston. Specifically, it was a "cult of female sexual power" held at the apartment of William Marston's aunt,

68 — See also Hanley (2015) 135; Berlatsky (2014) 149-52.

69 — Lepore (2014) 124-6.

70 — Richard (1942).

71 — See further Lepore (2014) esp. 87-97; Marston (1937).

72 — Quoted in Lepore (2014) 130-31.

73 — Lepore (2014) 131.

Carolyn Marston Keatley⁷⁴. A 95 page diary records the proceedings of what Jill Lepore suggests may have been a “sexual training camp”⁷⁵. The women were divided into “Love Leaders”, “Mistresses”, “Mothers”, and “Love Girls”. A Love Leader, a Mistress, and a Love Girl together formed a constellation. The diary refers to Marston’s DISC theory (Dominance, Inducement, Submission, Compliance, which will be discussed below).

In his published psychological works, in particular *The Emotions of Normal People*, Marston asserted that emotions such as “fear, rage, pain, shock, desire to deceive, or any other emotional state whatsoever containing turmoil and conflict” were not normal⁷⁶. In contrast, he considered emotional responses that “produce pleasantness and harmony”, to be normal. In his *Try Living* monograph, targeted towards a more popular audience than *The Emotions of Normal People*, Marston argued that “love emotions”, specifically captivation and passion, lead to happiness⁷⁷. Captivation is domination, “the active, attracting aspect”, whereas passion comes from the desire to submit to domination. Marston argued that there were four primary emotions: Dominance, Inducement, Submission, and Compliance (Hence the acronym DISC was used to describe the theory). According to Marston, the optimal emotions were inducement and/or submission. Those who can truly induce another psychologically will feel more satisfied than if they merely dominate another person with force. On the other end, if a person can willingly submit to the desires of another, that person will feel more satisfaction than if they merely comply with that person’s request with an unwillingness to fully submit. Inducement and submission were the positive emotions, whereas dominance and compliance were negative feelings. Inducement consisted of persuading the other person to submit willingly; dominance meant forcing someone who was unwilling to do something against their will. Marston later deployed Wonder Woman and her Amazon mother Hippolyte to instill these ideas in the American public.

Marston’s scholarship was based, in part, upon experiments that he had conducted on young women students at Tufts, where the women engaged in bondage, domination, and submission with one another and reported their feelings to Marston and his assistant, who was also one of his mistresses, Olive Byrne. Marston’s *The Emotions of Normal People* did not make a big splash, but his Wonder Woman comics published more than a decade later, certainly did. Marston used Wonder Woman as a vehicle

74 — Lepore (2014) 118.

75 — Lepore (2014) 119.

76 — Marston (1928) 1-2; for a synopsis of Marston’s theories see Rhodes (2000).

77 — Marston (1937) 103.

to communicate his theories to the masses, and in this he was ultimately quite successful.

One might question Marston's feminism, inasmuch as he engaged in what were then deemed (and certainly would now be deemed, especially in feminist circles) unethical practices, including being sexually involved with a student. And yet the Wonder Woman comics are considered to have paved the way for the later 2nd-wave feminist movement of the 60s and 70s, whose leaders, such as Gloria Steinem, grew up with Wonder Woman⁷⁸. In the formative years of the Golden Age of Comics from 1941 to 1947, when the Wonder Woman comics were written by Marston, there was a decidedly feminist message delivered to the public. The Wonder Woman comics were immensely popular and had a large readership. Admittedly, 90 % of the readers were male, and, although the original Wonder Woman artist, Harry G. Peter, did not portray a hypersexualized Wonder Woman, later artists certainly would. As DiPaolo notes, "artists and merchandisers have sold Wonder Woman posters, action figures, and comics that represent her as a wet dream in a star-spangled thong and not [as] a "real" woman with a life beyond the one conferred on her by a lecherous male gaze"⁷⁹. This quote is particularly applicable to later renditions of Wonder Woman, most especially those drawn by Mike Deodato, Jr., where Wonder Woman is wearing a thong⁸⁰.

The original Wonder Woman created by Marston and Peter is not wearing a thong, and Peter's renditions of Wonder Woman are not hypersexualized like later versions of her. Her outfit, like those of her Amazon compatriots, was perhaps daring for the 1940s, when a woman was supposed to wear a skirt to her knees, although swimsuits and sportswear of that era were a bit more revealing. Wonder Woman's outfit was designed to be patriotic, even if it did take the shape of a one-piece swimsuit for all intents and purposes. She was garbed in a red, white, and blue star-spangled outfit that announced her American patriotism loudly and clearly⁸¹. Marston surely understood that presenting a superhero who "was as beautiful as Aphrodite" would sell more comics⁸². The other 10 % of the original readers were girls, and those girls did benefit from the messages of empowerment contained in said comics, which I will discuss below. In an era when women wore skirts to their knees, Marston created a superhero who wore the equivalent of a bathing suit in public. Clothes

78 — Hanley (2014) 89.

79 — DiPaolo (2007) 71.

80 — Robbins (1996) 162 fig. 182b, 166; Stanley (2005) 158; Frankel (2015) 144-5.

81 — Emad (2006).

82 — Frankel (2015) 39, writes: "It's undeniable that her minimal clothing was meant to make her popular with male readers. But Wonder Woman herself doesn't believe that she's dressing salaciously".

can be confining, and part of second-wave feminism (women's liberation) in the 1970s was about removing the confining layers of clothing and undergarments that hindered movement.

In a 1937 interview conducted at the Harvard Club in New York City, Marston predicted that "within 100 years the country" would see the beginnings of a trend toward "an Amazonian sort of matriarchy". Within 500 years, he predicted a battle of the sexes for political control, and full-on matriarchy within 1,000 years⁸³. In an interview conducted in 1942 by none other than Olive (Byrne) Richard and published in *Family Circle* magazine, Marston argued that women were "nature-endowed soldiers of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, and theirs is the only conquering army to which men will permanently submit – not only without resentment or resistance or secret desires for revenge, but also with positive willingness and joy!"⁸⁴. When asked by Olive Richard (who interviewed "Bill" while pretending that she barely knew him) if men would ever stop fighting, Marston replied: "Oh, yes. But not until women control men". Women had more love to offer than men, he asserted, whereas men had greater appetite. Appetite made men aggressive; submitting to women's love would calm them. In any event, despite the rich panoply of both ancient and modern sources available to him, the core of Marston's theory of matriarchy was developed from his own psychological theories.

Nevertheless, Marston used the Amazon myths to explain the origin of his superhero, Wonder Woman, and to reinforce his philosophy of matriarchy. It is clear that Marston knew of these myths. His version takes bits and pieces of the various myths, collects them together, and modifies them to suit a more feminist agenda than what we see in the Greek sources. As I will discuss below, Marston's feminism was complicated by his own fetishism, but nevertheless delivers a message of female empowerment⁸⁵. As to Marston's knowledge of the Classics, several sources arise. First of all, long after Marston's death, his wife, Elizabeth Holloway Marston said that her husband "studied Greek and Latin myths in high school. With that as a background, you can see that it was part of his background, so to speak"⁸⁶. Of course, an education in the Classics was par for the course in the early 20th century. Sheldon Mayer, an associate editor at DC Comics

83 — Marston (1937).

84 — Richard (1942). Olive Byrne took the last name of Richard after she had children, alleging that she had once been married but was a widow. The children were actually Marston's; Olive Byrne never married. Richard was a pseudonym of sorts.

85 — An excellent discussion of the controversies surrounding whether the bondage and domination in Wonder Woman is feminist or not can be found in Berlatsky (2014) 13-73. Berlatsky (2014) 13 writes: "The Marston/Peter *Wonder Woman* comics were both feminist and filled with bondage imagery". See also Call (2013) 27-57.

86 — Quoted in Daniels (2001) 22.

who worked on the Marston/Peter Wonder Woman comics, asserted that Marston “used the mythological business of the Amazon”, although “he took some liberties with it”⁸⁷. His wife, Elizabeth Holloway Marston, had been trained in ancient Greek as a student at Dorchester High School and later at Mount Holyoke College. Ancient Greek was her favorite subject, and Sappho was her favorite author. In fact, she died at the age of 100 with a copy of Sappho’s poems on her bed stand. Their son, Pete Marston, asserted that Wonder Woman was Elizabeth’s idea. “Come on, let’s have a Superwoman”, she said to her husband Bill. “Never mind the guys”⁸⁸. Of course, Marston could have (and probably did) read the sources in translation, if not in the original. But, as mentioned above, it also seems clear that the women in his life played a role in the creation of Wonder Woman, even though the details of how this happened remain somewhat of a mystery.

Marston also seems to have been influenced by Charlotte Perkin Gilman’s 1915 *Herland*, a story of Amazonian women living in Africa⁸⁹. The men in their society had been killed off long ago, and the women procreate by parthenogenesis (asexual reproduction)⁹⁰. A group of explorers discovers this lost land of self-sufficient women concealed in the African hinterlands and eventually marry some of the women. The tale has many elements of the stories of Antiope and Theseus, as discussed above. The introductory story of Wonder Woman takes elements from both the ancient sources and *Herland*, and possibly from Inez Gillmore’s *Angel Island*, a story of an island of winged women. The winged women on Angel Island are ultimately discovered by men, who clip their wings. The women transform from angelic creatures into Amazons. In other words, men took their freedoms away and give them no choice but to fight back. All of these early 20th century stories, of course, were inspired by the Greek myth of the Amazons. Transmission of classical myths may not be straightforward. That said, much of Greek myth does appear in the Wonder Woman comics, although it is repurposed to suit the needs of a modern context⁹¹.

