Preformations of the Amazonian:

Strong Women in German Literature of the Early Enlightenment

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2016

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Germanics

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Abstract

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The dissertation explores preformations of the Amazonian in German literature of the Early Enlightenment. Far prior to Heinrich von Kleist's famous Amazonian drama *Penthesilea* (1808), Amazons and other strong female protagonists were taking over German stages. While Amazons were first mobilized en masse as a cultural symbol by Parisian women during the French Revolution, this thesis explores the possibility that the Amazonian has deeper reaching roots in sociosemiotic practice, particularly in the context of learned women who rose to prominence during the Early Enlightenment. Starting from the archetype of the Amazon, covalent mythological figures of strong women are contextualized with classically inspired texts produced by intellectuals of the emerging German-speaking bourgeoisie. Johann Christoph Gottsched's

efforts to support women's education finds contextualization through a close reading of his pastoral, *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* (1741), his *Minnesang* poems to his wife, and his moral weekly designed for a female reading audience, *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* (1725–1726), exploring the possibilities for female autonomy in his play and the importance of the symbol of Minerva in the cultural archive of the Enlightenment. Similarly, the drama *Panthea* (1744) by Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched is investigated as part of a proto-feminist, emancipatory poetics, where her androgynous protagonist's suicide is read as a productive failure. Finally, the Electress Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphora's *Talestri. Regina delle Amazonni / Talestris. Königin der Amazonen* (1763) is explored as the self-representation of a female ruler as a Minerva-like Amazon, since she not only wrote the libretto and composed the music, but also performed the main role, literally embodying the queen of the Amazons in the context of court ceremonies. While she attempts to inscribe herself into the patriarchal structure of absolutist rule, her Amazons are also explored as potentially domesticated in favor of enlightened ideals.

German Abstract

Diese Doktorarbeit untersucht Präfigurationen von amazonenhaften Frauenfiguren in der Literatur der frühen deutschen Aufklärung. Schon Jahre vor der Publikation von Heinrich von Kleists *Penthesilea* (1808) eroberten starke Protagonistinnen die deutschsprachige Bühne. Obwohl Amazonen erst vermehrt als Symbol während der Französischen Revolution von Frauen angeeignet wurden, untersucht diese Dissertation, ob das Amazonische fundamentale und tiefliegende Wurzeln in der soziosemiotischen Praxis der frühen Aufklärung habe, insbesondere angesichts des Aufstiegs gebildeter Frauen zu dieser Zeit. Ausgehend vom Symbol der Amazone

werden vergleichbare mythologische Figuren von starken Frauen in Texten von deutschsprachigen Intellektuellen des erstarkenden Bürgertums interpretiert. Johann Christoph Gottscheds *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* (1741) wird sowohl mit seiner Unterstützung der Bildung von Frauen als auch mit frühen Minnesang-Gedichten an seine künftige Frau und mit seiner moralischen Zeitschrift *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* (1725–1726), die explizit für ein weibliches Lesepublikum geschrieben wurde, intertextuell gelesen. Darüberhinaus wird die Bedeutung des Symbols der Minerva im kulturellen Archiv der frühen Aufklärung betont. Das Drama *Panthea* (1744) von Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched, in dem die Hauptfigur am Ende sich das Leben nimmt, wird als Teil einer protofeministischen Poetik interpretiert und der Freitod als produktives Scheitern herausgearbeitet. Schließlich wird die Oper *Talestri. Regina delle Amazonni / Talestris. Königin der Amazonen* (1763) von der Kurfürstin Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa von Sachsen auf die Selbstrepräsentation der Herrscherin als eine Minerva-ähnliche Amazone untersucht, da die Autorin nicht nur das Libretto schrieb und die Musik komponierte, sondern auch die Hauptrolle der Königin der Amazonen auf der Bühne des Hofes verkörperte. Sie versuchte, soweit die These der Arbeit, sich in die Machtstruktur des patriarchalen Absolutismus hineinzuschreiben, obwohl Amazonen-Figuren bereits als durch die Ideale der Aufklärung domestiziert verstanden werden könnten.

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Acknowledgements

The work presented in this dissertation is the result of collaborative oversight by faculty members at the Wesfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and the University of Washington. The dissertation is submitted to each institution in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements.

This project would not have been possible without the guidance, friendship and critical insights of Professor Richard T. Gray, my *Doktorvater* at the UW. Equally, this work would never have come to fruition without the counsel, support, and intellectual engagement of Professor Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, my *Doktormutter* at the WWU. I would like to herby expressly thank them both for their invaluable feedback, constructive critiques, and for their continued patience and encouragement throughout the arduous process of researching and writing this dissertation. Thank you for helping me to wrangle and mold this project as it began to evolve beyond the parameters of its initial conception! I certainly hope for many more years of stimulating intellectual partnerships and continued friendship. I would also like to thank the University of Washington's Department of Germanics and its faculty and staff for their support and generosity. Many thanks go to Eric Ames, Helmut Ammerlahn, Manfred Bansleben, Charles Barrack, Diana Behler, Richard Block, Klaus Brandl, Jane Brown, Marshall Brown, Heidi Tilghman, Michael Neininger, Brigitte Prutti, Joseph Voyles, Stephanie Welch, and Sabine Wilke. The collegial atmosphere of teaching and learning in the department always made coming to work fun! Many thanks to the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universiät and the faculty and staff of its Germanistisches Institut as well! The great lectures, colloquia, workshops, and projects groups (including *Textpraxis*) organized thorough the Graduate School *Practices of Literature* made for a truly

amazing research environment during my years spent in Münster. Also, a thousand thanks to my friends and colleagues at the Sprachenzentrum in Münster and to all my friends and colleagues in Seattle, Münster, and from universities and conferences across continents! Also, a deep debt of gratitude goes to Mark Anderson, Michael Eskin, Andreas Huyssen, Dorothea von Mücke, and Harro Müller at Columbia University. Your courses initially excited my imagination, ignited a critical mode of thinking, and inspired a lifelong study of the German language, literature, and culture. Many thanks to the members of the dissertation reading committee—Mark Stein, Richard Block, Sabine Wilke, and Douglas Collins—for your time, thoughts, and critiques! Of course, the work done researching this thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of my parents, and words simply fail to express my gratitude, love, and respect. To all my friends and family, to my sister Elizabeth, again, language seems like a poor medium for conveying my thanks for your love and support throughout the many stages of working on this project. Finally, this dissertation would have never seen the light of day without the love and friendship of Sophia Herrmann.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, teachers, friends, and loved ones. And to Sophia, meine Münsteraner Amazone.

Introduction. Archetypes of Strong Women in Myth and Culture

> "Man seeks the Other in woman as Nature and as his peer. But Nature inspires ambivalent feelings in man, as has been seen. He exploits it, but it crushes him; he is born from and he dies in it; it is the source of his being and the kingdom he bends to his will; it is a material envelope in which the soul is held prisoner, and it is the supreme reality; it is contingency and Idea, finitude and totality; it is that which opposes Spirit and himself. Both ally and enemy, it appears as the dark chaos from which life springs forth, as this very life, and as the beyond it reaches for: woman embodies nature as Mother, Spouse, and Idea; these figures are sometimes confounded and sometimes in opposition, and each has a double face."
>
> — Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Amazons—the ancient tribe of warrior women—have long served as a unifying symbol for women's solidarity in the Western tradition, in what seems like an endless struggle for equal participation in politics, governance, the sciences, skilled trades, and the fine arts against culturally engrained discrimination and repression reproduced through patriarchally determined customs and mores.[1] In the eighteenth century, the term "Amazon" referred to neither the global Internet syndicate, nor the world's largest river, but solely to these warrior women described by the ancient Greeks, after which the river itself was named.[2] The ancient Greeks' mythological fascination with Amazons—as a symbol of an empowered, emancipated, militant femininity—

[1] For an informative, visually rich overview of the Amazons in ancient history, myth, recent archeological finds, and their continued symbolic relevance for contemporary society, see Börner, *Amazonen. Geheimnisvolle Kriegerinnen*.

[2] Scholars attribute the colonialist naming of the river after the Amazons of Greek myth to Friar Gaspar de Carvajal's account of Francisco de Orellana's exploration of the river in 1541–1542. After Orellana and his men encountered hostile tribes of women, the men began to informally refer to these warriors as Amazons, since they purportedly lived without men and killed all of their male offspring, raising only the daughters (Medina 220–22, 437–38).

has found constant re-expression in Western cultural productions. The transgressive liminality inherent in the symbol of the Amazonian Other has fascinated both male and female authors for centuries, and representations of strong, Amazon-like women continue to abound and actively challenge socially determined gender norms. Yet the palatability of Amazons, both in modern cultural productions and those of the past, often relies on scopophilic depictions that hyper-sexualize the Amazons warrior's body, which serves to ideologically realign Amazons within the hetero-normative boundaries of a given society. In modern-day representations, for instance in contemporary films and television shows, Amazons are not one-breasted, but often voluptuous female warriors. The popularity of the Amazon becomes inherently bound up with their breasts, which potentially mitigates their subversive potential against patriarchal norms. As with the protagonist of *Xena: Warrior Princess*, which ran from 1995–2001 (Franke-Penski 281), the heroine of *Laura Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), or the recent *Hunger Games* films, these female figures represent a strong, independent, and assertive femininity, which could be understood as positive role models with respect to women's struggles to break free of the confines of restrictive norms for women's behavior (Stuller; Early; Inness). But their physical beauty also invites the sexual objectification of the female form (Franke-Penski 279–85). Indeed, the emphasis on physical beauty and the presence of both breasts in modern Amazons indicates a move away from a "monstrous" androgyny and suggests a reintegration into gender norms. Wonder Woman was not represented in the likeness of female body builders, whose breasts have disappeared along with any other body fat, but as a sexualized female form that corresponds to patriarchally determined conceptions regarding women's pulchritude.[3] An absence of sexuality or perceived sexiness with relation to Amazons—androgyny—stigmatizes the Amazons as teratological, as a

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[3] For more on Amazonian androgyny and their missing breast, see Richter, *Missing the Breast* 3–20.

"pathological" form of "woman" that verges on the monstrous. At the same time, analogous to the femme fatale, these hyper-sexualizations do not entirely de-claw Amazons, for they still represent a violent threat to men and to common gender conceptions. One thinks of the phallic woman that Klaus Theweleit theorizes in *Männerphantasien*, where armed women ambivalently both attract and threaten to castrate the male onlooker (78–98). A latent aversion to the androgyny of Amazons can be gleaned from works like Hans-Joachim von Schumann's *Liebesunfähigkeit bei Frauen und ihre Behandlung. Psychodynamik des Amazonen- und Pallas Athene-Komplexes*. While the title might seem to relegate this work to the nineteenth or even early-twentieth century, it was actually published in 1969! Schumann went so far as to label female same-sex desire as a sickness to be treated via psychoanalysis; the absence of heterosexual desire in women correlates with what he calls an "Amazon complex." Amazons become fundamentally asexual or somehow "confused" in terms of their sexual preferences. The ambivalence bound to Amazons' physical allure—their beauty, their strength, their power (in the primitive sense of a capacity for violence), and their self-determined sexuality—has a double-face, and the upheaval of normative boundaries tied up with the eidolon of the Amazon requires further reflection, not only in contemporary cultural productions, but as a symbol of the strong woman that finds constant utilization (and misappropriation) throughout the Western canon.

While Amazonian protagonists continue to garner widespread public attention, I will focus this investigation on the sociosemiotic functionalization of the Amazons in early-eighteenth-century German poetic texts. This period remains a highly relevant and largely under-researched epoch regarding literary representations of strong women—particularly in the context of women's incipient struggle for emancipation. The cultural milieu of the Early Enlightenment—its emphasis on scientific, *rational* progress through a promotion of broader

social education in the sciences and the arts—naturally coalesces with the increasing popularity of learned women during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly in the emerging German middle class and in enlightened absolutist courts. The enlightened project generally speaks of the rational perfectibility of humans, and not always explicitly just men.

Indeed, the symbol of the Amazon was important long before the French revolution. An extensive visual tradition beginning in sixteenth century France emerged where female rulers stylized themselves as Amazons and Minervas in order to inscribe themselves into male-dominated realms of political authority and to represent themselves as learned patronesses of the sciences and the arts, as both *femmes fortes* and *femmes savantes* (Ch. 1 & 5). The resurgence of Amazons in the Early Enlightenment was also fed by the renewed popularity of classical literature, which catapulted from the revival of learning during the Renaissance. French classicism was particularly influential in Germany, for instance, on Johann Christoph Gottsched's development of German-speaking stage and inclusion of figures from classical mythology (Ch. 1 & 2). Amazons were not only taken up as symbolic capital by aristocratic women in positions of power, but also by men like Johann Gottsched who were attempting to communicate emerging enlightened ideals via poetic praxes. Amazonian protagonists also began to appear in works written by *femmes savantes,* as learned women in positions of privilege and power were becoming an increasingly common and publically heralded phenomenon. These women writers, often anonymously or under pseudonyms, actively recuperated notions of wisdom and heroism from men in order to garner support for women's right to education. These highly talented women often imagined powerful, even potentially militant female protagonists. At the same time, an enlightened, androgynous notion of universal human virtues began to develop in the ideology of Enlightenment representations, which already has repercussions for

the eidolon of the Amazons, since this androgynous ideal was both contested and celebrated by authors of that epoch. Indeed, strong women were already very present in the cultural archive of the early eighteenth century. For instance, at the turn of the eighteenth century, over 20 operas featuring Amazons had already appeared on stages in German-speaking lands (Ch. 5), and texts like Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta* (1741) and Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* also featured strong women as their protagonists, albeit with antithetical repercussions (Ch. 2. & 4). Felix Christian Weisse's patriotic *Amazonen-Lieder* appeared just as the Seven Years' War was drawing to its end in 1762, and Claude Marie Guyon's *Histoire des amazones anciennes et modernes* appeared in 1740. Guyon's work is particularly significant, because he emphasizes the historical reality of Amazons (as opposed to being only the fantasies of Greek poets, or women's vicarious dreams of combat, as with the female narrator/protagonist in Weisse's text), which relates to Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa's opera *Talestris* (1763) where the Electress literally embodied the queen of the Amazons on the court stage as a means to communicate emerging notions about female leadership and parity between the sexes (Ch. 5 & 6). These early-enlightenment representations of Amazons reveal that tensions regarding perceptions of purported gender differences were already a pressing socio-political issue from the outset of modernity. Notions of gender were not static prior to the French Revolution, but constantly being bartered and negotiated through textual practices, in works written by men *and* women.

Nevertheless, scholarship in the field of Germanics has tended to concentrate on literary representations of Amazons in the context of the French Revolution. This momentous, violent social upheaval in France can be understood as a focal point for a resurgence of Amazonian figures in textual productions in both France and German-speaking lands, as a turning-point in history, where sharp social shifts effected reverberations throughout Europe's political, social,

and cultural landscapes. Many intellectuals felt that their enlightened ideals had been utterly rebuffed by the excessive bloodshed of the Terror. The mass revolt against aristocratic power structures in France also fostered a radical questioning of other established social hierarchies, specifically with respect to the subordination of women in society and their exclusion from participation in government.[4] During the revolution women actively mobilized and attempted to secure their equal rights as citizens on the streets of Paris, often referring to themselves as Amazons.[5] The significance of a woman calling herself an Amazon as part of a revolutionary rallying cry, versus a man labeling a woman as an Amazon, indicates how evaluations of this figure are principally gendered from the outset. This is of central importance when comparing texts written by women and men. The Amazons represented by male authors in German literature are more likely to embody a monstrous Otherness, as an image produced by male anxieties—both conscious and unconscious. This correlates with the broader threat to patriarchal authority caused by French women's political awakening.

Naturally, the French Revolution serves as an excellent focal point for an analysis of the resurgence of Amazonian figures, as these radical events echoed throughout European society. Most scholarship regarding Amazons in German literature focuses on this time period, and rightly so. The socially progressive, enlightened ideals of *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité* transmogrified into the foment of violent uprisings against an aristocratic oligarchy, and culminated in mass executions. The revolution represents a paradigm shift, specifically regarding the rights of women and the roles (not) played by women in society. Indeed, like the *femmes savantes* and *femmes fortes* that preceded the revolution, Amazons were real, and they were

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[4] For a large collection of essays regarding women's fight for emancipation during the French Revolution, see Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Sklavin oder Bürgerin?*
[5] For more on women's social clubs and the Amazonian legion, see de Villiers, *Histoire des clubs de femmes et des légions d'Amazones*.

knocking at the door, armed and dangerous. Olympe de Gouges's *La déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (1791) mirrored and elaborated upon *La déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (1789), but with the major distinction that she argues for gender equality, for women's participation in government, for education, and for amendments to the legal status of married women, etc. At the same time women like Pauline Léon argued courageously for women's right to bear arms and for their capacity to earn their citizenship as soldiers. Anne-Josèphe Théroigne de Méricourt made the bold suggestion that a *légion d'amazones* should be created. Scenes of militant female mobs, such as the funeral march through several governmental buildings by Parisian women in response to Charlotte Corday's assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, denote women's active political involvement during the early 1790s. Women's use of arms in order to effect social changes during the revolution was largely prevented,[6] and women's efforts were met with resistance and often ended in violent failure. Nevertheless, these proto-feminists struck a chord within the collective masculine psyche of Europe, which makes itself evident in the proliferation of Amazons throughout Germany's cultural productions in the post-revolution era.