87 — *Ibid.*

88 — Her remarks were reported in her obituary: Marston (April 3, 1993). Pete Marston made similar comments in an interview with Steve Korte on July 29, 1999. DC Comics Archives. See Lepore (2014), 186-7; 367 n. 12-13. Lepore notes that “Holloway herself was more likely to say that she never had anything to do with Wonder Woman: ‘I’ve always had my own work and pay which meant that there was no time left over for Wonder Woman nor was it necessary,’ she wrote”.

89 — Gilman (1915/1999) ; Lepore (2014) 86.

90 — Gilman (1915/1999) 47.

91 — “...the narratives, characters, and symbols found in canonical texts take on new dimensions as they are repeatedly absorbed and filtered through subsequent historical-cultural sensibilities, in media ranging from comic books to television shows to video games”. Safran and Cyrino (2015) 1.

The Amazons in Wonder Woman

The Amazons of the comic series inhabit Paradise Island, where there are no men. That quickly changes when Steve Trevor crash lands and is badly injured (see fig. 3). Emad notes that “When Capt. Steve Trevor’s plane mysteriously crashes on Paradise Island, this triggers the beginning of rendering the familiar strange and presenting utopian ideals for social reform, which Marston sets into motion with a gender-reversal image that becomes a continuous trope throughout the comic book’s history...”⁹². Diana saves Steve Trevor, falls in love with him, but takes the role of protector and guardian, instead of becoming hopelessly dependent upon him.

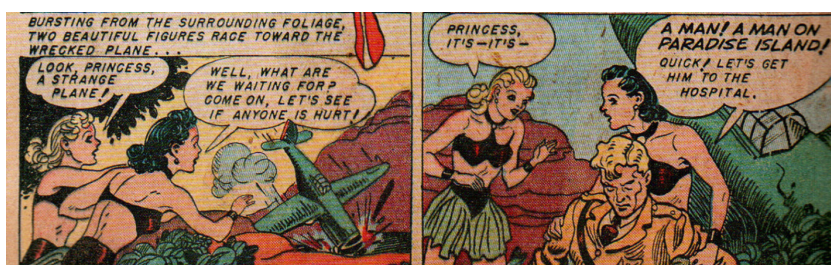


Fig. 3 – “Introducing Wonder Woman”. *All Star Comics* #8 (Dec. 1941-Jan. 1942). Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics (Marston and Peter (2016a) 11)

At the command of Aphrodite, the Amazons decide to return Steve Trevor to the land of men. Princess Diana, the daughter of Hippolyte queen of the Amazons, insists upon taking him herself. But her mother Queen Hippolyte does not let her go easily; she is only permitted to do so after winning an athletic competition. This is also a gender role-reversal of sorts when compared to the story of the suitors vying for the hand of Helen through an athletic competition. As suggested above, Wonder Woman’s departure to the “world of men” is a modern version of the tale of Antiope, the Amazon who leaves Themiscyra, but with a difference in agency⁹³.

⁹² — Emad (2006) 958.

⁹³ — Cf. Lepore (2014), 86-87, who asserts that “Wonder Woman’s origin story, in which Captain Steve Trevor crashes his plane on Paradise Island and Diana, princess of the Amazons falls in love with him – an attachment that is both a violation of Amazon law and a threat to her independence – comes straight out of Eastman’s poem and Gillmore’s novel”. Indeed, Marston may have been influenced by these early twentieth century authors, but there are obvious parallels to the myth of Theseus and Antiope.

When Wonder Woman returns Steve to the army hospital, she accidentally drops a scroll that explains the origin of the Amazons⁹⁴. The scroll, written in archaic Greek, is quickly deciphered by an archaeologist at the Smithsonian, one Dr. Hellas, who exclaims it to be the greatest find from antiquity yet. “The planet earth” begins the ancient script “is ruled by rival gods, Ares god of war, and Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty”. “My men shall rule with the sword” exclaims Ares, whereas Aphrodite exclaims “My women shall conquer men with love” (fig. 4). Aphrodite’s prediction that her women will conquer men with love illustrates Marston’s theory of a future matriarchy, with men submitting to the loving authority of women⁹⁵.

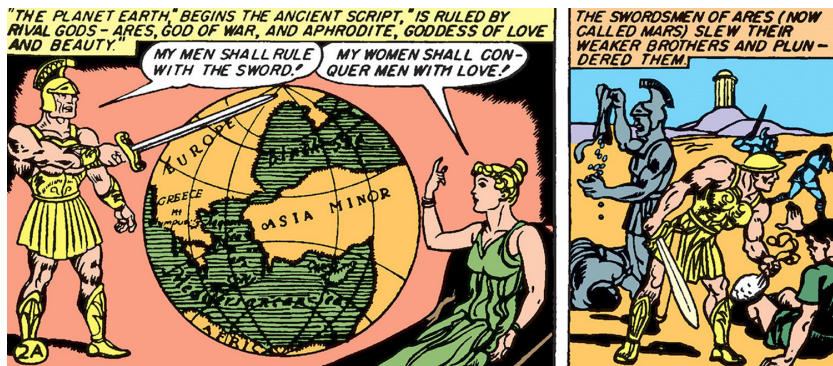


Fig. 4 – “The Origin of Wonder Woman” *Wonder Woman #1* (Summer 1942). Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics (Marston and Peter(2016a) 149)

Ares is presented as “co-ruling” the earth with Aphrodite. Ares’ men then enslave the women. Marston narrates that, after the conquest of Ares, “Women were sold as slaves, they were cheaper than Cattle”. Thus Marston illustrates patriarchy’s exchange of women⁹⁶. In response, Aphrodite created a “race of super women, who were stronger than men” whom she called Amazons. (This correlates, at least to some extent, to

⁹⁴ — Marston (2016a) 148 = *Wonder Woman #1 Summer 1942*.

⁹⁵ — In the 2017 movie, Aphrodite has been killed off, whereas in the comic book, Aphrodite is alive and well, and interacts with Wonder Woman and the Amazons. While the ancient Amazons worshipped Ares, the god of war in ancient Greek lore, the Amazons of Paradise island are the sworn enemies of Ares.

⁹⁶ — According to Justin (2.4), the Amazons of ancient lore, after their husbands had been killed off, refused remarriage to neighboring men, calling it “slavery, not matrimony”.

the early 20th century definition of “Amazons” as women who left the home, obtained an education, and worked, living independently. WAACS and WAVES (women in the armed forces) were called Amazons as well, perhaps unsurprisingly. Aphrodite then gave her own “magic girdle” to the Amazon queen, Hippolyte. Ares, who is now called Mars, is furious that Aphrodite had created new women stronger than men, and vows revenge against his sister. He thus inspires Hercules to make war on the Amazons⁹⁷. Hercules, “the strongest man in the world”, challenges Hippolyte to a duel. Hippolyte’s magic girdle helps her to prevail over Hercules in battle, so he resorts to “treachery”⁹⁸. At Hippolyte’s insistence, he swears not to attack the Amazons again, in exchange for being set free. He then invites the Amazons to a banquet in his men’s tents to seal their “pact of eternal friendship”. He then seduces Hippolyte and asks to hold her girdle, after she admits that “thou art strong as Ares – without this magic girdle I could never have conquered thee!”. After Hippolyte admits the source of her strength (the girdle) to Hercules, he makes his opportune move: “Let me hold thy girdle, O queen, just to touch it will send my spirits soaring since thou hast worn it”. “I ought not – but I cannot resist thee”, says Hippolyte, both wary of Hercules but yet love-stricken, as she hands the girdle over to Hercules. He then raises the battle cry, has his men seize and bind the Amazons, and Hercules commands the looting of their city, Amazonia. Hippolyte, helpless and in chains, next prays to Aphrodite, who takes pity on her, responding to say “You may break your chains, but you must wear these wrist bands always to teach you the folly of submitting to men’s domination”⁹⁹. The Amazons now rise up against the Greeks, recover the magic girdle, board the Greek ships, defeat the Greeks guarding them, and sail away to Paradise Isle, where they build a “splendid city” (which, though not named in this origin story, would be labelled Themiscyra in later Wonder Woman comics and ultimately the 2017 movie).

The Amazons’ rebellion against their Greek captors in *Wonder Woman #1* is reminiscent of the well-known story of the Amazons told by Herodotus (4.110-19), whereby the Amazons, taken captive by the Greeks on ships, mutiny against their captors. The Amazons do not know how to sail, and thus wind up in Scythia, where they marry Scythian men and form the new Sauromatian tribe. (This is the only ancient myth of the Amazons in which they defeat the Greeks of which I am aware). In *Wonder Woman #1*, the Amazons also rise up against their Greek captors, defeating

97 — Marston (2016a) 150.

98 — Marston (2016a) 151.

99 — Marston (2016a) 152. Hence Wonder Woman wears her bracelets, and loses her strength if a man chains them together.

them on land but also on their harbored ships. The Amazons then take the ships and sail to Paradise Island, led by Aphrodite. Aphrodite provides them a safe harbor, safe from men, that is. In a sense, Marston reverses the myth provided by Herodotus, as the Amazons begin by living among men, but wind up living alone.

Although much of the story of Hippolyte's "girdle" is derived from Greek myth, the Marston version has a decidedly more feminist ending, with the Amazons prevailing and ultimately escaping from men rather than being defeated. Furthermore, the story serves as a warning for young girls and even older women readers not to trust men while simultaneously reinforcing feminist ideals of self-determination, bodily autonomy, and reproductive choice. Like Charlotte Perkin Gilman's *Herland*, Paradise Island is a feminist utopia, where women are free from the chains of patriarchy, and war, caused by men, is not present.

Marston's comics portrayed his philosophy and predictions. In *Wonder Woman* #7, Wonder Woman is allowed to see into the future on the Amazon "Magic Sphere"¹⁰⁰. What she sees is herself being elected president¹⁰¹. This, of course, is what Marston had predicted, as the "Women's Party" first defeats the "Men's Party" in the year 3,000 A.D.

Wonder Woman fights misogyny. The dichotomy between good and evil, America and Nazi Germany, etc. is often boiled down to a battle of the sexes, such as Wonder Woman, representing America and its promotion of women's rights, versus Ares, representing the war, the oppression of women, and, of course, the Nazis. Mars is more than just a god of war in the comic series, he is a representative of patronizing misogyny at its worst. In *Wonder Woman* #5, *June/July 1943*, we read that "Mars, the War God, present ruler of this World, receives unpleasant information from his slave secretary. 'Here is the report you asked for – there are eight million American women in war activity. By 1944 there will be eighteen million!' 'Hounds of Hades!' the sexist Mars retorts: 'Women! This smells like more of Aphrodite's work!'"¹⁰². Mars is vehemently opposed to women working outside the home; he ultimately represents, in one sense, the oppression of women. In contrast, Wonder Woman urges women to "Get Strong" by joining the WAACs or WAVEs to "earn your own living", thus reaffirming the feminist goal of economic self-determination for women.

Wonder Woman strives to empower women on other levels as well, both physical and mental. In *Wonder Woman* #13, Diana returns to Paradise Island, where young Amazons have begun to doubt their own

100 — Marston (2016a) 731.

101 — Marston (2016a) 743.

102 — From "Battle for Womanhood", *Wonder Woman* #5 (June/July 1943); Marston (2016a). Lepore (2014).

abilities “to perform superfeats”¹⁰³. Wonder Woman encourages the girls, jumping 150 feet into the air and snapping chains. “You see girls”, she says, “there’s nothing to it!”. She is shown (fig. 5) in a 1943 illustration drawn by Harry G. Peter (the original artist of Wonder Woman) breaking off the chains of “Prejudice, Prudery, and Man’s Superiority”.



Fig. 5 – Reprinted from *The American Scholar*, Volume 13, No. 1, Winter 1943/44. Copyright © 1943 by The Phi Beta Kappa Society

The drawing accompanied an article published by Marston in *American Scholar*, the journal of Phi Beta Kappa, which was entitled “Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics”¹⁰⁴. Wonder Woman’s breaking free from such bonds harkens back to suffragists who wore

103 — Marston (2017) 545-6.

104 — Harry G. Peter, pen and ink drawing in Marston (1943-44).

chains during protests¹⁰⁵. Lucy Burns, one of the leaders of the National Women's Party who had been arrested multiple times in 1917, was beaten and chained to her jail-cell door¹⁰⁶. She and her co-founder, Alice Paul, and others had gone on hunger strikes while imprisoned. Shortly thereafter, in January 1918, Woodrow Wilson finally announced his support for Women's Suffrage. The suffering of these suffragists had not been in vain, even if it had been insufferable.

Amazons, Holliday Girls, and Sisterhood in Wonder Woman

Perhaps one of the most feminist aspects of Wonder Woman is her association with other women, both the Amazons and the sorority sisters of Beeta Lambda, the "Holliday girls", who, for all intents and purposes, take the place of Diana's sidekick Amazons in "the world of men"¹⁰⁷. The sisters of Beeta Lambda assist Wonder Woman in apprehending various criminals. Like Amazons, they are tough and fearless; and none is tougher or more fearless than Etta Candy, Wonder Woman's main sidekick and president of the Beeta Lambda sorority. The idea of women working together to further their own betterment is one of the underlying precepts of feminism. In fact, the most vocal of Wonder Woman's critics, Fredric Wertham, who was certainly no fan of feminism, pointed this out in his invective. He reveals the anxiety that such sisterhood could invoke in men:

The homosexual connotation of the Wonder Woman type of story is psychologically unmistakable. The *Psychiatric Quarterly* deplored in an editorial the "appearance of an eminent child therapist... which portrays extremely sadistic hatred of all males in a framework which is plainly Lesbian".

For boys, Wonder Woman is a frightening image. For girls she is a morbid ideal. Where Batman is anti-feminine, the attractive Wonder Woman and her counterparts are definitely anti-masculine. Wonder Woman has her own female following. They are all continuously being threatened, captured, and put to death. There is a great deal of mutual rescuing... Her followers are the "Holliday girls", i.e. the holiday girls, the gay party girls, the gay girls. Wonder Woman refers to them as "my girls"¹⁰⁸.

For Wertham, the homosocial environment of Holliday College, the cooperation among the young women, and, one might suggest, some of their kinky bondage and domination schemes, making pledges submit

105 — Lepore (2014), 84-6.

106 — Lepore (2014) 48, 52. Clift (2003) 150-2.

107 — Berlatsky (2014).

108 — Wertham (1954) 192-93. See also Berlatsky (2015) 131; Lepore (2014) 265-271.

to them, as well as the “masculine” activities of apprehending criminals, all seemed to lead to lesbianism, a point to which I shall return shortly. While Wertham saw the camaraderie of young women as a threat, Gloria Steinem later saw it as novel and welcome:

Wonder Woman’s family of Amazons on Paradise Island, her band of college girls in America, and her efforts to save individual women are all welcome examples women working together and caring about each other’s welfare. The idea of such cooperation may not seem particularly revolutionary to the male reader. Men are routinely depicted as working well together. But women know how rare and therefore exhilarating the idea of sisterhood really is¹⁰⁹.

Yet Steinem also noted that what Marston was arguing for was not really feminism, but rather “female superiority”. She writes:

Marston’s message wasn’t as feminist as it might have been. Instead of portraying the goal of full humanity for women and men, which is what feminism has in mind, he often got stuck in the subject/object, winner/loser paradigm of the “masculine” versus “feminine” and came up with female superiority instead... No wonder I was inspired but confused by the isolationism of Paradise Island: Did women have to live their lives separately in order to be happy and courageous? No wonder even boys who could accept equality might have felt less than good about themselves in some of these stories: were there *any* men who could escape the cultural instruction to be violent¹¹⁰?

Of course, the feminist separatism of the Amazons is derived directly from the Greek myths. In the stories of the Amazons told by Strabo (11.5.1), the women of the Amazons met with the neighboring tribe of the Gargarians only once a year to copulate. They raised the daughters, and gave the boys back to the Gargarians. Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4 F 167), calls the Amazons *arsenobrephokontoi*, or, “male infant-killing”, suggesting that they didn’t even give the boys away, but rather committed infanticide with them. The idea of “female superiority” can also be attributed to the myths as well. As noted above, Diodorus Siculus (2.45), relates that the Amazons lived in a matriarchal fashion, breaking the legs of their menfolk and making them perform domestic labor while the women fought and hunted. In other words, the world of Diodorus’ Amazons was an inversion of patriarchy, a matriarchy, and hence “inimical to civilization”¹¹¹.

And whatever Steinem’s thoughts were on Paradise Island, the concepts of matriarchy and Amazons had broad appeal to feminists of the 1970s.

109 — Steinem (1972) 2. See also DiPaolo (2007) 156.

110 — Steinem (1995) 276-77.

111 — Deacy (1997) 155.

In fact, the one thing that all feminists of the 1970s agreed upon, at least according to Hanley, was that they loved the Amazons¹¹². That's where the agreement ended; "the rise of lesbian feminism in the 1970s, for example, presented women with some very thorny questions about the noncontinuities between sex and politics and resulted ultimately in internal sex wars within feminist and lesbian and lesbian feminist communities"¹¹³.

Some lesbian feminists wished to live completely apart from men, just like the Amazons, and the comics of Wonder Woman may well have constituted their first exposure to the ideology of feminist separatism as young girls. These women joined with other "radical feminists", establishing a platform that went beyond what the "liberal feminists" sought. Whereas the liberal feminist, like others, sought equal social and political rights as men, radical feminists argued that the only way to fight patriarchy would be to tear it down altogether¹¹⁴. Radical feminists argued that working with the government or participating in marriage and traditional child care could only keep women down. Some felt that pornography was demeaning to women, and sought to rid society of its influence. By avoiding marriage and having no interaction with men, women could be free of patriarchy. Of course, this worked better for lesbians than for others. By seeking to have an existence completely separate from men, these "radical feminists" were modern-day "Amazons" in the truest sense of the word. The Wonder Woman comics provided an example with visions of the utopian, manless Paradise Island.