Like Pallas Athena's parthenogenesis, where the goddess emerges from Zeus's skull bearing arms and clad head-to-toe in armor, the Amazons that populate the dramas and novels of late-eighteenth century Germany—especially post-revolution dramas—also often broke out forcefully from the minds of women and men acting as literary agents in the wake of the French Revolution. When read both as conscious rejoinders to current events and as unconscious fantasies, the Amazons that appear in texts like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and *Die natürliche Tochter*, Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, and Kleist's *Penthesilea* acquire more

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[6] See Marc de Villiers, *Histoire des clubs de femmes et des légions d'Amazones (1793-1848-1871)* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1910).

significance, not just as men's poetic responses to women's efforts towards emancipation, but also as symbols of femininity that reflect an unconscious psychical need to work through the trauma of the French Revolution, which had thrown traditional notions of gender identity into question. Hence the question arises as to how the Amazons that infiltrate German literature after the Terror might be interpreted as counterrevolutionary representations, or still possessing revolutionary potentials.[7] However, this perspective on Amazons in German literature is not new; Inge Stephan has already commented that Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* and the Amazons in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* stand as conscious efforts by men to tame and domesticate the threat of women's emancipation. In *Inszenierte Weiblichkeit* (2004), Stephan notes:

> Auffällig ist, dass sich die kämpferischen Frauen während der Revolutionszeit selbstbewusst auf das antike Amazonenvorbild bezogen, während die männlichen Gegner sich durch den Kampf der Frauen in der Durchsetzung ihrer eigenen Ziele gefährdet sahen. Das, was an den lebendigen Frauen als Bedrohung abgewehrt und wie im Fall von Olympe de Gouges kurzerhand getötet wird, wird nun auf der Ebene der Ideologiebildung als Tugend aufgewertet und gleichzeitig neutralisiert. […] Im Bild der Amazone wird die Frau zur abstrakten republikanischen Tugend erhöht und gleichzeitig auf den Status einer (toten) Statue reduziert. Als Amazone, als Göttin der Freiheit, der Gleichheit und der Vernunft stabilisierte sie nur die kollektive Identität der Männer. (118)

Building upon Marina Warner's notion that allegories of strong women in myth are monumentalized and de-potentiated as patriarchally inscribed symbols in Western society, Stephan examines how Goethe and Schiller neutralized the image of the Amazonian by taming

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[7] For a theoretical framework supporting art's revolutionary and counterrevolutionary potentials, see Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*; *An Essay on Liberation*.

it, and she keenly points to Kleist's *Penthesilea* as a radical countertext.[8] The notion that their textual mediations stabilized a collective masculine identity begs further questioning, as the revolution's blurring of gender distinctions suggests the continued precariousness of any normative gender identity. Indeed, a plethora of excellent scholarship explores the significance of Amazonian women in the works of Schiller, Goethe, and Kleist, and even in the lesser-known works of women writers who have been systematically excluded from the canon, like Therese Huber, Karoline von Günderrode, Dorothea Schlegel, among others.[9]

This project also started with a naïve focus on canonical texts spanning a period from Late Enlightenment classicism to the Romantic period. Like many scholars and laypersons interested in German literature, I was first impressed by Heinrich von Kleist's paradigm-shattering *Penthesilea* (1808), which was my first encounter with the powerful trope of the Amazon in German-language literature. With a little reflection, one realizes quickly that a long tradition of strong female protagonists exists in this literary tradition[10]—and indeed throughout the Western canon—which extends back beyond the famous medieval *Nibelungenlied* (c. 1250) and its Brünhild and Kriemhild figures, all the way to ancient Greek myths of Amazons and the Amazon-like virgin huntresses Artemis and Atalanta, or the armed goddesses of victory and

[8] See Inge Stephan, "'Da werden Weiber zu Hyänen…' Amazonen und Amazonenmythen bei Schiller und Kleist," "Mignon und Penthesilea. Androgynie und erotischer Diskurs bei Goethe und Kleist," *Inszenierte Weiblichkeit* 113–34, 165–88.

[9] See MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity*; ter Horst, *Lessing, Goethe, Kleist and the Transformation of Gender: From Hermaphrodite to Amazon*; Stephan, *Inszenierte Weiblichkeit. Codierung der Geschlechter in der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*; Kollmann, *Gepanzerte Empfindsamkeit. Helden in Frauengestalt um 1800*; Simpson, *The Erotics of War in German Romanticism*; and Nielsen, *Women Warriors in Romantic Drama*.

[10] For a detailed, encyclopedic overview of Amazonian warrior women in German literature, see Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Beauty or Beast? The Woman Warrior in the German Imagination from the Renaissance to the Present*; Colvin and Watanabe-O'Kelly, eds., *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination since 1500*; and Sy-Quia and Baackmann, eds., *Conquering Women: Women, War, and the German Cultural Imagination*.

wisdom Nike and Minerva. If we accept Robert Graves' evaluation,[11] these mythological archetypes of strong women connect even further back to a matrilineal religion of the Triple Goddess from Old Europe (7000–1700 BCE), which predates Indo-European Neolithic cultures and which has been investigated by the renowned archeologist Marija Gimbutas.[12]

With this larger (literary) tradition of Amazonian protagonists in mind, it seemed premature to focus solely on works written by male authors of the established literary canon; not because these texts are not hugely important, but because existing scholarship is excellent and already thoroughly developed. So I began looking for texts featuring Amazons or Amazon-like protagonists—written by men *and* women— and I quickly stumbled upon a relatively unknown text, titled *Thalestris. Königinn der Amazonen*, published in 1766 (posthumously) by Johann Christoph Gottsched. Upon closer inspection, the text turned out not to be an "original" work by the *Literaturpabst* at the time, but a translation of an opera written by the Electress of Saxony, Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa, in 1763 (Ch. 5 & 6). She not only composed the libretto and music, but sang the lead part at court performances. I quickly tried to learn as much as possible about absolutist courts during the Late Baroque in German-speaking lands, about women's ability to wield political power at that time, and uncovered fascinating research on a visual tradition employed by female rulers that involved an identification with the figures of Minerva and the Amazons in allegorical portraits (see Ch. 1 & 5). Upon further investigation, it appeared that Johann Gottsched praised not only Maria Antonia but several other learned women as Minerva in his speeches, poems, and in dedicatory paratexts addressed to noble women. This led to investigations into a secret learned society that propagated the enlightened ideals of scientific progress and that fought against superstition and religious zealotry, the Societas

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[11] *The Golden Fleece*; *The Greek Myths*.
[12] *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*; *The Language of the Goddess*.

Alethophilorum or the Friends of Truth, which also used the figure of Minerva as its escutcheon, and to which both Johann Gottsched and his wife Luise Adulgunde Victorie Gottsched belonged (see Ch. 1 & 3). Through an analysis of the Gottscheds' dramatic productions, poems, and published letters, a much more vivid picture of learned women during the Early Enlightenment began to emerge, and two texts in their shared oeuvre that featured strong women protagonists stood out: Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* (1741) and Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* (1744). Both texts thematize women's autonomy and challenge polarized notions of gender, albeit through very different poetologies and with greatly diverging implications for their broader poetic praxis of communicating enlightened ideals (see Ch. 2 & 4).

Rather than merely applying any given theory onto a textual analysis, this project builds upon a new historicist approach, framing close readings of texts inside the parameters of the cultural archive within which they were produced, in chronological order.[13] Authors writing in German-speaking lands during the eighteenth century were (at least partially) determined by their cultural and sociopolitical environments, where the educated men *and* women of the bourgeoisie and upper classes enjoyed particularly privileged circumstances. Such learned women had access to education beyond the bounds of housework and childcare, whereas the majority of women remained confined to domestic roles. At the same time, many moral magazines began to emerge, which were dedicated to the education of girls and young women as housewives, as Christiane Brokmann-Nooren notes.[14] Yet the distinction given to highly educated women (*gelehrte Frauenzimmer*), who for a time were venerably catalogued in the *Frauenzimmer* lexica published in the first two decades of the 18th century, gradually faded in

[13] See Bovenschen, "Einleitung," *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit. Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen*, 9–16.
[14] *Weibliche Bildung im 18. Jahrhundert. 'Gelehrtes Frauenzimmer' und 'gefällige Gattin.'*

favor of the broader, more practical education of ordinary women for lives as their husbands' domestic servants, which was propagated through moral magazines like *Der Patriot* and even in Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* (Brokmann-Nooren 260–69).[15] While Brokmann-Nooren concedes "Dem 'gelehrten Frauenzimmer,' dem Bildungsideal der Renaissance, wurde zwar nur innerhalb bestimmter Gesellschaftskreise (Fürstenhöfe, Gelehrtenzirkel, Sprachgesellschaften und Dichterorden) nachgestrebt" (260), she concludes that these figures proved that women were intellectually equal to men, when given proper opportunities for education (261). Thus the particular social situations of female authors need to be considered carefully when analyzing their textual productions, in order to discern the social mores and psychological conditioning that latently or manifestly inform narrative structures, specific tropes (here focusing particularly on texts featuring Amazons), the actions of characters, and conceptions of gender and morality.[16]

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[15] See also DiFino, *The Intellectual Development of German Women in Selected Periodicals from 1725 to 1784*; Ball, *Moralische Küsse. Gottsched als Zeitschriftherausgeber und literarischer Vermittler*; and Koloch, ed., *Frauen, Philosophie und Bildung im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*.

[16] Brinkler-Gabler, in "Das weibliche Ich. Überlegungen zur Analyse von Werken weiblicher Autoren mit einem Beispiel aus dem 18. Jahrhundert: Sidonia Hedwig Zäunemann," argues that in order for literary scholars to establish a tradition of women's literature, there needs to be an explicit analysis of the social situation of an aesthetic subject: "[A]llerdings wäre für eine spezifisch weibliche Tradition in der Literatur ein Schritt weiterzugehen und die Frage zu stellen, inwieweit sich die spezifischen Bedingungen an den Werken selbst, bis hin auf die ästhetische Struktur, ablesen lassen. Sinnvoll ließe sich von einem weiblichen Ich in der Literatur erst reden, wenn dieses Ich auch sprach-, form- und bildbestimmend ist. So wäre etwa zu fragen: Welchen Einfluss auf die ästhetische Konstruktion von Innen- und Außenwelt hat die traditionelle Bindung der Frau an die private Sphäre, beziehungsweise die allmähliche Auflockerung dieser Bindung mit den dadurch bewirkten Widersprüchen im Subjekt? […] Nötig wäre ein kritisches Instrumentarium, dass zwischen Leben und Schreiben vermittelte. Es wären also Kategorien zu entwickeln, die es ermöglichen, den Spuren spezifisch weiblicher Sozialisation im Selbstverständnis der weiblichen Subjektivität nachzugehen und solche, die die jeweilig individuelle Antwort auf diese Situation zu beschreiben hätten, die Umsetzung des Erfahrungs- und Wahrnehmungsgehalts und die Ausdrucksleistung. […] Für eine solche Betrachtung des weiblichen Ich oder – um einer erneuten Ontologisierung des Begriffes vorzubeugen – der

Amazons versus Amazon-Like Protagonists: Towards a Sociosemiotic Theory of a Polyvalent Otherness

The word Amazon, according to Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (1731-1754), derives from the Greek root *mazos*, which means breast, and the privation conveyed by the prefix *a* then confers the title of being without a breast. Zelder's follows the report of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, noting: "[D]er Name dieser Weiber soll von dem *a privativo* und *mazos*, die Brust, herkommen, indem sie denen jungen Mägdgen in ihrer ersten Kindheit die rechte Brust ausgebrannt, um sie zu dem Fechten fertiger zu machen" (Zedler 1:1667). The second entry for "Amazonen" in *Zedlers Universallexicon* moves beyond the traditional definition of Amazons as women who have removed their right breasts: "Andere hingegen führen *αμα*, mit einander, und *ζαω*, ich lebe, her, weil sie ausser der Gesellschaft der Männer zusammen gelebet" (1: 1667). This definition serves to reinforce Amazons' independence from men, literally living apart; however, the first etymological definition, which suggests the removal of the breast, also deserves commentary, as Amazonian androgyny/hermaphroditism might be construed as undermining sexual dimorphisms necessary for constructing identity via difference. Scholars have long contested the etymology of Amazon as "missing the breast, " offering alternate etymologies that contrast with the traditionally accepted theory. Josine Blok suggests that the word refers to a positive sense of community, interpreting it to mean *amazo-nes*, "priestess of Artemis," *ama-zoosai*, "living

Entwicklung weiblicher Subjektivität müssen vor allem noch soziologische und psychologische Sachverhalte aufgearbeitet werden, damit die Implikationen so verschiedener Komplexe wie der Wertordnung, des individuellen Verhaltens von Figuren, einzelner Motive, Phantasien und Formen in den Werken weiblicher Autoren analysiert werden können" (56–57).

together," or *ama-zoonais*, "with girdles" (23–25), where notions of inclusion are emphasized, rather than privation or exclusion. While Zedler's offers several other etymologies for Amazon—like "living without bread" (1667), referring to *matzos*, the Hebrew term for unleavened bread—the first definition serves best for the purposes of this exposition since it emphasizes that Amazons, through this ritualistic self-mutilation, had effectively removed a physical sign of their femininity from their bodies. The missing right breast could be understood as symbolically relating to a rejection of traditional norms of behavior for women, taking on social tasks like hunting and waging war, which were generally viewed as "masculine" pursuits.

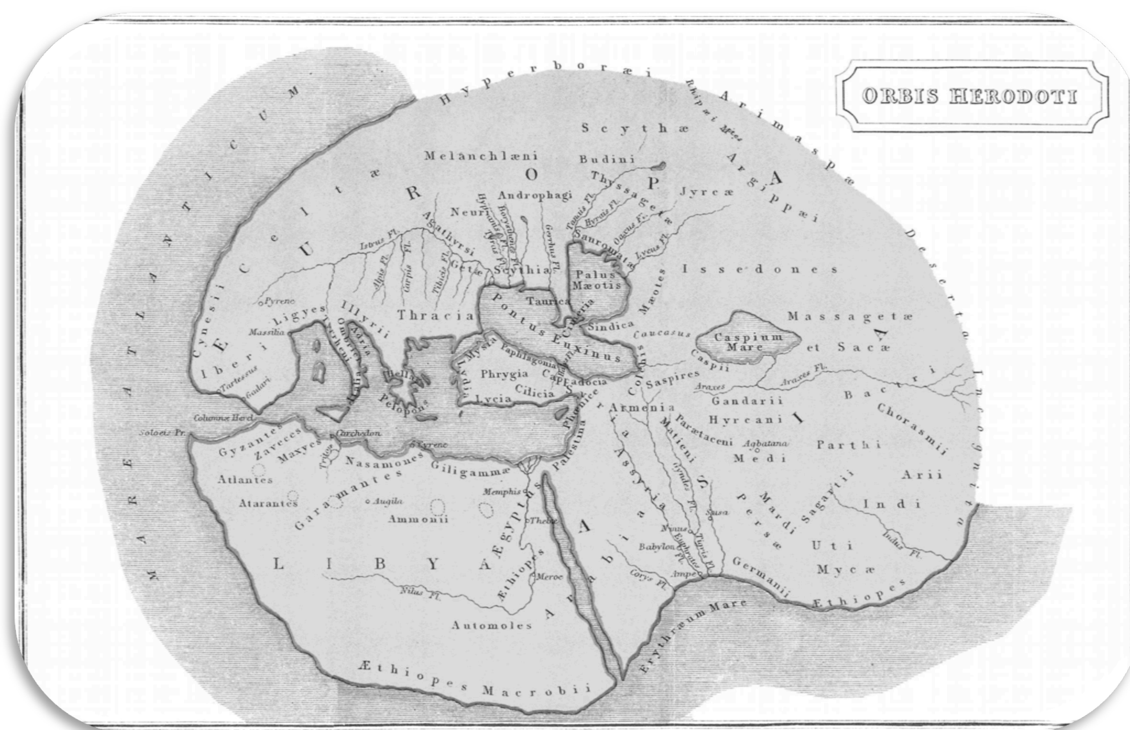

Fig. I.1. Orbis Herodoti [The World of Herodotus]*, steel engraving by S. Hill (circa 1860). The Amazons are located between the Scythians and the Androphagi, above the Pontius Enuxinus (Black Sea) in what is the modern day Ukraine, although the Amazons are curiously not shown among the other tribes depicted by Herodotus in this visual representation.*

In Herodotus's *Histories*, for example, Amazons inhabit the edge of the known world. Surrounded by savage, cannibalistic Scythian tribes, the Amazons people an anarchical, exterior

social space within Herodotus's narrative.[17] Through an associative parataxis, the Amazon's matrilineal society is stigmatized as teratological. In other words, because of their topographical location—in a land populated with strange, "uncivilized" foreigners—Amazonian women become as monstrous as cannibals.[18] Like their blood-thirsty neighbors, Amazons exist in a terrain outside of Greek cultural norms. For example, they shun the ordained domestic roles of women within patriarchy; instead, they ride horses and wage wars, thereby appropriating two traditional masculine vocations. Accordingly, Herodotus notes that the Amazons were named *Oreopata*, "killers of men," by the Scythians. The Amazons thus implicitly represent the potential death of the patriarchal order.

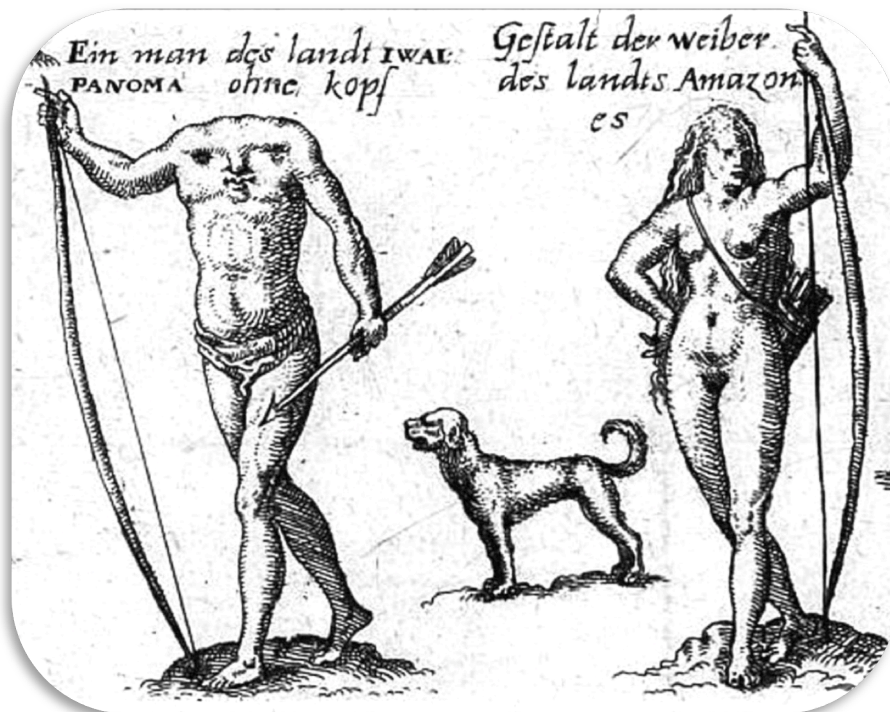

Fig. I.2. *Section from an early map of South America/Guiana published by Theodor de Bry (1599), based on Gaspar de Carvajal's account of Orellana's expedition exploring the Orinoco in 1542.*

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[17] See Herodotus, *The Histories* bk. 4, par. 64–75, 110–117.

[18] Not all scholars share the opinion that Amazons were construed as foreign or monstrous Others in antiquity. For example, Wagner-Hasel holds that Amazonian society mirrors the same social structures found in patriarchal societies, just in inverted form (251–80).

The Amazons embody a cultural Other that threatens both the stability of gender norms and of power monopolies.[19] While he does not mention, as did Diodorus, that the Amazons removed their right breasts, and while he explicitly notes that the Amazons had sexual relations with the Scythians, Herodotus's relegation of this all-female tribe to the periphery operates as a poetic confinement of this threatening image and pushes Amazonian women to the margins of ancient Greece's cultural consciousness. It indeed resembles a cartography of the human mind (see fig. I.1), albeit with erotic undertones intertwined with threatening surroundings and a non-normative lifestyle. The psychical topography of the *Histories* will hence form a paradigm for exploring literary representations of Amazons, with particular focus on the relationship between the Amazonian and notions of Otherness as a socially determined symbol with shifting significance according to changes in cultural contexts.[20]

Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* offers an excellent theoretical starting point for unpacking the implications that Amazons have as harbingers of an unconscious Otherness existing within the Self. Although Kristeva's project broadly covers the role of foreigners in ancient Greece, through the Renaissance, to the Enlightenment in France, and finally to German Romanticism, her conclusion about how Freud's "discovery" of the unconscious reveals an acute truth is relevant for our discussion of Amazonian Otherness:

> With the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings an *otherness* that is both biological *and* symbolic and becomes an integral part of the *same*.

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[19] A more nuanced discussion of the Amazons' relevance for cultural constructions of identity via the Other is undertaken in more detail below.

[20] See Saussure, "Die Natur des sprachlichen Zeichens," "Unveränderlichkeit und Veränderlichkeit des Zeichens," "Das Zeichen als Ganzes betrachtet," *Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft*, 76–82, 83–92, 143–46.

> Henceforth the foreigner is neither a race nor a nation. […] Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided. (Kristeva 181)

In the final sections of her book, Kristeva points to Freud's essay "Das Unheimliche" (1919) as the quintessential prototype for the literary analysis of the unconscious, where doubles (*Doppelgänger*), fears, and repetitions manifest repressed/unconscious fantasies via the strange Others that haunt texts like E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann*. Two universal objects for uncanny fears, according to Kristeva's interpretation of Freud, are death and the feminine; both are hazily registered within the psyche as the alpha and omega inherent in its (de)construction. The Amazon thus becomes a powerful image, embodying both of these unconscious fears; Amazons unify death with the feminine and can therefore be seen as correlating with a broader *femme fatale* archetype.[21] Amazons that populate the pages of German literature will therefore be explored as materializations of the unconscious self. To this end, essays by Iris Därmann and Christoph Jamme in *Fremderfahrung und Repräsentation* will be read along with those of Kristeva. In her introduction to the collection of essays, Därmann notes that foreignness only exists in relation to one's own culture or selfhood (28). With reference to the theories of Freud, Lacan, Derrida, and Husserl, she argues:

> Der Andere ist weder präsentierbar noch repräsentierbar, sein Ego und Leib können lediglich mittelbar appräsentiert werden. Dieser unaufhebbare Entzug des Anderen stellt zugleich eine kritische Infragestellung der eigenen Mittel und Möglichkeiten bei dem prinzipiell vergeblichen Versuch dar, sich eine adäquate Vorstellung oder ein angemessenes Bild vom Anderen zu machen. Wenn es denn Vorstellungen vom Anderen

[21] For a more detailed theoretical understanding of the *femme fatale* as a masculine fantasy, see Hilmes, *Die Femme Fatale. Ein Weiblichkeitstypus in der nachromantischen Literatur*, particularly the "Methodische Annäherung an das 'Rätsel-Weib'" (1-14) and the "Exkurs: Foucault – Freud – Weininger" (39–50).

> zu geben scheint, dann betreffen sie niemals ihn selbst, sondern rühren stets an das Eigene. (30)

Following Husserl, Därmann holds that the Other remains inaccessible, always merely reflecting the self. These intersubjective simulacra precondition the possibility for self-knowledge.[22] Thus textual representations of Amazonian Otherness, and encounters with Amazons will be construed as connected to mediations of authorial identity, in the sense of being textual barterers for collective gender identities. Amazons will be explored both as uncanny harbingers of death and as erotic wish-fulfillment fantasies that reveal unconscious desires and fears, which are projected onto these images of a strong, independent femininity.[23] A crisis in identity is reflected in the image of the Amazon. In line with Därmann's thoughts about self-reflections via Otherness, this represents a narrative encounter with the Self and not a direct encounter with the Other. Whether or not Amazons can be understood as hybrid figures, as fusions of the self with the Other, as projections of the masculine onto feminine figures, and vice versa, thus forms a central set of questions for further textual inquiries.

How does one define Amazonian Otherness? First, the Amazons participated in warfare, which is typically defined as a masculine activity. Amazonian women subvert gender roles based on sexual dimorphism, in that they are routinely stronger than the men against whom they fight, bringing death and violence rather than comfort and life. Second, and along the same lines, Amazonian figures live independently from men, not confined to the bounds of marriage.

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[22] Similarly, in "Gibt es eine Wissenschaft des Fremden?" Christoph Jamme argues that "Der Weg in und durch das Fremde ermöglicht einen neuen, 'reineren' Blick auf das Eigene" (197). See also Freud, "Narzißmus der kleinen Differenzen" (*GW* 14: 474).

[23] See Stephan, "'Bilder und immer wieder Bilder…' Überlegungen zur Untersuchung von Frauenbildern in männlicher Literatur"15–34. Stephan elaborates on Theweleit's *Männerphantasien* with an emphasis on critically evaluating texts based on the socio-historical and ideological horizons surrounding their genesis within patriarchal thought-economies.

Amazons sought men only for procreation; they rejected traditional forms of motherhood/wifehood and were therefore sexually/socially emancipated. Third, living apart from men, Amazons governed themselves. Their political autonomy can therefore be construed as a possible counter-model to patriarchal hegemony. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly elegantly lays out these three criteria that describe transgressions by Amazons against traditional gender roles ("Amazonen" 127–29). In spite of their transgressive and ambivalent nature, Amazonian figures often remain fixed as erotic objects in hetero-normative economies of desire. However, when they are considered as cross-dressing figures, as projections of masculine traits onto women, the Amazons' androgyny may be understood as deconstructing bifurcated definitions of gender. The hybridity inherent in the image of the Amazon potentially undermines traditional definitions of typical "male" and "female" identity via a clearly definable Other. Indeed, these three fundamental character traits of the Amazons can be related to other strong women from Greek myths: to Minerva, who dresses in armor and is the goddess of wisdom and warfare (see Ch. 1); to Artemis, the virgin goddess of the hunt who lives apart from men; to Atalanta, who mirrors Artemis's autonomous lifestyle as a chaste huntress (see Ch. 2); and even to Nike, who often appears armed as the goddess of victory. The extent to which these figures appear in German-language cultural productions prior to the French Revolution deserves further reflection, particularly as preformations of an Amazonian revolt against the systematic discrimination and repression of women during the Early Enlightenment.

Chapter One explores the intellectual partnership between Johann Christoph Gottsched and Luise Adulgunde Gottsched, née Kulmus, in the context of the Early Enlightenment and its ideals for social progress. Johann Gottsched's enlightened homiletics spanned several print media, but his literary journal *Die Deutsche Schaubühne* is taken as a lens for understanding his

poetological practices and as a vehicle for spreading German-language versions of great works of French classicism—dramas by Molière, Detouches, Voltaire, Jean Racine, Pierre Corneille, and St. Évremond—often translated by Luise Gottsched herself. The journal also included several original works by the Gottscheds, incluing *Atalanta* and *Panthea*, and hence it functioned as vehicle for propagating the emerging "enlightened" mores of the German-speaking bourgeoisie. At the same time, the symbol of Minerva is explored as having a central significance within the cultural archive of the Gottscheds, with specific connections to *femmes savantes* like Luise Gottsched, as evidenced by early love poems and texts by Johann Gottsched dedicated to noble women in positions of power.

Chapter Two examines Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* (1741) as a dramatic vehicle for communicating his conceptions of a rational love, which is juxtaposed to the vulgar love of the Arcadians as well as to a conflicting vision of female autonomy. Johann's rendition of the Atalanta myth takes a strong, independent, Amazonian woman and turns this autonomy against her, ultimately portraying it as something dangerous and detrimental. After a brief exploration of the Atalanta myths, the double standards regarding female virtues that operate in Johann's pastoral play are deconstructed. His domestication of Atalanta finds contextualization with his "enlightened" pedagogy for women, which promoted women's education, but kept them confined to domestic roles. In this regard, the dystopian vision of an Amazonian state in his moral weekly *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* (1725–1726) serves as a foil for understanding *Atalanta* as part of Johann Gottsched's didactic poetics for the stage. Although his text seems to rebel through its adherence to genre conventions, it remains to be seen if he successfully domesticates the once Amazonian Atalanta under the enlightened sign of Minerva.

Chapter Three continues to explore the working relationship between the Gottscheds. Feminist critiques of their partnership are contrasted with scholarship that praises their intellectual collaborations. Johann's attempts to domesticate Luise as his enlightened Minerva are revealed through an analysis of the *Minnesang* rhetoric he employs in his idealizations of Luise Gottsched/Kulmus as a *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*. At the same time, Luise Gottsched's letters and poems expose her own stance regarding this association of learned women with the figure of Minerva. Luise Gottsched notably emphasizes the androgyny bound to the figure of Minerva/Pallas Athena, and she takes this as a springboard for advancing a new definition of enlightened femininity, one that assumes typically "masculine" character traits in order to assert women's activities as thinkers and as poets.

Chapter Four reflects on Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* (1741) as an autofictional reflection on her sociopolitical situation as a learned woman during the first half of the eighteenth century. How do Panthea's struggles against men attempting to possess her as a sexual object relate to Atalanta's refusal of unwanted sexual advances in her husband's play? Their defense of virtue is explored as the thread that unites these two dramas. Luise Gottsched struggles against bourgeois gender norms that left very little room for educated women. Does Luise narrate from a position of Otherness within bourgeois society? Thinking about de Beauvoir's alterity of the feminine Self in a phallocratic Western culture, does Luise transform Panthea into an androgynous, Amazonian Other in order to conflate patriarchally determined notions of "masculine" and "feminine" virtues? *Panthea* presents a self-reflexive expression of female subjectivity with regard to hetero-normative cultural determinations of feminine selfhood, revealing an awareness that the authorial self is distinct from those norms, particularly through an identification with a strong female protagonist who comes to represent an androgynous heroism.

Chapter Five investigates the sociopolitical context surrounding the performance of Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa's opera *Talestri. Regina delle amazzoni / Talestris. Königin der Amazonen* (1763). A brief exploration of the context of her self-staging offers an opportunity to reflect on whether her work can be understood as an effort to legitimize her own power as a female ruler, akin to her contemporaries Maria Theresa of Austria or Catherine the Great of Russia, who also mobilized the symbols of the Amazons and Minerva as self-representations. While her opera clearly pertains to an aristocratic sphere of life, to a heterotopic space of play, an investigation into the norms represented and deconstructed through her work remains very relevant.

Chapter Six focuses on an analysis of the opera libretto, exploring the extent to which Maria Antonia's opera deconstructs gender differences through the cross-dressing figure of Orontes, who successfully disguises himself as an Amazon in order to get to know their beautiful queen, Talestris. After meeting Orontes/Orizia, Maria Antonia's Amazonian queen rejects killing men, and the opera ultimately concludes with her marriage to Orontes and with peace between the Scythians and Amazons. Her opera offers a utopian vision of gender parity, and at the same time, she uses the figure of Talestris to posit enlightened ideals for leadership that hinge on being able to make rational discernments rather than blindly applying laws to any given situation, which also specifically hinge on the hybrid identity of Ortontes/Orizia and his/her disruption of categories of Self and Other. Her opera transcends gender norms and offers an alternative vision of female leadership, but are the Amazons in *Talestris* also potentially tamed under the sign of Minerva?

Chapter 1. Conflicting Fables of Feminine Identity in the Gottscheds' Early-Enlightenment Poetics: The Protective Sign of Minerva & Amazonian Transgressions

> "Die Menschen haben sich bisher stets falsche Vorstellungen über sich selbst gemacht, von dem, was sie sind oder sein sollen. Nach ihren Vorstellungen von Gott, von dem Normalmenschen usw. haben sie ihre Verhältnisse eingerichtet. Die Ausgeburten ihres Kopfes sind ihnen über den Kopf gewachsen. Vor ihren Geschöpfen haben sie, die Schöpfer, sich gebeugt. Befreien wir sie von den Hirgespensten, den Ideen, den Dogmen, den eingebildeten Wesen, unter deren Joch sie verkümmern. Rebellieren wir gegen diese Herrschaft der Gedanken. Lehren wir sie, diese Einbildungen mit Gedanken vertauschen, die dem Wesen des Menschen entsprechen, sagt der Eine, sich kritisch zu ihnen verhalten, sagt der Andere, sie sich aus dem Kopf schlagen, sagt der Dritte, und – die bestehende Wirklichkeit wird zusammenbrechen."
>
> — Karl Marx, "Vorrede" to *Die deutsche Ideologie*

> "Das Theater der Mythologie – Bühne und Spieler und Zuschauer – ist der Mensch. Mit ihm umkleiden sich die Götter wie mit einem Stoff. Soweit geschichtlich, sind sie nur in menschlichem, vom Menschen aus sich selbst und der umgebenden Welt gewobenem Stoff da."
>
> — Karl Kerényi, *Die Jungfrau und Mutter der griechischen Religion. Eine Studie über Pallas Athene*

Representations of strong women appear throughout the history of German literature, long before Amazons would become codified as a relevant symbol for women's struggles for

political and economic emancipation during the French Revolution.[24] The social context of the German-speaking lands during the early-eighteenth century confines women to the domestic roles of mothers and housewives, and their subordination to men found legitimation through religious dogma and philosophical, that is, "scientific" treatises about the inherent natures of men and women (Laqueur 154–63; 198–203). However, not all women conformed to patriarchal notions, and indeed strong female protagonists began to appear in prominent literary works with more and more regularity. Literature often presented foils to social norms, and many imaginative cultural productions contrasted with more conformist ideas about women. The first two chapters of this project serve to investigate two lesser-known, but truly exemplary texts from the Early Enlightenment that feature fiercely independent protagonists: Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit. Ein Schäferspiel in fünf Aufzügen* (1741) and Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched's *Panthea. Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen* (1744). The Gottscheds understood their literary productions as a form of social praxis, as a didactic means for attempting to effect sociopolitical change. Accordingly, their utilizations of powerful female protagonists will be related to an ongoing legitimation and contestation of patriarchal gender norms in the emerging educated middle class (*Bürgertum*) in German-speaking lands, as exemplified through their poetic practices. In the sociopolitical context of the Gottscheds, one particularly powerful symbol of femininity begins to appear in the cultural archive of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries that warrants further attention alongside the Amazons: Minerva, or Pallas Athena. As explored in the Introduction, the armed goddess of

[24] For more information regarding real Amazons, that is, the French women who openly agitated for the right to participate in state affairs, such as Théroigne de Méricourt's proposed Légion d'Amazones and other women's social clubs formed during the French Revolution, see Marc de Villiers. [The importance of the French Revolution for German-speaking lands will be explored in more detail in following chapters and theoretically framed in the introduction.]

wisdom, warfare, and the fine arts and sciences also poses an ambiguous threat to gender norms through her cross-dressing, making her akin to the trope of the Amazon.[25] At the same time, Minerva also stands as a protective, positively connoted symbol of Early Enlightenment values related to education and scientific progress. The following two chapters analyze how the signs of Minerva and the Amazons are semiotically related to socially relevant questions regarding women's right to education, equality, and gender roles in the context of the emerging norms of the "enlightened" German-speaking bourgeoisie transmitted by the Gottscheds.