Amazons and Love Binding

The Amazon society of Paradise Island was based upon "love-binding" among women, and between the goddess Aphrodite and the Amazons. The Amazon practice of bondage, domination and submission, of course, echoed Marston's theory of emotions, as did those of the similarly homo-social Holliday girls. The homoeroticism in both groups is a subtext which can be read in, if the reader so chooses. In that sense, Wonder Woman is like films of its time; codes of conduct prohibited explicit mention of lesbian relations, but that did not stop authors, artists, and filmmakers from hinting at lesbian and gay themes which the reader or viewer could infer¹¹⁵. While there is no explicitly lesbian content in *Wonder Woman*, the implications are everywhere. Bondage and domination are recurring themes among both the Amazons and the Holliday Girls, with strong homosocial and homoerotic overtones.

112 — Hanley (2014) 204-5.

113 — Halberstam (1998) 113.

114 — Hanley (2014) 199-200.

115 — See further Russo (1995) esp. 63-123.

When visiting Atlantis in *Sensation Comics* #35, Wonder Woman subdues female guards. As she tackles and binds one of the guards, she exhorts: “This is what we Amazons call the kitten hold! On Paradise Island where we play many binding games, this is considered the safest method of tying a girl’s arms!”¹¹⁶ (figs. 6 and 7).

In figure 6, Wonder Woman, wearing high-heeled boots with her lasso tied to her belt, looks like a fashionable dominatrix. And while she handles the Atlantean guard somewhat roughly, pulling her head through her legs by the hair, her naming of the position as “the kitten hold” suggests erotic play, as well as Marston’s idea of submission to a loving authority. In figure 7, as she binds the other woman’s hands while sitting on top of her, Wonder Woman invokes the need for safety as part of an Amazon ethics of seemingly eroticized bondage play.



Fig. 6 – “Girls Under the Sea” *Sensation Comics* #35.
(November 1944) Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics
(Marston and Peter (2017) 333)

116 — Marston (2017) 330.



Fig. 7 – “Girls Under the Sea” *Sensation Comics* #35.
(November 1944) Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics
(Marston and Peter (2017) 333)

On Paradise Island the Amazons incorporate bondage into their worship of Aphrodite. They are willingly bound by Hippolyte to show their submission to her authority, and by Princess Diana as well. According to Hanley “The Amazons incorporated bondage into their society as an expression of trust to emphasize that their utopia was based on kinship with a hierarchy of submission. All of the Amazons were committed to their patron goddess Aphrodite; love was their very foundation”¹¹⁷. Since there are no men on Paradise Island, there is an homoeroticism suggested by all of this.

Bondage in the Wonder Woman comics, however, serves multiple functions. As noted above, it can be representative of patriarchy. The Baroness Paula von Gunther is enslaved to the Gestapo as an agent because they hold her daughter as a captive¹¹⁸. Similarly, her slaves are bound by “fascism” to her. They are forced into overcompliance, resulting in negative emotions per Marston’s theory of emotions, rather than being induced into willing submission, a far more pleasant experience per Marston. Wonder Woman theorizes that, “if girls want to be slaves,

117 — Hanley (2014) 50.

118 — Marston (2016a) 376.

there's no harm in that", but explains that "the bad thing for them is submitting to a master or to an evil mistress like Paula! A *good* mistress could do wonders with them!"¹¹⁹. The kind of domination enacted by male masters is categorically rejected, and only one kind of dominator is considered fit for the task: a dominatrix. The slavegirls of Mars, a typical "sexist tyrant", in the stories, eat on the floor and wear leashes like dogs¹²⁰. "Theirs is a humiliating, dehumanizing bondage, quite distinct from the empowering Amazon kind". Bondage is used among Amazons to express love and submission, although it is also used to detain villains, criminals, and other adversaries. Even then Wonder Woman is reticent to hurt others, however; she tends to bind her captives and then send them to Reform Island, where they are rehabilitated from their erring ways. This contributes to yet another feminist goal, the attainment of peace. In both cases, the use of bondage seems more in line with BDSM practices than it does with law enforcement, as in the latter case one might not have time to be "gentle" while apprehending dangerous criminals. BDSM is a "compact acronym which points to three intimately related, yet quite distinct practices. Each of these practices is designated by a pair of linked terms, and each pair of terms appears in the larger acronym: bondage and discipline (BD), dominance and submission (DS), sadism and masochism (SM)"¹²¹. Each of these three practices is unique, although there are clear overlaps from one to the next. Furthermore, the practice of BDSM, at least when following a scenario of "best practices" involves an ethical code of conduct. Similarly, when we see Wonder Woman tying up Atlantean guards, she follows an Amazonian code of conduct. This is not derived from any Greek source of which I am aware, but rather seemingly stems from William Moulton Marston's own psychology and practice, a practice to which he was perhaps exposed by Marjorie Wilkes Huntley¹²². "For Marston, bondage was about submission, not just sexually but in every aspect of life. It was a lifestyle, not [just] an activity, and he used bondage imagery as a metaphor for this style of submission"¹²³. Marston did not necessarily approve of sadism, the enjoyment of inflicting pain¹²⁴. "The only hope for peace is to teach people who are full of pep and unbound force to enjoy being bound", Marston wrote. Men desire to submit to

119 — Marston (2016a) 374.

120 — Call (2013) 46.

121 — Call (2013) 1.

122 — See further Lepore (2014) 56-7.

123 — Hanley (2014) 47.

124 — Marston saw sadism as an abnormal emotion, but was quick to note that "[m]ild whipping, spanking, or other forms of subjecting force, applied to the body of the person captivated may not necessarily constitute sadism *provided that the individual subjected is not injured physically or emotionally, and provided that the captivatress seeks to subject the other individual only in those ways that will evoke maximum pleasantness in the other individual*. Marston (1928) 385; Richard (1940).

women, because women are “nature-endowed soldiers of Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, and theirs is the only conquering army to which men will permanently submit”¹²⁵.

Amazons on Paradise Island enjoy being bound; they often walk around with their hands tied. “Female dominance offered the key to a sustainable, loving, happy relationship. Male dominance, on the other hand, slid too easily into an oppressive, patriarchal configuration”¹²⁶. Marston argued against Freudian assessments of female dominance and male submissiveness as unnatural and pathological¹²⁷. In fact, he argued for the opposite, asserting that female dominance was the ultimate good.

Amazons, Holliday Girls, and Lesbianism in *Wonder Woman*

The homoeroticism in *Wonder Woman* is subtle, but can be inferred¹²⁸. Etta Candy is *Wonder Woman*’s sidekick and head of the Beeta Lambda sorority, also called the Holliday girls. The Holliday girls serve as a “stateside substitute for the Amazons”¹²⁹. In ancient Greek tragedy, the Amazons are described as *anandroi* “man-less” and *stuganores* “man-hating” by Aeschylus (*Suppliant Women* 287; *Prometheus Bound* 723-4). Like an Amazon, Etta expresses her lack of use for men in *Wonder Woman* #1. Etta Candy lives up to her name; she likes eating candy and is not concerned that it makes her plump. Diana chides her for her indulgence, saying “But Etta, if you get too fat you can’t catch a man –”, to which Etta replies “Who wants to? When you’ve got a man, there’s nothing you can do with him – but candy you can eat!” (see figure 8).

125 — Richard (1942).

126 — Call (2013) 51.

127 — Call (2013) 34-5.

128 — See further Young (2018) 228-32.

129 — Robinson (2004) 40.



Fig. 8 – “Wonder Woman Versus the Prison Spy Ring”
Wonder Woman #1 (Summer 1942) Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics
 (Marston and Peter (2016a) 189)

Noah Berlatsky astutely notes that Etta is wearing a rather “butch” cowboy outfit (as is Diana, in her military hat, shirt, and tie, despite the skirt (the only military woman’s option at the time) and that Etta’s mouth is aligned with Diana’s crotch as she discusses eating “candy”. Lillian Robinson argues, seemingly sarcastically, that “Etta’s reply is categorical and seemingly free of double entendre”¹³⁰. Berlatsky takes this to mean that rather than saying that “there is no sexy lesbian content” present in the panel, Robinson is actually arguing that there is such content visible to the reader if not to Etta herself. Berlatsky suggests that the eating of candy can be understood as a “direct and deliberate allusion to lesbian oral sex”, and further argues that any reading of this panel (and he offers three possibilities) must be understood as powered by its “relationship to the closet”¹³¹. Even if Marston had intended for the scene to have lesbian overtones, they had to remain implicit rather than explicit. This was, after all, the 1940s and Marston was writing, ostensibly, for children. Nevertheless, “Etta’s disavowal of romantic interest in males is important”, as it points to a crack in the closet, so to speak¹³².

130 — Robinson (2004) 41.

131 — Berlatsky (2014) 131, 133.

132 — Berlatsky (2015) 132.