Since the publication of Christine de Pizan's *Le livre de la cite des dames* (*The Book of the City of Ladies*) in 1405, the *querelle des femmes* —the long-running argument about women's place in society, where even the status of women as human beings was a subject of controversy—had been debated by intellectuals, philosophers, and theologians in France, Italy, and England (Becker-Cantarino 149–61; Bock 9–52). These discussions about women's abilities and aptitudes, specifically their access to education, became a pressing topic among intellectuals during the first half of the eighteenth century, as reflected in the explosion of *Frauenzimmer*-lexica at the turn of the century (Schmidt-Kohberg 218–27). Support for women's education was far more popular during the first half of the century, yet the moral and social repercussions bound to the enlightenment of women had also already given rise to a patriarchal resistance to the early attempts to promote women's education. As Gisela Bock notes, commenting on the fifty-fourth volume of Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (1731–1754), Zedler affirms women's status as human beings and sardonically wonders who would question this, despite the fact that more restrictive definitions

[25] Karl Kerényi offers an intriguing Jungian analysis of the contradiction and inner tension bound to the figure of Minerva/Pallas Athena in *Die Jungfrau und Mutter der griechischen Religion. Eine Studie über Pallas Athene* (1952). For more regarding Kerényi's research on Pallas Athena as an ambivalent, liminal figure, see Intro. (PAGES).

of women (*Weib*) appear elsewhere in the lexicon and provide evidence that strict normative limits were still placed on women's social independence (Bock 29). While Zedler affirms the question of women's education, their ability to teach as professors at the university is flatly refuted, as is their suitability for participation in government. Moreover, service in the military remained out of the question for Zedler, with women's essential nature determining their exclusion (Bock 29). Certainly at the same time, learned women, such as the translator Anne le Fèvre Dacier (1645–1720), were celebrated in encyclopedic compendia like Gottlieb Siegmund Corvinus's *Nutzbares, galantes und curiöses Frauenzimmer-Lexicon* (1715), the first German-language lexicon intended explicitly for women readers. Initial steps towards liberating women from the confines of ignorance were beginning to take shape, but educated women were still largely confined to the domestic sphere (Becker-Cantarino 155–61). This will be of particular significance when considering Atalanta and Panthea as Amazon-like protagonists in the texts by Johann and Luise Gottsched under examination here,[26] specifically with respect to Johann Gottsched as an early proponent of women's education and to Luise Gottsched's status as a learned woman who explicitly broke through the glass ceiling limiting women to the domestic sphere.

Atalanta and *Panthea* first appeared in *Die deutsche Schaubühne nach den Regeln der alten Griechen und Römer*, the highly successful literary magazine edited by Johann Gottsched

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[26] A brief aside about names: In her introduction to *Little Detours. The Letters and Plays of Luise Gottsched* (1999), Susanne Kord righly takes up the arguments of Barbara Hahn, who, in *Unter falschen Namen. Von der schwierigen Autorschaft der Frauen* (1991), argues against the scholarly practice of using single names when referring to male authors (Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, et al.). I will refer to both Gottscheds by their first and last names. The use of "Johann Gottsched" and "Luise Gottsched" reflects a conscious choice to place them on an equal footing. Where appropriate and to avoid stylistic repetitiveness, "Luise," "Johann," or "Gottsched" may be employed, but only when it is contextually clear as which Gottsched the surname refers.

and published by Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf between 1741 and 1745.[27] *Die Deutsche Schaubühne*, one of many projects that provided the Gottscheds with a medium for transmitting their shared ideals, partially laid the foundations for Johann Gottsched's attempts to reform German theater in the tradition of French classicism (Mitchell 45–49). Comedies and tragedies by Philippe Néricault Detouches, Voltaire, Jean Racine, Pierre Corneille, Molière, and St. Évremond appeared in German translation, and many of the key works of French classicism—which played an important role in the revival of ancient Greek and Roman culture, an epoch of the French stage that popularized and reworked classical Greek plays—were translated by Luise Gottsched and her husband. Above all else, the journal provided Luise Gottsched a publication venue for disseminating a number of her works, something that would have certainly been more difficult to accomplish for a woman not in her unique social position, as the wife of a university professor of *renommé* and with her husband acting as the journal's editor.

Keeping in mind the significance that French classicism held for the Gottscheds, it should be noted that mythological figures from antiquity were already beginning to occupy the imaginations of Europeans well before the popular publication of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst* in 1755,[28] and that figures from Greek and Roman mythology and literature were very present in the cultural archive of the time. Minerva/Pallas Athena, however, deserves

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[27] The commercial and public reception of *Die Deutsche Schaubühne* among the literati of German-speaking lands provided a successful textual vehicle for putting Johann Gottsched's pedagogical poetics into practice, which aimed to "clean up" the German-speaking stage according to emerging enlightened norms. The literary supplement provided the perfect platform on which Johann Gottsched could recapitulate the moral didactics that he initially set out to establish with his *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*. See Hollmer 38–65.

[28] While scholars like E.M. Butler refute the influence of French classicism on Germany's obsession with ancient Greek culture (5), Gottsched's relation to the *querelle des ancient et de modernes* has been clearly laid out by Thomas Pago. For more on French classicism, see Broch 89–113.

particular attention among these figures, since she comes to occupy a central position as the defender and embodiment of enlightened values. Analogous to the independent heroines in the Gottscheds' plays, the widespread utilization of Pallas Athena as a symbol will be explored here as a lens for understanding the emerging challenge of educated women to patriarchal hegemony. However, the figure of Minerva/Pallas Athena is not without its ambivalence. For instance, a Gorgon's head decorates her breastplate. Gorgon refers to one of three sisters in Greek mythology, which include Euryale, Stheno, and Medusa. They were traditionally depicted as having snakes in the place of hair, and they were able to turn anyone who looked at them into lifeless, ineffective stone (which might give us pause for reflection with respect to a subversion of the desiring male gaze).[29] Etymologically, *gorgos* means "terrible." It is then interesting that this figure is also associated with Pallas Athena, if only indirectly. Perhaps the Gorgon's head mounted on her breastplate relates to her potential Amazonian status: she is in control of her sexuality and independence through an oath of virginity, and her armor itself defies gender norms as a form of cross-dressing. Additionally, Minvera/Pallas Athena's association with warfare, as its patron goddess alongside Ares/Mars, could potentially inscribe her into Amazonian destructiveness—although she was more closely connected to strategic warfare, as opposed to heroic savagery on the battlefield. Conversely, both Kerényi and Warner argue that Athena's Gorgon's head re-inscribes her into a patriarchal narrative, along with her motherless birth from her father's head, which etiologically excludes a mother goddess from the mythological narrative of Zeus's patriarchal authority. Indeed, the ambivalence bound to Minerva stands out, and this archetypical figure becomes particularly relevant with reference to

[29] The concept of the male gaze was coined by Laura Mulvey in her essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which dissects the visual appetites of heterosexual voyeurism in Hollywood productions from both Freudian and Lacanian perspectives.

the utilization of her image as a monumental maiden bound to Reason by German-speaking intellectuals during the first half of the eighteenth century, which will be explored here in the context of the cultural archive of the European Enlightenment.

Fig. 1.1 & 1.2. *To the left, an engraving from the first volume of Johann Heinrich Zedler's* Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste *(1731). To the right, an engraving of Luise Gottsched published with the* Sämtliche kleinere Gedichte *(1762).*

Looking at the engraving from the first volume of Zedler's famous *Universal-Lexicon* depicted above (fig. 1.1), when reading the image from left to right, the figure of Minerva immediately captures the viewer's attention. She sits comfortably in her traditional armor with her right hand pointing to the page of a book, and she appears to be dictating to another woman who reclines on the floor writing in a large tome, as if she were recording the entire project of a *Frauenzimmer-lexicon* itself. A globe stands prominently at Minerva's side, and the floor in front of her is scattered with scientific instruments, which symbolize her patronage of the sciences.

Additionally, her physical dominance over the globe could be understood with respect to female authority. The portrait of Luise Gottsched as a *femme savante* (fig. 1.2), which accompanied her husband's posthumous collection of her poems as its frontispiece, figures her as a Minerva-like character. Luise, like Minerva, places her hand upon a book. She stands centrally in the foreground, and several large, decorative volumes adorn the scholarly room behind her (her *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*). Moreover, the image opens onto a window view of a baroque structure in the distance, connoting a connection to the buildings of Leipzig University. Minerva stands emblematically not just for the Enlightenment—for wisdom, the sciences, and the arts—but for the *femme savant* as well, a connection that will be explored in the cultural context surrounding the Gottscheds. This will allow us to better understand the significance of the Amazon-like figures in *Panthea* and *Atalanta*. The close readings of these dramas should help answer questions about the extent to which the "specter" of the educated woman relates to the militant goddess of wisdom, and whether *Panthea* and *Atalanta* can be understood as operating under the Enlightenment's sign of Minerva, or as burgeoning expressions of the more militant and transgressive trope of the Amazon and hence as standing for the emerging ideal of the intellectually emancipated woman.

As discussed in the Introduction, Pallas Athena and the Amazons can be understood as analogous archetypes of strong women in Greco-Roman mythology (Intro. 9–10). While both Minerva and the Amazons are represented militantly, some important differentiations must be drawn between these two eidolons. Minerva, while martial in appearance, functions more as a protector: she defends and promotes the arts and sciences and represents intellectual strength (particularly strategy in warfare), which was utilized by female rulers of the Baroque and Early Modern periods to reinforce their authority within patriarchal paradigms of power. Amazons, by

contrast, do not share this apotropaic function, but represent a threatening, aggressive image of femininity, when viewed from a patriarchal, hetero-normative perspective. Their power is not measured intellectually, but through their sheer physical strength. Similarly, Amazons generally do not serve to inscribe female authority into a patriarchal order, but rather represent a transformative attack on that order. Thus close attention should be given to the strong women portrayed in *Panthea* and *Atalanta*, as the transformative potentials bound to these representations of femininity hover between positive and negative poles, between progressive and transgressive potentialities, between the Amazons and Minerva.

The Societas Alethophilorum, Minerva, and the Gottscheds

Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766) first became a professor of poetics at Leipzig University in 1731, a year after the publication of his *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*. In the following year he published his *Sterbender Cato*, an adaptation of Joseph Addison's work that earned him initial acclaim, and later disparagement for its pedantic stiffness. A year after receiving two additional titles as professor of metaphysics and of logic in 1734, Johann Gottsched married the talented poet and translator Luise Kulmus, after six years of poetic courtship and intellectual correspondence. Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched, née Kulmus (1713–1762), immediately published—albeit anonymously—her famous critique of fanatical pietism, *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke*, during the first year of marriage (Brown 9–48). Significantly, *both* Gottscheds played a major role in disseminating enlightened values in Saxony. While more prominent because of his position as an educator at the university, Johann did not work alone on his intellectual pursuits, but instead constantly collaborated with Luise, who possessed not only extraordinary poetic talents, but also an intellectual curiosity that equaled that

of her husband.[30] Through their collaborative work on journals and specifically through their translation of Pierre Bayle's *Encyclopedie historique et critique*,[31] the Gottscheds actively mediated currents of contemporary knowledge, and both participated in various learned societies in Dresden and Leipzig.[32]

One particular organization of this sort stands out: the Societas Alethophilorum. Both Gottscheds were active members, and Luise Gottsched was notably the only woman in their ranks.[33] Originally founded by Count Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel (1676–1749) in Berlin and moved to Leipzig in 1741, the society was, much in the same vein as freemasonry, open to persons from all levels of society who shared a common interest in promoting the communication of scientific knowledge and who sought to combat superstition and religious

[30] Johann Gottsched notes in his necrology of his wife, for example, that she would secretly listen to his lectures through an anteroom; as a woman, she was forbidden from attending these lectures (*AW* 10.2: 513).

[31] Their translation appeared under the title *Herrn Peter Baylens, weyland Professors der Philosophie und Historie zu Rotterdam, Historisches und Critisches Wörterbuch, nach der neuesten Auflage von 1740 ins Deutsche übersetzt; auch mit einer Vorrede und verschiedenen Anmerkungen sonderlich bey anstößigen Stellen versehen, von Johann Christoph Gottscheden [...]*. It was published in four volumes between 1741 and 1744 by Breitkopf. The translation and commentary notably appeared solely under Johann's name, although Johann, in the eulogy that accompanied her *Sämtliche kleinere Gedichte* in 1762, finally did give credit to Luise for doing a lion's share of the work. Much recent criticism revolves around this shared project of the Gottscheds, where Johann's labeling of Luise merely as his "fleißige Freundinn" and "geschickte Gehülfinn" contrasts with her letters to Dorothea von Runckel where she laments the arduousness of this task and the onset of various physical and mental ailments (Kording 11–13, Kord 5–7).

[32] See Andres Straßberger for a more thorough investigation of Johann Gottsched as a propagator of Enlightenment values; see also Marie Hélène Quéval for more on the Alethophilean works of Luise Gottsched (118–218).

[33] Johann Joachim Schwabe wrote a letter to Luise Gottsched on 13. February 1738 explaining why women were generally not allowed to participate in the meetings of Freemasons: "Unser Gesetz, das Frauenzimmer betreffend, geht nicht weiter, als daß wir es von unsern Versammlungen ausschliessen. Deswegen aber halten wir sie nicht zu unsern Gesetzen unfähig. Das erstere ist nöthig, um allen übeln Verdacht von uns abzuhalten, worein wir gerathen könten, wenn wir beÿ unsern geheimen Zusammenkünften auch Personen von dem andern Geschlechte unter uns hätten" (*Briefwechsel* 6: 33–34).

fanaticism (Bronisch 124–70). While theoretically egalitarian, one of the Society's main aims was to promote the philosophical ideals of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646–1716) and Christian Wolff (1679–1754), particularly at German-speaking courts. But as a consequence, the society became increasingly affiliated with universities, whose faculties had access to members of the aristocracy, and this ultimately restricted its membership and transformed the organization into an elitist circle of intellectuals.[34] Nevertheless, due to her own philosophical convictions, and of course with the firm support of her husband and the society's founder, the Alethophiles gladly welcomed Luise Gottsched as a member in 1738, although, as Bronisch notes, her membership constituted a rare exception (146).

Luise Gottsched received a medallion from the society emblazoned with an image of Minerva for her translation of the intellectual dispute between the renowned learned woman Marquise Gabrielle Emilie le Tonnelier de Beteuil du Chatelet (1706–1749) and Jean Jacques d'Ortous de Mairan (1678–1771). Chatelet defends the principles of Leibniz, and—as another highly educated *femme savant*—she thus gave Luise Gotttsched an added impetus to prove her "alethophilische Gesinnungen" to Manteuffel (*AW* 10.2: 525), while also providing her an opportunity to show solidarity and support for another educated woman by translating her scientific dispute for a German-speaking readership. The text appeared under the title *Zwo Schriften welche von der Frau Marquise du Chatelet und dem Herrn von Mairan, das Maß der lebendigen Kräfte in den Körpern betreffend, sind gewechselt worden* (1741). As Johann Gottsched notes: "Kurz, die übersetzte sie, und ward von demselben [Manteuffel] für diese

[34] Bronisch emphasizes that the Societas Alethophilorum attempted to transcend several hierarchies in society: religious differences were bridged; class, too, was theoretically of no importance, although membership was ultimately confined to highly educated bourgeoisie and nobility; and, finally, generation gaps were overcome as well. However, Bronisch notes that the heterogeneity of this society was reduced greatly after the Alethophiles moved from Berlin to Leipzig (146).

Bemühung, mit einer goldenen alethophilischen Schaumünze beschenket; die andern Mitgliedern nur in silbernen Abdrücken zu Theile geworden" (*AW* 10.2: 526; see fig. 1.4).[35] He informs the reader that this medallion is the very same one that was reproduced at the beginning of his dedicatory preface to his posthumous collection of Luise Gottsched's poems (fig. 1.3).

SAPERE AUDE.

Leben
der weil. hochedelgebohrnen, nunmehr sel. Frau,
Luise Adelgunde Victoria Gottschedinn,
geb. Kulmus, aus Danzig.

Diese in ganz Deutschland, ja auch in benachbarten Ländern, durch ihre Geschicklichkeit, und viele gelehrte und witzige Schriften, bekanntte und berühmte Frau, war 1713. den 11. April zu Danzig gebohren. Ihr sel. Vater war Herr Johann George Kulmus, aus Breslau gebürtig, der Arzeneykunst Doctor, Königl. Pohln. Leibarzt, und der kaiserl. Akad. der Naturforscher Mitglied. Er hatte sich in seiner Jugend, durch einen Tractat berühmt gemachet, der unter dem Titel: Oneirologia, sive Tractatio Physiologico-Physico-Theoretica de Somniis, & hinc dependente eorum consideratione medica, nec non inde facta excursione ad deliria &c. zu Breslau bey Rohrlachen 1703. ans Licht getreten; und ihm eine Art geistl. Verfolgung zu-

* 5 gezogen

SAPERE AUDE.

SOCIETAS ALETHOPHILORUM AB ERN. CHRISTOPHORO S.R.I. COM. DE MANTEUFFEL INSTITUTA BEROL MDCCXXXVI

Nachricht
von der zu Berlin
auf die Gesellschafft
der
ALETOPHILORUM
oder
Liebhaber
der Wahrheit
geschlagenen
Müntze.

1740.