Yet there is one final point that must be noted about this panel. On the opposite side of the railroad car sits a man. While Diana Prince and Etta Candy pay him no mind (an interesting reflection given their respective statements), he stares over at the two young women, particularly at Etta. He is a voyeur who seems to be rather interested in the two women flirting, or, perhaps better stated, in Etta's flirting with Diana¹³³. Berlatsky suggests that the man could possibly represent Marston himself¹³⁴. While Marston approved of female homoeroticism, he also saw it as part of a broader polyamory¹³⁵. His approval of female homoeroticism may have stemmed, at least in part, from his own polyamorous relationship(s), though the evidence is not entirely conclusive¹³⁶.

Yet another lesbian implication in *Wonder Woman* is the frequent invocation of the name of Sappho, although much of this, interestingly, occurred under later authors after Marston's death in 1947. One of *Wonder Woman*'s stock phrases was "Suffering Sappho" (see fig. 9).



Fig. 9 – "Villainy Incorporated" *Wonder Woman* #28
(March 1948). Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics
(Marston and Peter (2016b) 67)

133 — See Belatsky (2015) esp. 152.

134 — Berlatsky (2015) 152.

135 — Female homoeroticism, he suggested, could prepare young women for making love to men. Not only did such erotic and romantic activity make one woman a better lover, but it also made her a better mother. Marston (1928) 338; Berlatsky (2015) 152.

136 — See further Daniels (2001) esp. 76; Lepore (2014) *passim*.

Given Elizabeth Marston's penchant for reading Sappho, the source of this phrase, like the idea of Wonder Woman herself, can probably be attributed to Elizabeth¹³⁷. Sappho does directly mention the suffering of young women, who were presumably sent away from Lesbos upon their marriages. The most explicit of Sappho's fragments suggests the loss that one of Sappho's beloved is feeling upon her marriage, and hence impending departure from Sappho's presence:

"I simply wish to die".
Weeping she left me
and said this too:
"We've suffered terribly
Sappho I leave you against my will."
I answered, go happily
and remember me,
you know how we cared for you,
if not let me remind you
...the lovely times we shared.

Many crowns of violets,
roses and crocuses
...together you set before me
and many scented wreaths
made from blossoms
around your soft throat
...with pure, sweet oil
...you anointed me,
and on a soft, gentle bed...
you quenched your desire...
...no holy site...
we left uncovered,
no grove... dance
...sound¹³⁸.

Sappho's erotic and emotional involvement with other women is suggested by the remnants of her own work¹³⁹. While there is some contro-

137 — After Marston's death in 1947, the Wonder Woman comics were written by Robert Kanigher. On Feb. 4, 1948 Elizabeth wrote to Kanigher to explain what exclamations were appropriate, and which were not. "Avoid 'Vulcan's Hammer'" she implored, "Preferred: 'Suffering Sappho'", quoted in Lepore (2014) 23.

138 — Fr. 94, ed. Voigt, trans. Rayor. The only complete poem written by Sappho to survive from antiquity is, without question, homoerotic (fr. 1, ed. Voigt). See further Rayor (1991) 51 no. 1, 160-61; DuBois (1995) 7-9.

139 — The extent to which Sappho's poetry is autobiographical, or even if it is at all autobiographical, is disputed. Lardinois, for example, argues that Sappho's poetry was publicly performed in the context of wedding ceremonies, where laments such as that found in Sappho fr. 94 quoted here function as part of a ritual. The bride and her friends would lament the loss of her former life and

versy over whether Sappho's poems are autobiographical, in the early 20th century Sappho was extremely popular at women's colleges, and the term lesbian, derived from Sappho's place of origin, Lesbos, was increasingly used to describe women who were romantically and/or erotically involved with other women¹⁴⁰.

To a classicist specializing in gender studies, the phrase "Suffering Sappho" makes a world of sense. But in the 1940s and 1950s, it was enough to cause an uproar. Indeed, after Marston's death, Dr. Frederic Wertham published a book entitled *Seduction of the Innocent*, in which he purported that the Wonder Woman comics promoted lesbianism¹⁴¹. Marston had endorsed female homoeroticism in his published psychological work, *The Emotions of Normal People*, and the characters in Wonder Woman, especially Wonder Woman herself, tended to espouse his ideas, as I have discussed above.

In *The Emotions of Normal People*, Marston asserted that it was normal for young girls of the ages of "five or six years, or older" to experience passive love for other girls, "with or without mutual stimulation of the genital organs"¹⁴². Furthermore, he explicitly explained how two women could have clitoris-to-clitoris sex, otherwise known as tribadism¹⁴³. Not even Freud had explained how such stimulation occurred; Marston describes the possibility of mutual genital stimulation between women as a "little known" fact¹⁴⁴. He also asserts that "women's expression of passion emotion in relationship with other women" is important in the emotional life of women¹⁴⁵. "I was aware from personal observation that young women living together in a home might evoke from one another extremely pleasant and pervasive love responses, without bodily contact or genital excitement. Upon investigating, with the invaluable aid of my collaborators, the love relationships between girls and women outside the influence of college authorities and home life, however, I found that nearly half of the female love relationships concerning which significant data could be obtained, were accompanied by love stimulation"¹⁴⁶.

friends, as she would go to live with the groom's family. Lardinois (2001) 80-93. According to Hallett (1979) 453, "the surviving fragments of Sappho's poetry do not provide any decisive evidence that she participated in homosexual acts".

140 — Lepore (2014) 22.

141 — Wertham (1954); Daniels (2001) 103. See further above.

142 — Marston (1928) 303.

143 — Marston (1928) 318.

144 — *Ibid.* See further Berlatsky (2015) 146; Halberstam (1998) 65.

145 — Marston (1928) 337.

146 — Marston (1928) 337-38.

The Reception of Amazons in the 2017 *Wonder Woman* Film

Patti Jenkin's 2017 film presents the Amazons in an archaizing fashion. They wear leather armor and use swords and bows and arrows instead of guns (as compared to the Amazons of the 1940s Wonder Woman comics, who do have guns, airplanes, and other current and even fantastic technology, such as a "magic sphere" which can even see into the future). The most impressive of Wonder Woman's attributes, the golden lasso of truth, is seemingly more magical than technological. It is also not an aspect of Greek myth but rather stems from Marston's life: he invented, or was at least one of the inventors, of the lie detector test¹⁴⁷. In the movie, the Amazons use their golden lasso to extract the truth from Steve Trevor as to his identity.

Steve is an interloper in what certainly counts as a "queer" world – that of women who shun men, the Themiscyra of ancient Greek lore. The film nonetheless quickly dovetails into heteronormativity as Diana falls in love with Steve Trevor. Yet it at least seems to be a feminist version of heteronormativity. Diana is ultimately the protagonist, though Steve Trevor is more of an equal to her (minus her superpowers) than the Steve Trevor of Marston's comics, who plays more of a "damsel in distress" role than that of a co-eval. Diana's evolution from a young child to a grown, wise woman fits fairly neatly into a narrative pattern of the hero's journey, or, perhaps better stated, the superhero's journey¹⁴⁸.

In this, the casting of a woman in a role usually reserved for a man, and also in its cinematography, the film is decidedly feminist. Patti Jenkins uses what has been termed in Hollywood as the "female gaze", as opposed to the "male gaze" as theorized by Laura Mulvey in her canonical 1975 essay¹⁴⁹. Mulvey argued that the typical film had used a male perspective in filming, with women typically being objectified and eroticized as passive characters in contrast to dominant male figures. The "male gaze", Mulvey argues, is not limited to the viewer but exists within the film itself, with male actors doing the looking and women being looked at. *Wonder Woman*, in contrast, employs the "female (Amazon) gaze" most notoriously in one scene, where Diana does the looking¹⁵⁰. She

147 — Lepore (2014) 36; Hanley (2014) 11; Call (2013) 27-8; Berlatsky (2015) 8.

148 — The story of Diana as presented in the 2017 film fits somewhat, although not totally, into all three of the integrated "myth paradigms" discussed by Salzman-Mitchell and Alvares (2018) 25-27: "(1) the coming-of-age narrative (2) the Hero's Quest or journey, and (3) the marvelous-child paradigm".

149 — Mulvey (1975); on the 'female gaze' in Starz *Spartacus*, see Strong (2013); in other films made by women, see Malone (2018).

150 — Blondell explores the "female (Amazon) gaze" in the Action Pack movie *Hercules and the Amazon Women*. Blondell (2005) 200.

gazes at an athletic, handsome, and naked Steve Trevor, played by Chris Pine. Steve Trevor is also the object of the viewer's gaze (minus his genitals, which only Diana has the pleasure of viewing)¹⁵¹. (Diana, despite Cameron's criticisms mentioned in the introduction of this paper, is not shown naked). When Diana walks in on Steve Trevor naked as he has just finished bathing in one of Themiscyra's luminescent pools, she asks him "What is that"? When Steve demurs from commenting on his private parts and points to his watch, noting how it tells a man when to sleep, eat, and do everything else on a schedule, Diana wittily replies how amazed she is that men allow such a "little thing" to control their lives. The sexual innuendo of her comment is not lost upon the audience.