Fig. 1.3 & 1.4. *To the left, the first page of Johann Gottsched's 1762 biographical eulogy of Luise Gottsched, crowned with the reproduction of her Alethophilean Minerva medallion. To the right, a newsletter from the Societas Alethophilorum dated from 1740, when the society was still located in Berlin, with an engraving of the Minerva medallion.*

Johann Gottsched candidly describes Luise Gottsched's membership in Manteuffel's Societas Alethophilorum, and he even refers to a *Gelegenheitsgedicht* written by Luise for Manteuffel that was explicitly dedicated to Minerva, the armed goddess of wisdom (*AW* 10.2: 521). Gottsched details their participation in the Society's affairs, and he pays specific attention

[35] Bronisch notes: "Die Aufgabe der Alethophilenmedaille von 1740 sei es, so Manteuffel, das Wolffische Werk zu propagieren [...]. Die Vorderseite dieser Medaille zeigt die Göttin Minerva im Brustharnisch mit Helm. Letzteren zieren nicht nur ein Federbusch, sondern vor allem die Portraits Leibniz' und Wolffs. Als Umschrift trägt die Medaille die aus Horaz' Epistulae I.2, 40 stemmende Devise 'Sapere aude'" (161–62).

to those projects that promoted the philosophy of Wolff and Leibniz (*AW* 10.2: 521). Depicted on the emblem wearing a helmet, Minerva was graced by the visages of Wolff and Leibniz, the Gottscheds' philosophical fathers, and with the Horacean "Sapre aude" inscribed above, a saying that was made popular by Immanuel Kant in his famous essay "Was ist Aufklärung?" in 1784. Societas Alethophilorum translates as the Friends of Truth. But why choose Minerva as their emblem? She was, above all else, the goddess associated with a patronage of the sciences and the arts, the two main reserves of enlightened culture. However, Minerva's prominence as the society's escutcheon remains highly suspect, especially if one were to infer that the society promoted equality between the sexes, since Luise Gottsched remained the exception and not the rule. Nevertheless, Luise is explicitly identified with Minerva as a learned woman through her husband's reproduction of her Alethophilean medallion in the (auto)biographical preface to his publication of her collected poems. This association underscores her exceptional status as an educated woman, where her wisdom and her poetic accomplishments are visually reinforced by the association that she represents a Minerva-like goddess of the pen. This could also allude to the possibility that Luise Gotttsched was being identified as the "Muse" of the Society, as the living embodiment of the Minerva symbol. To what extent can Johann's association of Luise with Minerva thus be understood as progressive, or even as potentially transgressive? Did Luise self-identify with Minerva as well? Or did she rather consider herself an Amazon of the pen?

Johann Gottsched's early poems to Luise already begin to reveal a Minerva-like, or perhaps even Amazonian assertiveness that he associates with her skill as a poet. For instance, in a poem written on her name day, 30 January 1736, Gottsched praises:

Dein anmuthsvoller Mund, dein Umgang, Witz und Scherz,

Dein kluges Häuslichseyn, dein philosophisch Herz,

> Dein ungemeiner Kiel, der Männerwitz besieget,
>
> Hat mich bisher weit mehr, als alle Welt, vergnüget.
>
> Du hassest Stolz und Pracht, und liebst die Reinlichkeit;
>
> Die Kleidung ziert nicht dich, du zierst ein jedes Kleid. (*AW* 1: 360–61)

Johann associates Luise's poetic prowess with war-like language (*besiegen*), a rhetoric that points towards the Amazonian. But it also immediately serves as an aesthetic object that pleases the male recipient. At the same time, Luise's intelligence and philosophical inclinations suggest a positive, progressive association with Minerva rather than the transgressive, anti-patriarchal potentials bound to the image of the Amazon, although Johann's militant language does emphasize that he holds Luise as superior to male poets. While Luise defeats men intellectually with her exceptional pen (*Kiel*), she remains bound by her husband's adherence to conventions of natural female beauty and domesticity (*Häuslichseyn*). The poem appropriately ends with him suavely praising her for her humble simplicity and purity, only to subsequently objectify her physical pulchritude, as he regresses from an enlightened praise of her intellect (*Witz*) back into the role of a lauding suitor. This idealization of Luise early in their relationship, while highly ambivalent, mirrors Johann's posthumous elevation of her as a paradigm for transforming corrupt women into models of virtue:

> außerdem hätte sie auch einer keuschen *Sulpitia* verglichen werden können, die in Rom, bey gänzlicher Verderbung weiblicher Sitten, von der ganzen Stadt einhällig erwählet wurde, den vom Rathe neugestifteten Tempel und Dienste der herzenlenkenden Venus (*Veneris verticordiæ*), im Namen alles Frauenzimmers einzuweihen. [...] Wenderin der weiblichen Herzen zu Zucht und Sitte. (*AW* 10.2: 522)

Johann juxtaposes Luise against a *venus libentina* (symbolizing sensual desires) through a comparison to the famous female composer and cloistered nun, Sulpitia Cesis (1577–n.d.), and he thus underlines the patriarchal importance placed on the sexual virtue of women, that is, on the circumscription of women's sexuality. But Johann's praise once again reveals its ambivalence through a logical contradiction: on one hand, he idealizes Luise's sexual virtue (*Keuschheit*); on the other, she "turns" women's hearts, which might be taken as indirectly implying that women are naturally inclined towards depravity and hence their sensuality needs to be domesticated (*Zucht*). His idealization of Luise's purity could also be related to Minerva's status as a *parthenos* (virgin), which could then be connected to her association with wisdom, here in the sense of prudence or chastity.

However, Luise's poetic wit, which Johann understands as conquering men's intellects (*Männerwitz*), could also be related to an Amazonian independence from men. Similarly, considering the association of Minerva as the emblem of the Societas Alethophilorum with Luise Gottsched, the question arises as to whether or not the image of Minerva might also be potentially trangressive with respect to the education of women. True, Minerva is the protective goddess of wisdom, and it makes sense that a learned society that referred to itself as the "Lovers of Truth" would emblazon itself with her image. But Minerva is not only the guardian of the arts and sciences, she is also associated with the art of war. She is armed and dangerous. Thus the identification of learned women with Minerva might relate to a break in hetero-normative definitions that kept women confined to the domestic sphere, which was already beginning to emerge during the Early Enlightenment. Does the emergence of Minerva in European culture, particularly in enlightened literary publications, predate and preform the later semantic mobilizations of the Amazon trope by German-speaking authors in the wake of the French

Revolution? Or to what extent is the valorization of Minerva by the Societas Alethophilorum already patterned on the domestication of the Amazon and the "enlightened" disciplining of transgressive Amazonian powers?

Minerva, the Amazons, and Women in Positions of Political Power

Before we can undertake an analysis of *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* and its significance in relation to the moral didactics for women bound to Johann Gottsched's poetics, the importance of Minerva as a symbol in the cultural archive of Europe requires some further exploration. While Minerva might seem to be reduced to an allegorical monument in the context of the Societas Alethophilorum, this goddess relates not just to the Enlightened values that Johann Gottsched projected onto his wife, but to a broader social phenomenon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: portraits of female rulers as Minerva/Pallas Athena. In the absence of a male heir to the throne, or through the death of a reigning husband—one thinks of Maria de Médici of France or Catherine the Great of Russia—a woman in a position of power could also rule on her own, or as an acting regent (Kintzinger 377–98). One way to inscribe themselves into the absolutist monarchical authority otherwise held by men was by commissioning portraits in which they were allegorically glorified as Minerva/Pallas Athena. Ruprecht Pfeiff has shown that there is also a long tradition of *male* rulers who consciously associated themselves with Minerva, which goes back to antiquity and relates to patronage of the arts and sciences. Pfeiff points to 16th-century France and describes a portrait of François I (1494–1547) at the palace of Fontainebleau, in which the French king wears Pallas Athena's armor emblazoned with the Gorgon's head (86–87). This representation serves as a kind of inaugurating springboard for the valorization of women associated with the court as Minerva,

including his sister, Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549). Pfeiff identifies this as the first glorification of a woman in a position of political power as Minerva (87–89). Similarly, as Christa Schlumbohm demonstrates, it became typical for aristocratic women in political power to identify themselves with Minerva during the Baroque and Early Modern periods (77–99). Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, female rulers turned to this figure as a means for representing their authority within the paradigm of patriarchal militarism that was mobilized by absolute monarchs in their self-representations—specifically through the visual arts and ceremonial performances at the court.[36]

Minerva serves as a vehicle for solidifying women's claims to political authority, as an emblem of both female strength and intelligence, by visually reinforcing and legitimating claims to women's equal capability as rulers (Baumgärtel 149–150). Thus *femmes fortes*, like Maria de Medici and Queen Christina of Sweden (see fig. 1.5), positioned themselves within a tradition that promotes militaristic representations of rulers. Yet this trend to identify with Minerva, who almost always appears wearing armor and a helmet and bearing weapons, also correlates to patronage of the arts and to Minerva's role as the goddess of wisdom, as was the case with both Christina of Sweden (1626–1689) and Maria de Medici (1575–1642) (see fig. 1.6). In the context of the emergence of enlightened absolutism, this patronage of the arts signified a ruler's dedication to his or her people, where, at the same time, Minerva's militant appearance lent itself to the martial leadership required by rulers.

[36] For more on women rulers and their self-representations as Minerva, or even as Amazons, see also Baumgärtel, Neysters, and Dixon.

Fig. 1.5 & 1.6. *To the left, a bust of Queen Christina of Sweden as Minerva (1649). To the right, Maria de Medici as Minerva (1708).*

Women in positions of power did not just refer to themselves as Minerva; in many instances what could be described as cults of Minerva began to spring up around these female rulers. Poets and intellectuals would often dedicate their works to women who governed, and in these dedications the lady in question would often be referred to as “Minerva,” “Pallas” (from Pallas Athena), or as a “Schutzgöttin der freien Künste.” *Schutz* should be understood as the operative term here, as the protection offered by Minerva over the arts and sciences stands in opposition to the more threatening, aggressive violence of the Amazons. With this enlightened protection of wisdom in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that both Luise and Johann Gottsched dedicated several of their major projects to women in positions of power. While scholars have recently (and rightly) emphasized that Johann Gottsched represents one of the first German-

speaking poets to pivot away from the traditional dedicatory paratext common in Baroque literature and to move towards introductory paratexts designed to provide broader poetological insights about the works that they frame (Schramm 401–34; Dembeck 64–107), he and his wife were nevertheless still very much ensconced within the baroque tradition of producing dedications to rulers. While Johann was employed by Leipzig University the electors of Saxony supported this institution, and thus he was also directly beholden to these rulers' munificence. Both Gottscheds dedicated their published texts to members of the nobility, but not necessarily always to the rulers of Saxony nor directly to those who sponsored their works as patrons. Still, one can surmise, there was a constant desire to woo new financial supporters as well.

One patroness stands out among the rest: Maria Antonia Walpurgis of Saxony, who was the Dowager Electress of Saxony and a talented poet, singer, composer, and painter in her own right. Maria Antonia not only stylized herself as the queen of the Amazons in her opera *Talestri, regina della Amazonni* (1763), she was also praised as Pallas Athena (and alternately as Minerva) by both Johann and Luise Gottsched. Johann had the opportunity to laud her in speeches given at Leipzig University on numerous occasions, not to mention a plethora of dedicatory paratexts that hold her up as Minerva, that is, as an enlightened patroness of the arts. In his function as the main propagandist for enlightened ideals at Saxony's court, he praised Maria Antonia not only for her love and support of the arts, but also as a virtuoso in her own right. For instance, in a speech given to commemorate Maria Antonia's second appearance at Leipzig University on 27 April 1749, Johann Gottsched praises her as the "Durchlauchtigste Pallas, die gnädigste Vorsteherinn aller Wissenschaften" (*AW* 9.2: 556–57). Previously, on 10 October 1747, Johann Gottsched spoke in celebration of Maria Antonia's wedding to Friederich Christian of Saxony. There he asks:

> sollten wir nicht bereit seyn, Blut und Leben für sie aufzuopfern? Da Sie aber auch selbst, eine so große und erleuchtete Kennerinn der Wissenschaften sind: was haben nicht unsere Musen für Schutz und Zierde von einer so durchlauchtigen Beschirmerinn zu hoffen? Und was haben wir nicht insbesondere für eine Verbindlichkeit, Sie als eine gnädige Vorsteherinn unsers Helikons zu verehren! Haben doch die Alten nicht nur den freyen Künsten die Musen; sondern auch den Wissenschaften und der Weisheit selbst, nicht einen Gott, sondern eine Göttin, die Pallas vorgesetzet: warum sollten wir nicht eine so hocherleuchtete Prinzessinn, als Eure Königl. Hoheit sind, für unsere Minerva, für unsere weise Vorsteherinn erklären? (*AW* 9.1: 38–39)

While Johann addresses both Friedrich Christian and Maria Antonia, he emphasizes that it is she who should be understood as the protector of the arts and sciences, specifically because she is an enlightened woman, and in line with the fact that the ancients ascribed this role to a goddess, not a god.[37] It is somewhat more ambiguous, and therefore striking, that Gottsched, who was known as a staunch opponent of war and its negative effects on society, would begin patriotically by suggesting that his countrymen should be willing to die for Maria Antonia as their leader, since this returns the appellation of Minerva/Pallas Athena to a militaristic gloss. This militarism might seem to stand in contradiction to the image of an enlightened female ruler, but this attitude is a standard character trait used in praising rulers. It actually reinforces similar characterizations of male rulers at absolutist courts, particularly in Saxony, which relied heavily on effusive descriptions of rulers' artistic patronage and military might to legitimate their multitudinous claims to political power. Minerva/Pallas Athena, then, transfers this paradigm of male authority onto Maria Antonia as a female ruler. Gottsched emphasizes the fact that Maria Antonia herself

[37] Johann Gottsched also translated Maria Antonia's three operas into German Alexandrine verse, including *Talestri*, which will be discussed in further detail in Ch. 5 & 6.

is an artist, thus acting both as a protector and as an additional ornament (*Zierde*) for the arts and sciences in Saxony. But above all else, he insists that she should be recognized as a wise ruler, as Saxony's *Vorsteherin.* In many ways Luise Gottsched's role as the living Minerva of the Societas Alethophilorum parallels the allegorical glorification of Maria Antionia under the same sign.

Similar to her husband, Luise Gottsched dedicated the first volume of the *Ausführliche Schriften der königlichen Akademie der Aufschriften und schönen Wissenschaften zu Paris* (1753) to Maria Antonia and adorned her preface with a bust of Minerva (see. Fig. 1.7). Luise, already an accomplished poet and translator in her own right, nevertheless abases herself before Maria Antonia:

> Ich, die ich die Unfähigkeit meiner Feder, auch bey mittelmäßigen Materien empfinde, besitze nicht Verwägenheit genug, mich an das Meisterstück der Musen zu wagen. Zudem, so sind die seltenen Vorzüge der Schutzgöttin sächsicher Musen, der Welt viel zu bekannt; als daß die eines andern Zeugnisses bedörfte, als die unsterblichen eigenen Werke der Durchlauchtigsten Maria Antonia. (*AS* 4)

While one might expect more solidarity between learned women, Luise's lowering of herself reflects more their disparate social positions, which was also a conventional gesture in a dedicatory paratext. True, Luise was also a learned woman, but she did not share the same class status as a member of the nobility, nor the same access to education often enjoyed by aristocratic women, and thus Luise's praise of Maria Antonia and denigration of her own talents corresponds to custom. Maria Antonia's opera libretti had already reached broad audiences through their

translation and publication in German,[38] which Luise claims—or perhaps earnestly believes—surpasses her own intellectual and artistic productions, although time has certainly proved otherwise regarding their respective receptions. Maria Antonia remains a superlative instance in the mind of Luise, a protective goddess (*Schutzgöttin*) living and breathing in Saxony. In contrast to her husband, however, Luise does not utilize any militaristic rhetoric, and thus her praise remains focused on the arts and sciences, in the sense of an alethophilean Minerva.

In a similar vein, Luise Gottsched's *Geschichte der königlichen Akademie der schönen Wissenschaften zu Paris* (1750), her monumental six-volume translation of the history of the Royal Academy of Science and Arts in Paris, represents another work dedicated to a powerful woman, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (1717–1780). Luise's dedication is set off by an engraving featuring the bust of Maria Theresa, which is surrounded by the figures of Athena and Themis, who both stand armed and surrounded by cannons and instruments of war (see fig. 1.8). Both Themis and Athena look toward Maria Theresa for their cues, and significantly, Maria Theresa's bust not only stands higher than both figures, but is also proportionately larger, as if to emphasize her importance as a ruler. Luise's dedicatory text is full of superlatives, and her praise ranges from addressing Maria Theresa's beauty and her ability to rule, to her dedication to the arts and sciences. However, any explicit imagery associated with warfare or conquest remains conspicuously absent. Johann particularly makes note of Luise's pleasure at having once had the

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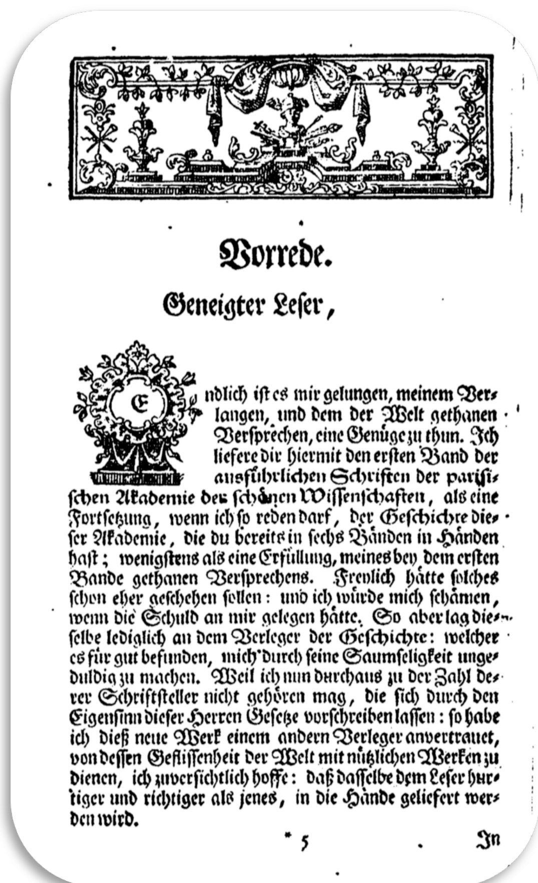
[38] Johann Gottsched would publish a German rendition of Maria Antonia's pastoral, *Il triomfo della fedeltà* as *Der Triumph der Treue, ein Schäferspiel. Aus dem von der Meisterhand der Durchlauchtigsten Ermelinda Thalea, einer arkadischen Schäferinn verfertigten wälschen Singspiele, Il Triomfo della Fedeltà, seiner Vortrefflichkeit wegen verdeutschet,* which was published in 1754, with the musical score, by Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf. He had previously translated her text written for the oratorium of Johann Adolf Hasse's *La conversion di Sant Agostine* (1750).

opportunity to meet the empress in Vienna, and here, too, the emphasis seems to be placed on intellectual prowess and Maria Theresa's patronage.[39]

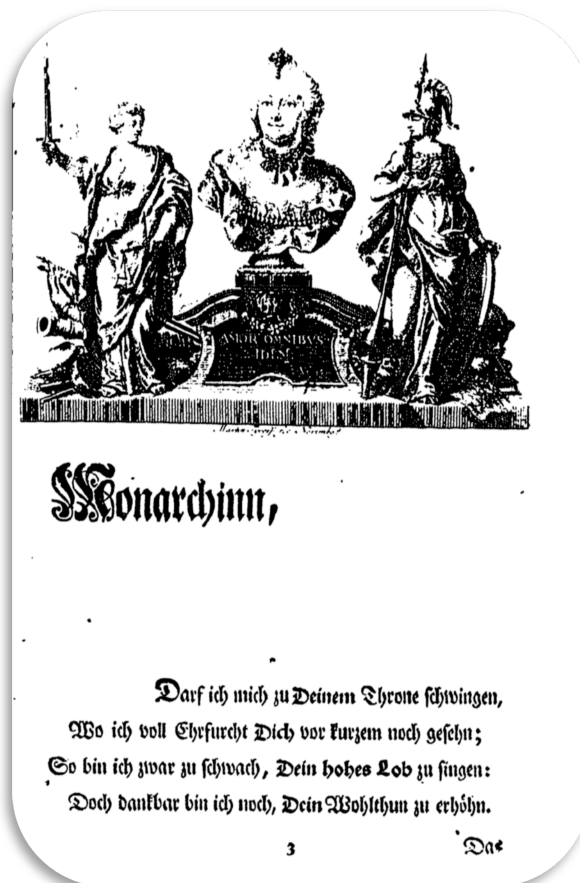


Vorrede.