The film is shot from the viewpoint of Diana; Steve is a sidekick if also a co-eval. As the film begins, Diana views an old photograph of herself, Steve, and their compatriots from World War I. Diana is centered in our viewing of the picture, and the viewer is pulled into her centrality as the camera fades into her childhood at Themiscyra. Themiscyra is an Amazon paradise, where women train for warfare daily. It is like a female-only vision of Sparta.

As she falls in love with Steve and yearns to leave Themiscyra to find and fight Ares, we quickly learn that Diana is no ordinary Amazon. In fact, though she is raised by the Amazon queen Hippolyte and trained to be a formidable warrior by her aunt Antiope, Diana turns out to be more than an Amazon. Diana, we learn, lives up to her Roman name: she is a god. (In true 21st century feminist fashion, she is called a god instead of a goddess). While she is told by Hippolyte that she was molded from clay, she later learns from Ares that she is the daughter of Zeus. Both of these ancestries come from the comic series. In the initial *Wonder Woman*, written by William Moulton Marston, Diana was made from clay like Enkidu or Adam, yet it was Aphrodite (not Zeus, as in the film) who breathed life into her as this comic strip (**fig.10**) portrays¹⁵².

151 — Feminist theorists, e.g. Doane and Kaplan, have suggested that the objectification of male bodies merely reverses the patriarchal hierarchy, whereas a feminist approach would eliminate the "subject/object" dichotomy". See further Hansen (1986) 11. Strong (2013) 180, asserts that the creators of Starz *Spartacus* "reject the radical feminist theory linking all representations of heterosexual sex with violence and offer a more positive, female centered alternative". Although "*Spartacus* utilizes the same sort of objectifying, dehumanizing cinematography and fragmentation that has long been condemned by feminist film scholars... this objectification is directed equally or perhaps even more at male slave bodies as well as female ones. Even more startlingly, the gaze itself often originates in the eyes of a powerful female figure".

152 — Marston may have derived the idea for Diana's birth from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915/1999) in which women, like Amazons, live in a man-less society. They bear their children, who are all daughters, by parthenogenesis. Gilman (1915) 205; Lepore (2014) 87.

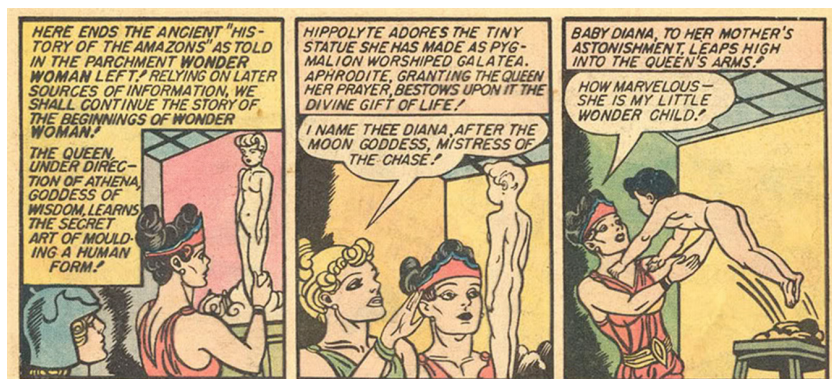


Fig. 10 – “The Origin of Wonder Woman” *Wonder Woman #1*
(Summer 1942) Artist: H. G. Peter. DC Comics
(Marston and Peter (2016a) 153)

In a much later (2011) version of the New 52 Wonder Woman series, however, Diana is heralded as the daughter of Zeus and Hippolyta¹⁵³.

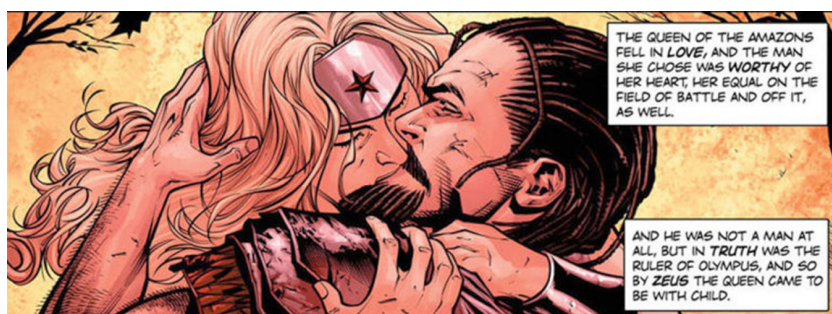


Fig. 11 – *DC Universe Rebirth: Wonder Woman Vol. 1 The Lies*
Artist: Liam Sharp. DC Comics
(Rucka, Sharp, and Martin (2017))

This would normally have made her a demi-god in Greek myth, but in the 2017 film we are told only that she is the daughter of Zeus who was raised by Hippolyte. Her birth mother remains unknown. In any event,

¹⁵³ — Azzarello, Chiang, and Akins (2012). See further Berlatsky (2015), 190-91; Brake (2017).

Diana defeats Ares and stands as the last of the Olympians¹⁵⁴. This is yet another feminist feature of the story. Whereas Xena killed off a number of the Olympian gods, usually such a job is done by a male protagonist on the silver screen¹⁵⁵. The death of the gods is a motif used by filmmakers to better relate to modern audiences, who are more used to monotheism. The idea that a woman, Diana, is the only god in the universe is striking. Thus, Diana, as the last of the Olympians, is certainly no ordinary Amazon.

And if we wish to call Diana an Amazon at all, then she is a “modern” Amazon. Between the comics and a pacifist Hollywood vision, the altruistic mission of the Amazons is to defeat war, or perhaps better stated in mythological terms, Ares. This flies in the face of Apollonius of Rhodes’ description of the ancient Amazons’ bellicose nature:

For the Amazons, those who dwell on the Doiontian plain, were exceedingly savage and knew not that which is right; rather grievous hubris and the deeds of Ares are their concerns: for they are the offspring of Ares and the nymph Harmonia, who to Ares bore war-loving girls (*Argonautica* 2.987-992).

Despite a change in mission and genealogy, the Amazons of Wonder Woman do remain fierce. In perhaps the scene most reminiscent of Greek legend, an Amazonomachy, or battle between Amazons and men, Diana and her aunt Antiope lead the Amazons to victory over Germans, instead of the Greeks. Refreshingly, the Amazons defeat the Germans, whereas in Greek sources they are often, though not always, defeated by men¹⁵⁶. This is certainly a feminist turn.

The choreography of the Amazonomachy, fought on the beach of Paradise Island, displays the incredible agility and ability of the Amazons as warrior women. Amazons seemingly fly off of the cliffs (using ropes), aim their arrows with deadly precision, and kick butt. Like Xena, the Warrior Princess (an interesting television precursor to Wonder Woman), the Amazons give deadly high-flying kicks¹⁵⁷. Their athletic feats are particularly impressive, jumping, spinning in the air, and shooting with

154 — The “fall of the gods” is a theme that is found in other cinematic adaptations of classical myth, for example *The Clash of the Titans* (2010) and *The Wrath of the Titans* (2012). See further Tomasso (2015) 147-55; Salzman-Mitchell and Alvares (2018) 129-55.

155 — See further Tomasso (2015) 152, who argues that “The gods are a source of conflict in the Hercules-Xena universe and not just because they are morally reprehensible (for among many other offenses, seeking to kill an innocent baby) but also because they represent patriarchy and conservative, traditional views”.

156 — The two exceptions are in Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus* (25), where the Amazons sign a truce with the Athenians, and in Herodotus’ *Histories* (4.110), where they are captured by the Greeks but mutiny and ultimately defeat their captors. On these sources, see above in this article.

157 — See further Inness (1999) 4.

precise, deadly aim. The Amazons are depicted here as truly powerful, and exceptionally skilled. Their practice with arms pays off; they defeat a mechanized German army with archaic weapons and incredible athletic ability.

DC Comics drew heavily on later versions of the comics when dressing Wonder Woman, as the comparison here shows (**figs. 12 and 13**).



Fig. 12 – From: *DC Universe Rebirth: Wonder Woman Vol. 1*
The Lies

Artist: Liam Sharp. DC Comics
(Rucka, Sharp, and Martin (2017))



Fig. 13 – Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman in *Wonder Woman* (2017)
DC Films/Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc

Some comments on their inspirations for the costumes of the other Amazons were published in a Dec. 28, 2017 *Vanity Fair* newsletter:

Batman v Superman costume designer Michael Wilkinson wanted Wonder Woman to wear something specifically made for battle in the film that introduced the character to the D.C. cinematic universe. Patty Jenkins and Lindy Hemming then upped the ante on his original work in *Wonder Woman*, drawing inspiration from training armor, ancient cultures, societies run by queens and female warriors, and athletic trends. Hemming wanted her Amazons to be striking and strong, above all else – and she made sure to give them metal breastplates, a nod to mythology, in which Amazons cut off their left breasts to better wield their bow and arrows. Some of the Amazon warriors can be seen with a special breastplate on their left side, and many also protect themselves with armor on their knees and forearms, as well as metal headdresses. Their skirts are short for the sake of movement, resembling the design of Hoplite soldier wear, or *pteruges*, leather skirts worn by ancient Greek and Roman soldiers¹⁵⁸.