Geneigter Leser,

Endlich ist es mir gelungen, meinem Verlangen, und dem der Welt gethanen Versprechen, eine Genüge zu thun. Ich liefere dir hiermit den ersten Band der ausführlichen Schriften der parisischen Akademie der schönen Wissenschaften, als eine Fortsetzung, wenn ich so reden darf, der Geschichte dieser Akademie, die du bereits in sechs Bänden in Händen hast; wenigstens als eine Erfüllung, meines bey dem ersten Bande gethanen Versprechens. Freylich hätte solches schon eher geschehen sollen: und ich würde mich schämen, wenn die Schuld an mir gelegen hätte. So aber lag dieselbe lediglich an dem Verleger der Geschichte: welcher es für gut befunden, mich durch seine Saumseligkeit ungeduldig zu machen. Weil ich nun durchaus zu der Zahl derer Schriftsteller nicht gehören mag, die sich durch den Eigensinn dieser Herren Gesetze vorschreiben lassen: so habe ich dieß neue Werk einem andern Verleger anvertrauet, von dessen Geflissenheit der Welt mit nützlichen Werken zu dienen, ich zuversichtlich hoffe: daß dasselbe dem Leser hurtiger und richtiger als jenes, in die Hände geliefert werden wird.

5 In



Monarchinn,

Darf ich mich zu Deinem Throne schwingen,
Wo ich voll Ehrfurcht Dich vor kurzem noch gesehn;
So bin ich zwar zu schwach, Dein hohes Lob zu singen:
Doch dankbar bin ich noch, Dein Wohlthun zu erhöhn.

3 Da=

Fig. 1.7 & 1.8. *To the left, the first page of Luise Gottsched's introduction to the* Ausführliche Schriften *(1753). Note that the dedicatory and introductory paratexts are visually adorned with a bust of Minerva, who wears her traditional helmet and is surrounded by weapons. To the right, the bust of the Empress Maria Theresa with Athena and Themis, which precedes Luise's dedication of to the* Geschichte der königlichen Akademie *(1750). Note that Themis's sword further extends the militaristic imagery associated with Maria Theresa as a woman ruler.*

[39] In his necrology of Luise, Johann notes that she was very humble about her own talents in the face of royalty. Recounting a conversation between Empress Maria Theresa and Luise, the Empress is quoted as saying to Luise: "Es hieß: sie sind zu bescheiden: ich weis es gar wohl, dass die gelehrteste Frau von Deutschland vor mir steht. Meine Antwort war: Meines Wissens, ist die gelehrteste Frau, nicht nur von Deutschland, sondern von ganz Europa, Beherrscherinn von mehr als einem Königreiche. Die Kaiserinn erwiederte: Wofern ich sie kenne; so irren sie sich" (*AW* 10.2: 549–50).

In another pertinent example of Minerva-worship, Johann Gottsched dedicates his posthumous collection of Luise Gottsched's poems to none other than Catherine the Great of Russia (1729–1796),[40] and he mentions the forty-odd epistles exchanged by his deceased wife and the Queen, which he treasures as holy relics.[41] He also giddily mentions that she was present at the performance in Leipzig of one of Luise's plays in 1735, and he refers to her as "eine so erhabene Schutzgöttin der Musen." He further dubs her the "allerdurchlauchtigsten Kaiserinn, und Selbstherrscherrinn." Gottsched goes so far as to legitimate her authority through divine will:

> Die ganze Welt bewundert in einer so großen Monarchinn die göttliche Vorsehung, die Selbige mit so sichtbarer Hand geführet, und durch ganz unerhörte Wege, auf einen der höchsten Thronen von Europa gesetzet hat: wo Sie die Wohlfahrt unzählbarer Völker mit weiser Hand gründen, mit starkem Arme erhalten, und bis auf späte Zeiten dauerhaft machen kann. (Uneven pag.)

While the ascription of divine will to legitimate the authority of a monarch is a standard convention for absolutist rulers, Gottsched emphasizes that Catherine has accomplished a feat that has astounded the world, as something unheard of (*unehört*), and he further emphasizes not only her wise hand, but her strong arm. He thus figures her, like Minerva, as both a patroness of the arts and as a protector in the sense of military might. Gottsched goes on to offer to write her personal history (if she will grant him access to her archives), and he concludes by referring to her as his "verewigte Heldinn," which expresses how he idolizes her as a heroine and as a

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[40] Catherine herself was notably portrayed on horseback and wearing a soldier's uniform, which would further align her with Minerva (and moreover the horse-riding Amazons of Herodotus). Also, her violent rise to power in 1762 occurred at the same time that Maria Antonia von Sachsen wrote *Talestri*, the relevance of which will be discussed in Ch. 5 & 6.

[41] Johann's dedication to the *Sämtliche kleinere Gedichte* has uneven pagination and is not reproduced in the *Ausgewählte Werke*.

legitimate female ruler. It is not without consequence that his dedication to Catherine the Great is then immediately followed by the reproduction of Luise's Alethophilean medallion (see figs. 1.3 & 1.4), which then introduces Johann's biography of his deceased wife, another woman whom he held in the highest regard.

Here we have two instances where Minerva found association with women in the eighteenth century who advanced to positions of power in a patriarchal order. On the one hand, there are powerful women rulers, like Catherine the Great and Maria Antonia of Saxony, who utilized the image of Minerva for a dual-purpose: not only to re-inscribe their authority within the militarism inherent in patrilineal absolutism, but also to establish themselves as enlightened rulers, that is, as protectors of the arts and the sciences. On the other hand, the rise of women's education in the middle class also comes to be associated with Minerva, and the newly gained wisdom of the educated bourgeoisie was embodied by Pallas Athena, an antique eidolon that was taken up with gusto by enlightened thinkers like the Gottscheds. Minerva, who represents a progressive, protective femininity and celebrates its virtues, simultaneously suggests the violent, transgressive image of the Amazon. As discussed in the Introduction, Minerva relates to the Amazonian archetype in that she also wears armor and carries weapons. This image potentially carries a revolutionary impetus in light of the flourishing of learned women in the aristocracy and emerging German-speaking bourgeoisie that threatened old gender norms during the first half of the eighteenth century. Just as Amazons subvert gender norms, educated women potentially threaten men's hegemony over political, economic, and cultural spheres. While the Gottscheds often dedicated works to powerful women in positions of power, heaping praise onto these living Minervas, their own textual productions for the stage evince much more ambiguity regarding the depiction of independent female characters. How do the Gottscheds' praise of

women who ruled traverse from the genre of the dedicatory paratext to theatrical narratives with strong women as their protagonists? And how does that alter the social praxis attached to their poetics? Does the sign of Minerva represent a positive trope for enlightened progress, or do these texts signify the domestication and taming of Amazonian independence?

With Minerva in mind, Johann's *Atalanta* and Luise's *Panthea* will be explored through this dual-register of progressive and potentially transgressive representations of femininity, where the strong female protagonists could contextually stand not only for self-governing women in positions of power, but also for the supposed threat to the social order posed by the emerging prospect of a bourgeois woman's right to an education and equality, as exemplified by Luise Gottsched and at least theoretically by the humanistic ideals of the Early Enlightenment. Her husband's support for women's *Bildung* will thus be critically examined in the next chapter through a comparison of his play *Atalanta* with his moral weekly written explicitly for a female audience, *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* (1725–1726). Similarly, in Ch. 3 & 4 Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* will be investigated as a kind of self-staging of feminine self-determination that echoes extradiegetically with both Luise Gottsched's exceptional status as a learned woman, and diegetically as a portrayal of the precarious status of emancipated women in positions of political power and in the broader social context. The limitations that Johann places on Atalanta will then be related to Luise's Panthea figure, who will be explored as representing a much more drastic vision of Amazonian sovereignty, while her text also plays with the symbolic capital of Minerva. The ways in which these two texts both reflect or refute ideals surrounding the promotion of women's education during the first half of the eighteenth century deserve further analysis, particularly with respect to the Gottscheds' promotion of and participation in female edification. Thus their work can be viewed as a kind of sociopolitical praxis intent on modeling new

feminine identities by means of literary representations. Although *Atalanta* and *Panthea* can be considered to have been written under the enlightened sign of Minerva, Amazonian moments also abound in these narratives that profoundly renegotiate notions of female autonomy. An ambiguous transformative social potential exists in their texts: progressively, under the sign of Minerva, or even transgressively, under the sign of the Amazons.

Chapter 2: Performing Atalanta's *Tugend*: Amazonian Independence versus Minerva-like Virtue in Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* (1741)

> "[T]o understand identity as *practice*, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life […]. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. The injunction *to be* a given gender produces necessary failures […]."
>
> — Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

Johann Gottsched's representation of the Amazonian huntress Atalanta in his pastoral play *Atalanta, oder die bezwungene Sprödigkeit* (1741), offers an example of a non-canonical text from the Early Enlightenment that centers on a strong female protagonist. However, it is a narrative that also immediately places strict limitations on this figure as representing a "dangerously" independent woman. In lieu of a plot synopsis, a brief review of the traditional Atalanta myths will provide semantic context for Johann Gottsched's theatrical fable. This close reading of *Atalanta* will explore how Johann's play negotiates the three main Amazonian transgressions against patriarchal authority described in the Introduction: the Amazons' sexual independence, access to violence, and their political autonomy, and how these categories relate to the figure of Atalanta. Simultaneously, it will ask how Johann Gottsched's reworking of the Atalanta myth relates to Minerva's prominence in the cultural archive of the Early

Enlightenment. Finally, it poses the question whether the final erasure of Atalanta's independence[42]—through marriage and through the negation of her identity via the anagnorisis in the play's final scene—correlates to Gottsched's pedagogy for the moral "betterment" of women. My central hypothesis will be that the Minerva-like virtue of Atalanta reveals a broader circumscription of female agency that operates in Johann Gottsched's "enlightened" theatrical didactics. Johann's promotion of women's education in his moral weekly *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* will provide a framework for reflecting on *Atalanta* as a text that was written for a specifically female audience, and explicitly for the supposed moral education of those women readers.

First and foremost, Johann Gottsched was keen to distinguish his rendition of the Atalanta myth as an original invention. In the introduction to the third volume of *Die Deutsche Schaubühne* (1741) Johann lauds himself: "Es ist aber die ganze Fabel dieses Stückes nicht nur ein deutsches Original; sondern auch von allen Opern und Schauspielen, die man unter diesem Namen gehabt hat, gänzlich unterschieden" (XI–XII). While inserting his pastoral play into a tradition of Atalanta narratives, he immediately sets his own rendition apart from those unnamed works. When Johann asserts that his *Atalanta* shares only the name of the protagonist, and that the pastoral is otherwise totally different, "gänzlich unterschieden," he stakes not only a claim to the originality of his work, but also distances it from long-established narrative and visual traditions based on the Greco-Roman figure(s). But why mention the stage *and* opera? Johann

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[42] In "The Virgin Huntress Tamed: J.C. Gottsched's *Atalanta* and the Erasure of Female Autonomy," Edward Potter offers a very insightful reading of Gottsched's play that convincingly argues for Atalanta's ultimate erasure in Johann's text (36–63). However, Potter focuses on Johann Gottsched's supposed propagation of bourgeois notions of sentimental marriage, which to some extent limits his analysis. Rather than providing a tit-for-tat counter-reading, this exploration of *Atalanta* will focus more on the text's role as a vehicle for female education, specifically looking at Johann Gottsched's representation and negotiation of Amazonian transgressions and Minerva-like virtues.

nervously adds: "Es ist übrigens dieses Stück schon vor zehn Jahren gemacht, itzo aber hin und her übersehen worden" (XII). Here Johann would seem to be obliquely distancing his rendition from George Frideric Handel's opera *Atalanta*, which was composed and performed several times in 1736 in London. Having thus predated the first draft of his play ten years prior to its publication, Gottsched can better lay claim to its originality, though one might ponder these auctorial claims.[43] Unlike Handel, who still stays relatively close to the Atalanta myth, Johann Gottsched notably alters the figure of Atalanta, which significantly affects her agency in the text and shapes her function as role model for female readers. The introduction to the *Deutsche Schaubühne* positions *Atalanta* as requiring exegesis in terms of the relation of this "enlightened" Atalanta to other Atalanta narratives. When he proclaims that the "ganze Fabel dieses Stückes" differs from all previous versions, he alludes to two notions of the term fable. Johann not only re-invents the fabula—altering the mythological raw materials of the Atalanta plot—but also renders Atalanta into a fable that relates to the moral didactics bound to his conception of the German stage as a vehicle for the moral betterment of audiences.[44]

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[43] It could easily be argued that Gottsched's play more than just shares the motif of disguise (*verstellen*) with Handel's opera, which also features numerous feigned loves and masked identities. Interestingly, in Handel's opera, Atalanta disguises herself under the name of Amarilli, a "parallel" that will later be discussed in further detail with respect to the figure of Amaryllis in Gottsched's pastoral. It should be noted, however, that Handel bases his opera more closely on the Arcadian myth of Atalanta, and he even features Atalanta's participation in the hunt of the Calydonian Boar, which Gottsched excludes completely. Both works nevertheless end similarly with the "joyous" marriage of the protagonist, as she is brought back into society's normative fold, which aligns more with the Boeotian Atalanta myth featuring Hippomenes. Gottsched seems to have borrowed names from a pastoral poem published by Richard Steele in his *Guardian*, which features Menalkas and Amaryllis, and another poem by Benjamin Neukirch that enlists Damötas and Corydon, a poem Johann Gottsched reproduces in "Von Idyllen, Eklogen oder Schäfergedichten" in the *Dichtkunst* (*AW* 6.2: 83–88, 107–09). The names of these characters are in fact taken from Virgil's *Eclogues*.

[44] In the second installment of his *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*, Gottsched lays out a moral program that he envisions for reforming comedy on the German-speaking stage from lewd Hanswurst comedies into vehicles for propagating the emerging bourgeois values of the Early

The Two Atalantas in Greco-Roman Mythology and the Cultural Archive of Europe

The figure of Atalanta has rightly been associated with that of the Amazons, since she represents an alluring, ambiguous, and—above all else—strong female character, who first excited the imaginations of the ancient Greeks (Mayor 1–13). Atalanta also enjoyed a widespread presence in the European cultural imagination by means of illustrated manuscripts and paintings produced during the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Atalanta remained a popular character through the successful transmission of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was further disseminated by the printing press. Isaac de Benserade's illustrated Latin-French edition of the *Metamorphoses* from 1677 stands out as being particularly influential for the cultural archive of the Enlightenment (Dewes 105). Johann Gottsched, as part of a highly educated bourgeois elite, was surely familiar with Ovid's work, even though he distances his pastoral from the Atalanta epos.

But there are actually two Atalantas whose histories were often conflated in myths (Graves, *Greek Myths* 263–68), and indeed both are best known through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[45] In the first Arcadian version, Atalanta was the daughter of King Iasus and

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Enlightenment. The *Spitzbübereyen* of morally reprobate figures were still to be mocked, but not directly laughed at: "da es Comödie nicht ist, einzelne Personen zu spotten; sondern allgemeine Thortheiten lächerlich zu machen" (*AW* 6.2: 344). He further argues: "Die Comödie ist nichts anders, als eine Nachahmung einer lasterhaften Handlung, die durch ihr lächerliches Wesen den Zuschauer belustigen, aber auch zugleich erbauen kann" (*AW* 6.2: 348). Johann Gottsched wanted to make virtuous comedies for moral improvement, against crude entertainments for the uneducated masses (to whom he refers as *Pöbel*), and he thought that the genre of theater should be brought into a "völlige Übereinstimmung" with "Vernunft, Politik und Religion" (*AW* 6.2: 351), that is, into line with the establishment of middle-class behavioral norms as a medium for communicating and (trans)forming societal values.