A *pterux* is defined in the standard Ancient Greek-English lexicon as “the flap of a cuirass”¹⁵⁹. The cuirass is typically the armor that protects the chest. The flaps would hang down from it covering the groin and buttocks. These types of flapped, skirt-like garments were, indeed, worn by Greek and Roman warriors – in fact, Alexander the Great is depicted wearing one in the famous mosaic of the Battle of Issus now stored in the

158 — Fard (2017).

159 — *LSJ* s.v. *pterux*.

Museo Nazionale Archaeologico in Naples¹⁶⁰. Wonder Woman's outfit is also equipped with *pteruges*, and the outfits of all the Amazons are reminiscent of the short chitons worn by Amazons on Greek vases (see fig. 1 above). Thus the costumes do have an authenticity to them, although one inspired from Amazons wearing Greek outfits, rather than Thracian, Scythian, or Persian outfits with trousers. In *Justice League*, the Amazons do wear somewhat more revealing outfits, showing off their abs, but considering how ripped some of these women are, the effect works. One expects an Amazon to be strong. The fishtail braids worn by the Amazons also find a counterpart on ancient Greek statuary, if not in representations of Amazons themselves¹⁶¹.

The multiracial Amazons of *Wonder Woman* (2017) also fit into a third-wave feminist aesthetic. Whereas liberation and equality were the central tenets of Second Wave feminism (or the Women's Liberation Movement, starting in the 1960s), Third Wave feminism can be defined as incorporating diversity and individuality¹⁶². Whereas Second Wave feminism was critiqued for centering the white, middle class, heterosexual woman, Third Wave Feminism strove to embrace inclusion and understanding of difference among women of various ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Wonder Woman's feminist leanings waxed and waned over the years after William Moulton Marston's death in 1947 (mostly for the worst). Although her transformations have often, if not always, "mirrored those of her flesh-and-blood 'sisters': her metamorphoses reflect nothing less than the confusion, fear, and constant reformation of American ideals about American women"¹⁶³. When George Perez drew Wonder Woman, from 1987 to 1992, he made her look more "ethnic" as after all, she was not an American woman but rather an Amazon. Perez also drew the Amazons as more racially diverse, a welcome upgrade that the film would later replicate.

Perez also explored, at least implicitly, the possibility of Amazons being in romantic relationships with one another¹⁶⁴. While the sexual relationships among Amazons in the film remain largely unexplored, there is a telling moment in a conversation between Steve Trevor and Diana as they sail from Themiscyra to London. Aboard the boat Diana, perhaps naively (or perhaps not) invites Steve to sleep with her (in a literal sense). Steve's hesitation results in a conversation about sex. When Diana tells Steve that she has read all twelve volumes of Clio's treatise on eroticism,

160 — On *pteruges*, see further Aidrete, Bartel, and Aidrete (2013).

161 — I thank Marice Rose for bringing this to my attention. See further Schwab and Rose (2005): 1-24.

162 — Cocca (2014) 98.

163 — Stanley (2005) 145.

164 — Cocca (2014) 98.

which dictate in true Amazon fashion that men are vital for reproduction but unnecessary for bodily pleasures, Steve, of course, disagrees, and, even though he is somewhat timid in his seduction of Diana, in the end he is not deterred. Of course, the ideas expressed in these alleged treatises echo the legends of the Amazons, who, in Greek lore, only used men to procreate once a year, or, if they did find them a bit more necessary on a day-to-day basis, kept them as domestic slaves (Strabo 11.5.1; Diod. Sic. 2.45)¹⁶⁵.

Additionally, by allowing for individuality, Third Wave Feminism strove to allow “the reclamation of signs of femininity as empowering”¹⁶⁶. While she is a tough warrior, Diana sports a feminine sensibility as well. She coos over a baby in London, and sports a dazzling blue gown when she and Steve “crash” the German ball to stop Dr. Poison from creating weapons of mass destruction. Of course, none of this hurt the film at the box office. As Inness notes, tough women can be seen as threatening, and, furthermore, are often suspected of lesbianism¹⁶⁷. While some of us do enjoy such characters, Hollywood tends to cater to the mainstream, especially in DC films. Part of Wonder Woman’s success, in the comics, was that she portrayed “a breathtaking fusion of feminism and patriotism and kinky sex”¹⁶⁸. Perhaps her success in the 2017 film can be attributed to a fusion of feminism and heroism and naivety, which Gal Gadot seems to pull off effortlessly. Gadot does not present in a masculine fashion, though her character does take male prerogatives.

As noted above, the story of Diana and Steve Trevor bears a resemblance to that of Antiope and Theseus. Whereas Greek myth gives the agency to Theseus, however, and the original Wonder Woman comics to Aphrodite and Hippolyte, in *Wonder Woman*, Diana decides to leave Paradise Island with Steve Trevor of her own accord. This is yet another feminist update; Hippolyte does not wish for her daughter to go, and Aphrodite is dead in the film. Diana makes her own choice, and, in so doing, takes on her own destiny. Having left Paradise Island naively hoping just not to combat evil but to end it altogether, Diana learns all too quickly, that the purpose of her Amazons, to bring peace to earth, is ultimately futile. Diana and Steve Trevor nevertheless manage to bring an end to World War I, but Steve sacrifices himself. Thus, unlike her ancient counterpart Antiope, Diana does not marry Steve and thus is not placed

165 — It is remotely possible that the erotic manual attributed to a woman author named Philaenis may have discussed women pleasuring other women, as may have other such volumes, all now lost to us. See further Hallett (1989/1997); Brooten (1996) 42 n. 58, 46 n. 82, 54-55; Boehringer (2015) 74-92; Penrose (2016) 64-65.

166 — Cocca (2014) 98.

167 — Inness (1999) 20-22.

168 — Harrington (1995) 9.

under the yoke of patriarchy, thus adding yet another feminist twist to the denouement of the film.

As a prequel of sorts to the TV film and once-popular TV series, the movie does not fail to deliver when it comes to female action, and, even if the ending is not as uplifting as one might hope, flying, fighting Amazons do make for great fun. Diana takes the lead, but in some ways operates from the heart, rather than the head, like Gorgo in *300*¹⁶⁹. The fight with your head/fight with your heart is a stereotypical masculine/feminine divide in film. Furthermore, Diana has “sisters” in Themiscyra, but she does not fight with a female cohort once in the “world of men”, unlike her comic predecessor. Nevertheless, Diana is empowered, and thus serves as a role model for young women.

Conclusion

The myths of the Amazons serve as an excellent starting point to create a story of female empowerment. Whereas the Greek legends were used, ultimately, to reinforce patriarchy by highlighting the Amazons as negative role models who are killed off, the creator of Wonder Woman, William Moulton Marston, and the “wonder women” upon whom he both based his character and drew inspiration, Elizabeth, Olive, Marjorie, and perhaps others, adapted the myths of the Amazons to create a fictional “tradition” for the wonder women of the 1940s who found their way into the workforce. At the same time, analysis of Wonder Woman reminds us that, in reception, classical texts are received and then retransmitted by those who rewrite them. The Amazons of Themiscyra seek to bring peace through loving methods. They are submissive bondage enthusiasts, and they live in a queer society where feminism reigns supreme. Marston’s Amazons, and in particular Diana, Wonder Woman, are ultimately reflections of more than just the context of Marston’s age; they are a reflection of his desires as well as the desires of those women who served as his inspiration, and his co-collaborators: Elizabeth Holloway Marson, Olive Byrne Richard, and Marjorie Wilkes Huntley. And while Wonder Woman’s fortunes would wax and wane in the years following Marston’s 1947 death, in 2017, Wonder Woman finally hit the silver screen in an epic, blockbuster film. With its female protagonist, tough Amazon warrior women, cinematography, and diversity, the film brings the feminism that Marston and company sought to instill in America into the twenty-first century. The Amazons live on.

169 — Tomasso (2013) 117, 120.

Selected Bibliography

Selected Comics

- Azzarello Brian, Cliff Chiang and Tony Akins, (2012), *The New 52! Wonder Woman*, Volume 1, *Blood*, Burbank, CA: DC Comics.
- Marston William Moulton and Harry G. Peter, (2016a/2017), *The Golden Age: Omnibus*, Vol. 1 & 2, Burbank, CA: DC Comics.
- (2016b), *Wonder Woman A Celebration of 75 Years*, Burbank, CA: DC Comics.
- Rucka Greg, Liam Sharp and Laura Martin, (Feb. 28, 2017), *DC Universe Rebirth: Wonder Woman*, Vol. 1, *The Lies*, Burbank: DC Comics.