[45] Several variations of Atalanta's myth exist. For instance, Atalanta appears in Pseudo-Apollodorus's *Bibliotheca* and in Aelian's *Historical Miscellany.* Pseudo-Apollodorus records Atalanta as having traveled with the Argonauts on their quest for the Golden Fleece (*Bibliotheca* 1.9.16), a theme that Robert Graves brilliantly reworks into *The Golden Fleece* (1944), which

Clymene. Because the patriarchal king only wanted sons, she was to be euthanized on a hillside. A servant, however, took her to a cave on Mount Parthenio, where she was saved by a she-bear whose cubs had just been killed by a hunter, and the bear suckles Atalanta in their stead.[46] This wild rearing imputes a potentially dangerous animality to Atalanta and puts her into opposition with human civilization, which links her with the Amazons. Atalanta grows up as an Other, apart from society in the company of wild animals, just as Herodotus places the Amazons on the outskirts of the known world next to wild Scythians and anthropophagi. Although the Arcadian Atalanta found refuge among a clan of hunters, as a young woman she remained a virgin, preferred to be alone, and was always armed and on the hunt. Light on her feet, Atalanta was renowned for both her beauty and strength, but, like the Amazons, she was able to defend her autonomy and choose her own sexual partners, even if her choice was for abstinence. For example, when two centaurs, Hylæus and Rhœcus, hear of Atalanta's beauty, they attempt to attack and rape her, with the result that she kills them both (Graves 265). In this version of the myth, Atalanta takes part in the famous Calydonian boar hunt, as well. The beast was sent by the goddess Diana to wreak havoc after a sacrifice at her altar was forgotten. Meleager gathers an all-male hunting posse to kill the boar, when the huntress Atalanta joins the group, and he

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contains several encounters with Amazonian women: the women of Lemnos, who have killed their husbands and sons; the Amazons themselves; and a pre-patriarchal, matrilineal religion of the Triple Goddess that uncannily looms over the expanse of Graves's narrative.

[46] Atalanta's association with the she-bear reinforces a reading that links her with Artemis, whose name could be etymologically derived from the Greek word for bear, *árktos*. In some versions of the myth, Artemis is explicitly credited with having sent the bear to rescue Atalanta. Her maternal link to animality and to a state of nature in some respects strengthens Atalanta's heroic stature, as if the bear's milk and her rough upbringing in the wilderness imparts her with superhuman strength and agility, which only enhances her beauty, according to the old poets. She is further connected to Artemis/Diana in terms of her oath to remain a virgin; it is no coincidence that she is brought to Mt. Parthenio, since the Greek word *parthenos* means "virgin." The figure of Atalanta is also congruous with Artemis/Diana through their shared love of the hunt.

immediately becomes infatuated with her. Atalanta demonstrates her prowess when she sinks the first arrow into the beast, much to the embarrassment of the other men in the hunting party. The boar then manages to kill and maul several men, until Meleager finally subdues the animal. Having fallen in love with Atalanta during the hunt, Meleager then offers its hide and its monstrously tusked head to Atalanta as a gift, which delights her, but not his companions (see fig. 2.1).

Fig. 2.1. *Oil painting by Peter Paul Rubens,* Meleager Presenting Atalanta the Head of the Calydonian Boar *(circa 1635).*

The other hunters' complaints about this overly prestigious gift ultimately costs them their lives, as Meleager kills several of them for insulting Atalanta. In this Arcadian version of the myth, Atalanta is a strong, independent woman who shuns the company of men and remains chaste, but who nevertheless arouses their libidinal interests—very much in line with the

paradigm of the Amazons. She is also notably determined by her solitary existence as a huntress, and Atalanta is ontologically re-connected to nature through her upbringing by a bear and the forests in which she dwells, and even the gift of the boar's head underscores her existence in a state of nature. She also distinctly maintains a capacity for violence, directly through the killing of the centaurs, and indirectly through Meleager's butchering of his kinsmen.

In the second Boeotian version of the myth, Atalanta is even more Amazon-like, as she literally kills men for sport. Born to King Schoeneus, she is marked by her exceptional beauty but pleads with her father to allow her to remain a virgin, having been warned by the Delphic Oracle to avoid marriage. To assuage her father, Atalanta ultimately agrees to marry, but only on the condition that her suitor either beat her in a footrace, or die by her hand: "Young Atalanta was ruthless, but such was the power of her beauty / that all her impetuous suitors accepted her terms and competed" (Ovid Bk. 10, ln. 573–74). After many suitors have already met violent ends, she is eventually bested by Hippomenes, whose trickery wins him victory over his physically superior opponent. Hippomenes had acquired three golden apples from Aphrodite/Venus, which he strategically lets fall, enticing Atalanta to collect them during the course of the race. However, because he fails to give thanks to the goddess afterwards (or because the couple desecrated her temple, depending on the version of the myth), he and Atalanta are transformed into lions and left to roam in the wilderness (fig. 2.3).

Fig. 2.2. *Etching by Crispijn de Passe,* Atalanta and Hippomenes *(1602). While dressed in modern garb, Atalanta's breasts are presented to the viewer as she bends after a golden apple.*

Fig. 2.3. *Etching by Crispijn de Passe,* Transformation of Atalanta and Hippomenes into Lions *(1602). Note that this visual representation doubles the figures in the story, simultaneously showing them not only as lions in the foreground, but also embracing each other in the temple.*

In the Boeotian myth, Atalanta not only ends her days in a state of nature, but also retreats into the forest at the outset: "Alarmed by the oracle's warning, she lived in the depths of the forest /

unmarried, and fiercely repulsed the pressing throng of her suitors / by setting them terms […]" (Ovid Bk.10, ln.566–68). The Boeotian Atalanta thus remains bound to nature and a dehumanized Otherness throughout the narrative. This Atalanta myth also disrupts a patriarchal monopoly on violence, in that Atalanta slaughters her suitors en masse. Furthermore, she is politically autonomous, in that she sets the conditions of the race. However, the Boeotian version ends with Atalanta's marriage, and thus it briefly returns her to a normative gender role before she is metamorphosed into a lioness. It should also be noted that the suzjet specifically revolves around Atalanta as a sexualized object of the male gaze and as a *femme fatale*.[47]

Amazonian characteristics can be ascribed to Atalanta in both versions of the myth: she is a killer of men (see fig. 2.4), she controls her own sexuality in that she chooses not to marry and to remain a virgin, and she determines herself independently from the authority of men by maintaining a connection to nature, living in a space outside the boundaries of civilization and by setting the terms of the footrace. Atalanta is not explicitly an Amazon, but perfectly analogous. Additionally, as a mythological figure associated with Artemis, she shares the three major characteristics that archetypically define Amazonian independence from men.

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[47] Ovid emphasizes the sensuality and violence bound up with Atalanta's races, particularly through a male gaze. When Hippomenes comes to see Atalanta compete, he thinks to himself: "'How could anyone take such a risk in pursuit of a wife?' / And thus he dismissed the extravagant passion of all the contenders. / But once he had seen Atalanta's face and her unclothed body – / as lovely as mine or as yours, Adonis, if you were a women – / he gasped in wonder […]" (Bk. 10, ln. 576–79). He then goes on to ascribe worth to her beautiful body as a prize to be won. He is even more astounded when he sees her running by: "To the youth from Boeòtia she seemed to be running as fast as an arrow / fired from a Scythian archer's bow, but her beauty astonished / Hippomenes even more; indeed her running enhanced it" (Bk. 10, ln. 588–90).

Fig. 2.4. *Anonymous woodblock accompanying Ivo Schöffer's first German translation of Ovid's* Metamorphoses *in 1545. The brutality directly portrayed here, i.e. the decapitated suitors, differs from most depictions. This work, like many, conflates the Boeotian footrace and the Calydonian boar hunt.*

Untamed Amazonian Nature and the "Civilizing" Project of Enlightenment

How does the myth of Atalanta, a strong and independent woman, relate to Gottsched's contemporary situation and to the fact that he was attempting to exploit the German-speaking stage as a vehicle for the moral "betterment" of women? In order to answer this, we must analyze depictions of Atalanta's sexuality—be it descriptions of her beauty, her choice of partner, her abstinence, or even the licentiousness or virtuous loves of other characters. Of course, Atalanta's physical strength and her capacity for violence represent another important aspect of the play that should be taken into consideration. Additionally, Atalanta's independence from the authority of men warrants our attention. Finally, depictions of Otherness need to be taken into consideration and can certainly be applied to the three Amazonian criteria of sexual independence, physical strength/violence, and political autonomy. However, one specific form of Otherness, the

association of certain monstrous figures with nature (Kearney 65–82), will also be investigated here as a potential indicator that Amazonian figures are often placed beyond the bounds of society, and that the recuperation of Atalanta back into civilization from her existence as solitary huntress in nature remains central to Johann Gottsched's enlightened pedagogy, particularly in terms of establishing gender norms.

In Johann Gottsched's pastoral, Atalanta is presented as a chaste, beautiful huntress who lives apart from the other Arcadian shepherds; however this is where similarities to the myth seem to end. Atalanta neither hunts boars, nor does she kill her suitors or centaurs, nor does she suckle at the teats of a bear. Gottsched takes the notion of Atalanta's chastity and the fact that she lives apart from the Arcadian society as a huntress from both myths, but he redacts almost all specifically Amazonian character traits from his morally enlightening *Atalanta*. As the subtitle "die bezwungene Sprödigkeit" suggests, Atalanta remains removed from society due to her *Sprödigkeit*, which the Grimms define as "starre Zurückhaltung […] besonders gegenüber Liebeswerbungen, namentlich von weiblichen [P]ersonen" (17: 148). While Atalanta's *Sprödigkeit* has been understood as "aloofness" by Potter,[48] the positive and negative associations connected to her sexual restraint are correctly diagnosed by Quéval, who notes:

[48] The term *Sprödigkeit* originally referred to the hardness of soil (*friabilitas terrae*), during the winter for example, when unbending earth makes it impossible to bury a dead dog, regardless of the amount of raw willpower invested in moving it. In eighteenth-century German vernacular, *Spröde* was used as a disparaging term to denote a woman who could not easily be wooed, who was "impolitely" cold and immovable in response to men's advances (Grimm 17: 143–48). Indeed, much of Johann Gottsched's pastoral deals with the taming of the "shrew" Atalanta. Prudery would certainly be a more negative rendering of *Sprödigkeit* into English; chastity serves as a more positive term. Potter suggests "aloofness" for *Sprödigkeit*, which I was perhaps too quick to criticize in my review of his book (*Goethe Yearbook* 21 (2014): 272–74). However, a "starre Zurückhaltung" might actually relate well to Potter's choice of the term aloofness (36), which connects to a bourgeois critique of Atalanta's autonomous lifestyle apart from Arcadian society and runs parallel to Johann Gottsched's critique of libertinism and unrestrained hedonism.

"Gottsched critique surtout l'absence de mesure: la pudeur est une virtue, la pruderie un vice. Il oppose donc *keusch*, pudique, chaste, à *spröde* farouche, prude, le premier terme désignant le pôle positif, le second le pôle négatif d'une même qualité" / [Gottsched especially critiques a lack of moderation: modesty is a virtue, prudery a vice. He therefore opposes *keusch* (modest, chaste) and *spröde* (shyness and prudishness), the first term for the positive and the second as negative pole of the same character trait] (*Paradoxes* 77–78; my translation). Atalanta's overzealous chastity becomes prudery in its excessive form, and this represents the central character flaw at stake in the play—Atalanta's hamartia—which is initially framed by Atalanta's annoyance with the other shepherds and their frivolous games of love.[49] As Quéval keenly discerns, "Gottsched inverse la tradition: Atalante se transformera en une bête non plus si elle se marie, mais au contraire, si elle continue à parcourir les bois solitaire car on ne peut, selon l'auteur, renoncer à l'amour qu'au prix d'une grande sécheresse du cœur et d'une réduction de l'être" / [Gottsched inverts the tradition: Atalanta will not become an unthinking beast if she marries, but, on the contrary, if she continues to roam alone among the trees, because she cannot,

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[49] While frivolous, the erotic preoccupations of the Arcadian shepherds should not be understood as completely debauched. Rather, as Gottsched defines the pastoral play in the second volume of his *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst* (1742), the Arcadian life must be understood in strict contrast to a taxing life of poverty suffered by ordinary people in contemporary society. The pastoral play should be free of war and heavy labor, and it should depict a utopian-like vision of innocence and non-violence (*AW* 6.2: 77–78). With respect to their overt eroticism Gottsched notes: "Ich habe noch nichts von der Liebe gedacht, weil dieses eine besondere Beschreibung verdient**.** Dieser Affect herrschet am meisten unter ihnen, aber auf eine unschuldige Weise. Er ist die einzige Quelle ihres größten Vergnügens, aber auch ihrer größten Unruhe. […] Sie sind sehr treu in ihrer Liebe, und man weis bey ihnen von keinem größeren Laster, als von der Unbeständigkeit. […] Kurz, die unschuldige Schäferliebe muß von allen Lastern frey seyn, die sich durch die Bosheit der Menschen allmählich eingeschlichen haben" (*AW* 6.2: 78–79). Johann Gottsched's idyllic understanding of the Arcadian shepherds differs from others who emphasize the Arcadian civilization's moral entropy. For instance in the *Götterlehre*, Karl Philipp Moritz explains: "[D]ie ursprüngliche Einfalt und Unschuld der Sitten [artete] in Laster und Bosheit aus, daß Jupiter einst so lange seine Blitze auf Arkadien fallen ließ, bis endlich selbst die Erde ihre Arme ausstreckte und ihn um Erbarmung flehte" (68).

according to the author, renounce love, which would tax her heart too greatly and reduce her very essence to an animalistic nothingness] (*Paradoxes* 77; my trans.). Prior to Rousseau's romantic idealizations of the "noble savage" in the mid-eighteenth century, nature was primarily depicted as detrimental to humans and civilization itself. This relates to a broader enlightened sentiment that humans are perfectible, that humanity is the *telos* of nature, precisely because they are rational and thus distinct from other animals. In this light, Johann Gottsched's gradual removal of Atalanta from her chaste solitude operates under the framework of this rationalistic project. It is not her "virtuous" desire to remain chaste that is under attack in Gottsched's pastoral, but rather her exaggerated autonomy from civilization, in this sense relating to Potter's choice of the term "aloofness." *Atalanta* attempts to establish norms for women's behavior, but it depicts the heroine's return to Arcadian society and its erotic economy not as an act of free will, but as socially forced (*bezwungen*), which has direct implications for Atalanta's loss of Amazonian independence.

From the play's outset, Johann Gottsched establishes a set of bourgeois values that stand in semantic opposition to the norms that govern the Arcadian shepherds' society. In the play's first scene, Doris, "eine schöne tugendhafte Schäferinn," finds herself showered with attention and praise by Menalkas and Nisus. After Doris proclaims that her affections cannot be bought with gifts, that "kein Geschenk erwirbt die Gegengunst bey mir," Nisus replies: "Du bist ein Wunderthier! / Denn sonsten kann man doch, mit Gaben und Geschenken, / Der Schäferinnen Herz gar bald zur Liebe lenken" (*AW* 2: 358). Doris's resistance to this shepherd's advances, which is figured as an attempt to guide her heart like he would a flock of goats, inspires him to label her as a miraculous animal. In other words, when a woman asserts discrimination about those with whom she wants to have relations, she immediately is categorized not only as

exceptional, but demoted to the level of an animal. However, unlike the domesticated animals that shepherds can economically exploit, Doris resists this register by refusing to become an object of exchange, and she thereby prevents herself from being just another natural resource under the shepherd's control. Nisus re-inscribes Doris into this animal/natural realm through his performative speech act, "Du bist ein Wunderthier!" Nisus makes a distinction between the goats as "tame" animals and Doris as a "miraculously" wild animal. But Doris is a different kind of animal, and she remains to some extent undomesticated, resisting the shepherds' efforts to control her (affection). To this extent, Doris's un-masterablity could already be understood as prefiguring Atalanta's exaggerated resistance to the shepherds, and as foreshadowing the eventual domestication of Atalanta as a "wild" Amazon. Similarly, Doris assertively communicates a broader skepticism about the shepherds' ulterior motives when proclaiming their love for her: "Man muß euch Schäfern nicht auf bloße Worte trauen; / Ich will auf euer Thun, auf euren Wandel schauen. / Wer weislich leben wird, Verstand und Tugend zeigt, / Und mich beständig liebt, dem wird mein Herz geneigt" (*AW* 2: 359). Menalkas accepts this as reasonable, virtuous (*Tugend*) demands on Doris's part. Johann Gottsched brings reason onto the stage in this conception of bourgeois love, which is not an economic exchange but grounded on virtuous behavior, constancy, and circumspection. Moreover, Gottsched portrays Doris as wanting a monogamous (*beständig*) lover. Thus the figure of Doris adds constancy/fidelity to the vocabulary of female domesticity being developed in Johann Gottsched's text. As Quéval correctly deduces, Gottsched opposes the "verliebte Narrenpossen" of the shepherds against "vernünfftige Gedancken," an *amor rationalis* pitted against vulgar passions (*Paradoxes* 112). His depiction coheres with the theory that the bourgeois concept of love is part of a semantic code that is actively communicated and formed through the literary imagination—as postulated

by Luhmann in *Liebe als Passion* (1982). However, Gottsched seems to present an Early-Enlightenment notion of bourgeois love that is utterly devoid of passion—love as sterile *Vernunft*—where sensual instincts are overcome and governed by Reason. In other words, Doris's stubbornly virtuous thoughts on love and Atalanta's similar refusal to be domesticated function as a vehicle for proposing a new bourgeois conception of love based not on economically advantageous or class-conscientious unions, but on notions of a "rational" love grounded in shared enlightened values, so that, as a vehicle for moral education, Johann Gottsched's text autopoietically generates new values of love. Thus Doris's refusal of an erotic relationship based on commodity exchange is motivated by her emphasis on bourgeois values that conceive of love as wisdom, virtue, reason, and fidelity. However, this generates another set of normative values placed on women.[50] Johann Gottsched also significantly uses a female character as the mouthpiece for articulating these new moral expectations. Presupposing a self-identification of female audience members with the figure of Doris, her initial stance towards the shepherds overtly reproduces Johann Gottsched's emerging notions of rational love, while conversely covertly toying with the distinction between women's wildness and domesticity.