Other Sources

- Aldrete Gregory S., Scott Bartell and Alicia Aldrete, (2013), *Ancient linen body armor: unraveling the linothorax mystery*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bassi Karen, (1995), "Male Nudity and Disguise in the Discourse of Greek Histrionics", *Helios* 22(1): 3-22.
- Berlatsky Noah, (2015), *Wonder Woman: Bondage and Feminism in the Marston/Peter Comics 1941-1948*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Blok J., (1995), *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (trans. P. Mason), E. J. Brill: Leiden.
- Boehringer Sandra, (2015), "What is named by the name 'Philaenis'? Gender, function, and authority of an antonomastic figure", in Mark Masterson, Nancy Rabinowitz and James Robson (eds.), *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bonfante Larissa, (1989), "Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art", *AJA* 93(4): 543-570.
- Brake Matthew William, (2017), "Feminist Symbol or Fetish?: Žižek, Wonder Woman, and *Final Crisis*", in John Irwin and Jacob M. Held (eds.), *Wonder Woman and Philosophy*, Wiley & Sons, 73-80.
- Brooten Bernadette, (1996), *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Call Lewis, (2013), *BDSM in American Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Basingstoke, Hamshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chason Rachel, (August 25, 2017), "Hollywood director James Cameron attacks 'Wonder Woman' and pays the price", *The Washington Post*.
- Chow Andrew R., (August 25, 2017), "Is 'Wonder Woman' Feminist? James Cameron's Comments Draw a Rebuke", *The New York Times*.
- Clift E., (2003), *Founding Sisters and the Nineteenth Amendment*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

- Cohen Beth, (1997), "Divesting the Female Breast of Clothes in Classical Sculpture", in A. O. Koloski-Ostrow and C. L. Lyons (eds.), *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, Routledge, London, 66-92.
- Cook Brian, (1975), *The Frieze of the Temple of Apollo at Bassae*, London: British Museum.
- Daniels Les, (2001), *Wonder Woman: The Complete History*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Deacy Susan, (1997), "Athena and the Amazons: Mortal and Immortal Femininity in Greek Myth", in A. B. Lloyd (ed.), *What Is A God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity*, Duckworth, London, 153-168.
- Devambez P., (1981), "Amazones", in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zurich and Munich: Artemis.
- DiPaolo Marc Edward, (2007), "Wonder Woman as World War II Veteran: Camp Feminist Icon, and Male Sexual Fantasy", in Terrence R. Wandtke (ed.), *The Amazing Transforming Superhero! Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film and Television*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Doane Mary Ann, (Sept./Oct. 1982), "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator", *Screen* 23 (3/4): 74-88.
- Dowden Ken, (1997), "The Amazons: Development and Functions", *RhM* 140/2, 97-128.
- DuBois Page, (1982), *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- (1995), *Sappho is Burning*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eller Cynthia, (2011), *Gentlemen and Amazons: The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, 1861-1900*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Emad Mitra C., (2006), "Reading Wonder Woman's Body: Mythologies of Gender and Nation", *JPC* 39.6: 954-984.
- Fard Farah Joan, (Dec. 28 2017), "In 2017, Powerful Women Finally Got the Clothes They Deserve", *Vanity Fair* (online only), <https://www.vanity-fair.com/hollywood/2017/12/2017-wonder-woman-rey-star-wars-costumes> Retrieved November 12, 2019.
- Frankel Valerie, (2015), *Empowered: The Symbolism, Feminism, & Supeheroism of Wonder Woman*, Lexington, KY: LitCrit Press.
- Freeman Hadley, (Aug. 24 2017), "James Cameron: 'The downside of being attracted to independent women is that they don't need you'", *The Guardian*: 26.
- Gilman Charlotte Perkins, (1915), in Denise D. Knight (ed.), *Herland, The Yellow Wall-Paper and Selected Writings*, London: Penguin Books, 1-143.
- Gillmore Inez Haynes, (1914), *Angel Island*, New York: Henry Holt.
- Goldberg M. Y., (1998), "The Amazon Myth and Gender Studies", in K. J. Hartswick and M. C. Sturgeon (eds.), *ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ: Studies in Honor*

- of Brunilde *Sismondo Ridgway*, Philadelphia: The University Museum, 89-100.
- Graf Beverly J., (2015), "Arya, Katniss, and Merida: Empowering Girls through the Amazonian Archetype", Meredith Safran and Monica S. Cyrino (eds.), *Classical Myth on Screen*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 73-82.
- Halberstam Judith, (1998), *Female Masculinity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hall Edith, (1993), "Asia unmanned: images of victory in classical Athens", in J. Rich and G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Greek World*, London: Routledge.
- Hallett Judith P., (1979), "Sappho and her Social Context: Sense and Sensuality", *Signs* 4(3): 447-464.
- (1997), "Female Homoeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality", in Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn Skinner (eds.), *Roman Sexualities*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hanley Tim, (2014), *Wonder Woman Unbound: The Curious History of the World's Most Famous Heroine*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- Hansen Miriam, (1986), "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship", *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 25(4): 6-32.
- Hardwick L., (1990), "Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women?", *G&R* 37: 14-36.
- Harrington Michael, (Nov. 1995), "It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's...", *Spectator* 4: 8-9.
- Havelock C. M., (1982), "Mourners on Greek Vases", in N. Broude and M. D. Gerard (eds.), *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, New York: Harper and Row.
- Humphreys Sarah C., (1978), *Anthropology and the Greeks*, London: Routledge.
- Inness S. A., (1999), *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kaplan E. Ann, (1983), *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, New York: Methuen.
- Lardinois André, (2001), "Keening Sappho", in André Lardinois and Laura McClure (eds.), *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lepore Jill, (2014), *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Malone Alicia, (2018), *The Female Gaze: Essential Movies Made by Women*, Coral Gables: Mango.
- Marston Pete, (April 3, 1993), "Elizabeth H. Marston, Inspiration for Wonder Woman, 100", *The New York Times*.
- Marston William Moulton, (1923), "Sex Characteristics in Systolic Blood Pressure Behavior", *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 6: 387-419.

- (1928), *The Emotions of Normal People*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company.
- (1937), *Try Living*, New York: Crowell.
- (Nov. 11, 1937), "Marston Advised 3 L's for Success: 'Live, Love, and Laugh' Offered by Psychologist as Recipe for Happiness", *New York Times*.
- (1943-44), "Why 100,000 Americans Read Comics", *American Scholar* 13. <https://theamericanscholar.org/wonder-woman/> Retrieved August 1, 2019.
- Mavleev E., (1981), "Amazones Etruscae", in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zurich and Munich: Artemis.
- Mayor Adrienne, (2014), *The Amazons: The Lives and Legends of Warrior Women*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mulvey Laura, (1975/2016), *"Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema" 1975*, Belgium: Afterall Books.
- Nikoloska Aleksandra, (2012), "The Sea Voyage of the Magna Mater to Rome", *Histria Antiqua* 21: 365-371. https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=toc&id_broj=8187. Retrieved November 20, 2019.
- Penrose Jr. Walter, (2016), *Postcolonial Amazons: Female Masculinity and Courage in Ancient Greek and Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rayor Diane, (1991), *Sappho's Lyre: Archaic Lyric and Women Poets of Ancient Greece*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Reeder E. D., (1995), "Mythical Women as Images of Apprehension", in E. D. Reeder (ed.), *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 373-380.
- Rhodes Molly, (2000), "Wonder Woman and Her Disciplinary Powers", in Roddey Reid and Sharon Traweed (eds.), *Doing Science + Culture*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Richard Olive, (Oct. 25 1940), "Don't Laugh at the Comics", *Family Circle*.
- (Aug. 14 1942), "Our Women Are Our Future", *Family Circle*.
- Robbins Trina, (1996), *The Great Women Super Heroes*, Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press.
- Robinson Lillian, (2004), *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes*, London: Routledge.
- Russo Vito, (1996), *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (rev. ed.), New York: Quality Paperback Book Club.
- Safran Meredith E. and Monica S. Cyrino, (2015), "Introduction", in Meredith Safran and Monica S. Cyrino (eds.), *Classical Myth on Screen*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-14.
- Salzman-Mitchell Patricia and Jean Alvares, (2018), *Classical Myth and Film in the New Millennium*, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Schwab Kathryn A. and Marice Rose, (2005), "Fishtail Braids and the Caryatid Hairstyling Project: Fashion Today and in Ancient Athens", *Catwalk* 4 (2): 1-24.
- Sissa Giulia, (1990), *Greek Virginity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stanley Kelli E., (2005), "Suffering Sappho! Wonder Woman and the (re)invention of the feminine ideal", *Helios* 32: 143-163.
- Steinem Gloria, (1972), "Introduction" to Gloria Steinem (ed.), *Wonder Woman: A Ms. Book*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- (1995), "Introduction", to *Wonder Woman: Featuring Over Five Decades of Great Covers*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1995.
- Stewart Andrew, (1990), *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Strong Anise K., (2013), "Objects of Desire: Female Gazes and Male Bodies", in Monica S. Cyrino (ed.), *Screening Love and Sex in the Ancient World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 167-182.
- Tomasso Vincent, (2013), "Gorgo at the Limits of Liberation in Zack Snyder's *300* (2007)", in Monica S. Cyrino (ed.), *Screening Love and Sex in the Ancient World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 113-126.
- (2015), "The Twilight of Olympus: Deicide and the End of the Greek Gods", in Meredith E. Safran and Monica S. Cyrino (eds.), *Classical Myth on Screen*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 147-160.
- Tyrrell W. B., (1984), *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Young Serinity, (2018), *Women Who Fly: Goddesses, Witches, Mystics, and other Airborne Females*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Veness Ruth, (2002), "Investing the Barbarian? The Dress of Amazons in Athenian Art", in L. Llewellyn-Jones (ed.), *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, London: Duckworth. 95-110.
- Werthem Fredric, (1954), *Seduction of the Innocent*, New York: Rinehart.