It might seem as though the "wild huntress" Atalanta is initially set in opposition to Doris—via the semantic opposition between civilization and nature—but a closer analysis reveals more similarities than differences, particularly through their shared virtue, here specifically regarding Johann Gottsched's conveyance of norms relating to the importance of

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[50] Potter also recognizes that Menalkas and Nisus represent marriage as economical, whereas Doris represents a new notion of sentimental marriage based on a virtuous love (46). However, the sentimental values attached to emerging conceptions of bourgeois love also become part of an economy of male desire, in that under female virtue, notions of fidelity, etc. have worth because they preserve patriarchal authority, and these mores for women's behavior are thus determined by reason and not passion. A counter-revolutionary preservation of conservative gender norms remains inherent in bourgeois notions of love during the Early Enlightenment, specifically with respect to the "rational" defense of women's virtue.

women's moral integrity, i.e. their chastity. Nevertheless, when a hunter's horn announces Atalanta's arrival on stage, Doris cries: "Ey! Atalanta kömmt. Die wilde Jägerinn! / Gebt acht! Sie straft mich wohl, dass ich nicht spröde bin; / Nicht so, wie sie, das Wild in allen Büschen suche, / Und alles Männervolk, nicht so, wie sie, verfluche. / Willkommen Schäferinn!" (*AW 2:* 360). Atalanta is thus introduced by a female voice in Johann Gottsched's play as Other, as a wild and assertive huntress, but Doris also pejoratively chides Atalanta as prude, "spröde," thereby echoing the male characters' perspective. At the same time, Atalanta damns all men, "[und alles Männervolk […] verfluche," which connotes an Amazonian attitude in its extreme rejection of men and an explicit willingness to perpetrate violence, here intimated by the threat of punishment (*Strafe*) and damnation (*verfluchen*) as well. Thinking ahead to Hegel's desiring consciousness, Atalanta, too, seems to live in a constant state of desire, "wie sie, das Wild in allen Büschen suche," constantly seeking out prey for her satisfaction. While both Atalanta *and* Doris are described as virtuous via chasteness, Doris's rejection of the Shepherds' erotic advances remains reasonable, and she clearly explains her rational requirements for an idealized bourgeois love. However, it is Doris, another female character, who places Atalanta in *extreme* opposition to the lascivious Arcadians. Doris's welcome offers several grounds for Atalanta's Otherness in comparison to herself: Atalanta does not only hunt wild animals, but is also described here as a wild huntress (*wilde Jägerinn*), that is, as belonging to the realm of nature like the wild animals that she preys upon and being like those untamed animals herself. Doris claims she herself is not *spröde*, and that she does not share Atalanta's misandry; however, Doris already offers a happy medium between Atalanta's prudery and the licentiousness that both women perceive among the Arcadians, in that Doris is discerning when it comes to choosing a partner. In others words, as described by Quéval, Doris is chaste and not prudish. Again, Johann

uses a female figure—perhaps analogous to his praise of Luise as Minerva—as his spokesperson for transmitting notions of women's virtue during the Early Enlightenment.

Indeed, the communication of emerging enlightened virtues remains central to Johann Gottsched's poetology. Mirroring the virtuous Doris, Atalanta remains highly critical of the amorous inclinations of the shepherds, and she chooses to isolate herself in order to preserve her virtue in the face of the shepherds' erotic advances. Ironically, the Arcadian society seems to be wilder than nature itself, in that Eros is not rationally checked. Atalanta does not recognize that Doris has been reserved in her interactions with Nisus and Menalkas, and she scolds them collectively, holding them accountable for their uncouth behavior: "Verliebte Narrenpossen! / Was soll das albre [sic] Zeug? Was nützt die Plauderey!" (*AW* 2: 360). Astounded to see her brother Menalkas there, she chastises him directly, to which the latter retorts, "Ein tugendhaftes Herz darf man vernünftig lieben" (*AW* 2: 361). Thus Johann Gottsched turns his characters, this time Menalkas, into the spokespeople for an enlightened re-definition of love as a noble enterprise bound up with virtue (*Tugend*) and reason (*Vernunft*). Again, this goes back to Gottsched's re-conception of an *amor rationalis* from medieval *Minnesang*. Thus Menalkas's pontifications about the differences between noble and vulgar love culminate in his passionate claim that his love for Doris is not the crude physical lust that overcomes commoners (*Pöbel*), but a pure love situated in his heart and mind that bespeaks only his reason, virtue, intellect, and wit (*AW* 2: 361).

The determination and "defense" of women's virtue, however, serves as the primary didactic focus in *Atalanta*. Thus, Doris continues to function as the virtuous doppelgänger of Atalanta, and the latter reiterates sentiments expressed by her sister in the previous scene, asserting that her brother Menalkas's pretty words mask other, less noble intentions: "Das ist der

Vorwand nur von deinem eitlen Triebe. / Die Schönheit reizet dich gleich andern zu der Liebe: / Hernach beschönigst dus nach deiner alten Art, / Und sprichst, es habe sich die Tugend bloß gepaart" (*AW* 2: 362). Atalanta seems convinced of the shepherds' subservience to their libidos, and rather than listen to Nisus and Menalkas heap praises on women's pulchritude, she decides to return to the solitude of nature: "So liebt denn immerhin! und lasst mich wieder gehen. / Ich liebe Wild und Jagd, die sind gewisslich schön!" (*AW* 2: 363). She is then mocked by Nisus, who jeers: "Ja, ja! man sieht es wohl! Das zeigen deine Wunden. / Was fehlt dir den am Arm? Du hast ihn ja verbunden. / Das hat gewiß ein Bär, ein Wolf, ein wildes Schwein, / Aus Höflichkeit gethan! / Wie artig muß es seyn, / Wenn man ein wildes Their so liebenswürdig schätzet!" (*AW* 2: 363). The irony seems to be that she is accused of "loving" animals for that very unbridled passion, disguised as politeness, that she hates in men. Atalanta's love of the hunt functions as a symbolic substitution for her repressed sexuality, and her mastery over animals could be construed as correlating to her physical prowess over men. In contrast, when Nisus slyly intertwines Atalanta's enjoyment of combat against animals with courtly behavior, he attempts to assert that she loves violent, animalistic actions without regard for self-harm. Similarly, Menalkas further reinforces Nisus's critique of Atalanta's dangerous way of life by claiming that she is slowly destroying herself: "Und selbst zu Schaden kömmt, sich selbst zu tode hetzt" (*AW* 2: 363). Nature is not depicted here as a regenerative space for self-reflection and spiritual rejuvenescence, but rather as a negative topos that physically assaults Atalanta, damaging her very beauty, perhaps because it symbolizes Atalanta's struggle against males. In this vein, Menalkas sharply asserts that in chasing her prey, she is also chasing herself to death, thereby attempting to expose Atalanta's self-sufficient lifestyle as self-destructive. Nevertheless, convinced that the young men among the shepherds are unassuageably interested in sex, Atalanta

ignores their critical evaluations of her lifestyle and asserts, “Das geht euch gar nichts an!” (*AW* 2: 363). She maintains her status as an independent woman freed from the social constraints that dictate the behavior of the other Arcadians, at least for the time being. Atalanta embraces animality on the hunt, but not in sexual relations, where she remains an iron virgin. But is she merely fighting fire with fire, is her love of the hunt equally irrational and passionate? While Doris rejects the passionate advance of the shepherds, Atalanta goes even further, choosing to live in the wild in order to remove herself from the uncontrolled erotic energies of the shepherds. While she is preoccupied with her own virtue, she also denies that the Arcadian men are capable of the virtues that Doris defends. Thus a tension arises in Johann Gottsched’s text between the prescribed bourgeois virtues that Atalanta seeks to defend, and her autonomous, destructive life as an Amazonian huntress in nature, which preserves her virtue, but not her beauty, which also has “value” for an objectifying/desiring male gaze.

Under the aegis of Reason, Johann Gottsched further emphasizes the dangers of excessive passion in his pastoral. He achieves this through the figure of Corydon, who attempts to gain Atlalanta’s affections and pleads with her to listen to him before she returns to her solitude among the beasts in the liminal space of the forest beyond society’s bounds:

> Ach Schönste! gieb mir doch ein einzigmal Gehör! / Ist alles denn umsonst? Was fliehest du mich immer? / So hart ist in der Welt kein ander Frauenzimmer. / Du fliehst die Menschlichkeit. Ein unbewohnter Wald / Ist deine ganze Lust und liebster Aufenthalt. / Doch such ich dich allda, und wenn mirs endlich glücket, / Daß ich dich irgend seh, und dass du mich erblicket: / So fliehst du, wie ein Hirsch, der seinen Jäger scheut. (*AW 2:* 363–364)

Like the mythological figure of Atalanta, the virility and strength that she has acquired through her rough way of life does not negate her beauty as a woman, and in fact she possesses a superlative grace. For Corydon she is the *most* beautiful woman (*Schönste*). Corydon's initial plea, however, offers some strange inversions of the facts. He not only inverts Atalanta's Otherness, but also tries to dispel it. Strikingly, Corydon confounds her relationship to animals and men (at least with respect to the first version of the myth), in that it is not they who flee her, but vice versa. According to Corydon, Atalanta does not run away from humans (*Menschen*), but from her own humanity (*Menschlichkeit*), which correlates with the fact that he analogizes her with a buck escaping from a hunter. Here he implicitly associates her with the non-human, as a purely instinctual beast, but he also drastically reverses her agency through his comparison of her to a frightened, fleeing animal. At the same time, he associates her with a masculine animal, a *Hirsch*, which is a symbol of male virility. Phallically connoted, Corydon's simile of the buck invokes an ambiguous androgyny bound up with Atalanta's Amazonian lifestyle. Bucks and their impressive antlers also represent prized hunting trophies. Thus Atalanta is connoted here as the prey she otherwise refuses to be, with respect to the shepherds' attempts at sexual conquest. She figures herself, conversely, of course, as a predator instead, living as a huntress. Atalanta's lust for hunting and victory over wild animals functions as a symbolic substitution for her erotic energies, coupled with her aggressive responses to the Arcadians' shallow sensuality. Corydon's words do not pierce her self-conception just yet, and she understands him as just another persistent shepherd making yet another annoying attempt to win her over with thinly masked rationalizations of his libidinal desires: "Bist du schon wieder da? In Wäldern und in Hütten / Kann ich vor dieser Quaal nicht mehr gesichert seyn" (*AW* 2: 364). These persistent unwanted

advances are described here as a kind of assault on her person, which explains why she removes herself completely from the company of the Arcadians.

The fact that she feels injured and disturbed by the men's erotic propositions relates back to the Boeotian Atalanta myth, in that she asserts a desire to be in control of her own sexuality by maintaining her virginity, and she actively defends it. However, in the myth Atalanta's self-determination costs the lives of men foolish enough to challenge her to a race, whereas in Johann Gottsched's pastoral Atalanta's self-imposed circumscription of her sexuality comes at a cost only to *herself*, in that she is deprived of the comforts of civilization and suffers danger and injuries through constant combat with wild animals—to the detriment of her beauty, of course. This represents the perspective of Arcadian society via Corydon, who is trying to persuade and woo her not only into his arms, but also back into the confines of civilization. She, on the other hand, still claims to enjoy the hunt and solitude, and thus her life is one of social emancipation and not of deprivation, but Amazonian independence. Her virtue, importantly, never comes into question; it is not the *quality* of Atalatna's virtue that is problematized, rather the *quantity.* In this sense, her excessive passion for the hunt relates to an excessive desire to protect her virtue, which becomes characterized as detrimental. The sexist double standard operating in Arcadian society—which allows the male shepherds to pursue their pleasure principles unabated, and simultaneously commands female shepherds to be virtuous and chaste—informs Atalanta's decision to protect her virtue through a self-exclusion in nature, a virtuousness to which she exaggeratedly adheres. As we shall see, Corydon is not the only character whose excessive passion comes to the didactic fore as the play progresses. However, Corydon's obsession with Atalanta serves as Johann Gottsched's primary foil for notions of an enlightened, rational love.

The vulgar passions of the Arcadians become a central trope in Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta*, and regressive moral entropy seems to threaten the once idyllic Arcadian society (see note 8), especially with respect to the portrayal of the male shepherds' licentious behavior, which relates to a critique of vulgar love against an *amor spiritualis* that Johann Gottsched adopts from a theologically driven *Minnesang* tradition (see. Ch. 3). Throughout the fourth, fifth, and sixth scenes of Act One, Nisus and Corydon are joined by another shepherd, Damon, who adds to the cast of men unable to control their erotic desires. They argue about how to win Atalanta's heart, and Damon ostentatiously boasts about his success with other Arcadian women and even makes the spurious claim that Atalanta secretly loves him. The shepherds are joined by Amaryllis in the fifth scene, and she plays along and pretends that Damon does in fact have Atalanta's favor, although with her own ulterior motives, as she herself is in love with Corydon, even though he still remains preoccupied with the unobtainable Atalanta. Nisus appears to have bought into Damon's claims, and he complains that "[d]em Damon aber läuft fast jedes Mädchen nach, / Zum wenigstens wie er es von sich selber sprach; / Und Atalanta selbst kann ihn vor andern leiden" (*AW* 2: 370). The choice of language here is interesting, because Nisus does not explicitly say that Atalanta likes Damon, but that she can tolerate him (*jedmanden leiden können*). Still not entirely persuaded, Nisus asserts to Damon: "Du hast noch viel zu thun, eh du das Hinderniß / Der großen Sprödigkeit in ihrer Brust bezwingest, / Und diese Schäferinn auf deine Seite bringest" (*AW* 2: 372–73). It is not surprising then that Atalanta feels assaulted by the advances of the shepherds, when one looks here at the aggressive language used to describe the "conquest" of her hardened desire to remain pure. Indeed, the language employed here is typically associated with the suppression of the passions (*bezwingen*). Atalanta's prudery, according to Nisus, needs to be conquered like a fortress. This contrasts with Nisus's comment

about city women in comparison to Arcadian women at the outset of the second act. After Damon implies that novels found in the city explain how to win women's affections (*AW* 2: 375), Nisus replies, "Das eine fragt sich nur: sind unsre Schäferinnen, / So wie das Frauenvolk in Städten zu gewinnen? / Bezwingt man sie so leicht? Mich dünkt, es geht nicht an!" (*AW* 2: 375). Again, Nisus describes the winning of love as conquest, but contrast emerges here between the hard-won Arcadian women and the "easy" women of the city. Although it works against his libidinal machinations, Nisus seems to praise the virtuous sexual reticence of Arcadian women in comparison to the more relaxed behavior ascribed to city women, insisting on the challenge of the "hunt." This is surprising insofar as only Atalanta and Doris thus far have been described as exceptional women able to resist the broad sexual licentiousness in Arcadian society. Furthermore, this reveals a double standard operating in the Arcadian world: that women are to be chaste, while the men are free to be reprobate and pursue their libidinal interests. Moreover, chasteness is set as a normative value for women's behavior, which should be reflected upon from the perspective that the play communicatively shapes and performs emerging gender norms of the German-speaking bourgeoisie, here arguing against libertinism (Quéval 20–4, 127–45). One the one hand, this provides a justification for Atalanta's rational decision to remove herself from society, in order to protect her virtue. On the other, however, it highlights the chase, the notion that ardor increases with resistance, where Atalanta's exaggerated recalcitrance ironically only serves to make her more desirable.

Atalanta, however, is twice removed from her urban sisters, and she, like her forerunners in the Arcadian and Boeotian myths, actively defends herself from unwanted advances and determines her way of life autonomously. However, Johann severely limits Atalanta's access to Amazonian violence in comparison to the original fables. For instance, in the second scene of

Act Two, Damon and Nisus stand again before Atalanta and Damon attempts to explain and justify his love for her. When he attempts to kiss her, pleading: “Ach, scheue, bitt ich, dich vor diesem Schäfer nicht: / […] / Gib mir nur einen Kuß,” Atalanta forcefully thrusts him away, “*stößt ihn weg*,” and yells, “Verwegener Mensch, halt inne! / Was unterstehst du dich!” (*AW* 2: 379). Damon, unreprenting and seemingly unable to exert agency over his instincts—taking *unterstehen* here in the alternative sense of being subordinate to something or someone, rather than brash—attempts to kiss her again, hotly exclaiming, “Mit diesem Eigensinne / Machst du mich hitziger, als ich gleich anfangs war. / Die Liebe wagt sich auch in deutliche Gefahr. / Mein Schatz! ein Mäulchen!” (*AW* 2: 379). Her resistance heightens his passion, as Johann Gottsched reiterates the motif of the chase. But Atalanta does not kill Damon, instead successfully defending herself more through the violence of her words. Atalanta is not a man-killer in Johann Gottsched’s play, as such a figure would in fact be *too* autonomous for his enlightened mores regarding women’s virtues.

Instead, Atalanta seems to be cursed by her beauty, which makes her the obsessive object of the desiring male gaze, constantly interfering with her attempts to retreat into nature. Damon’s words also imply a recognition that Atlanta is not merely playing hard to get, but rather represents a dangerously independent femininity, a “deutliche Gefahr,” not in the sense of a man-killing Amazon or the femme fatale in the original Atalanta myths, but in terms of the fact that she remains dangerously aloof from others in a state of nature, here relating to women’s independence *eo ipso* as inherently transgressive. Damon is also being lewd when he metonymically asks for a little mouth (*Mäulchen*) rather than a kiss. This time she throws him away from her even more forcefully, “*stößt ihn noch heftiger weg*,” and she roars, “Halt! da hast du was zu naschen!” and “So viel hat sich bey mir kein Schäfer noch erkühnt! / Geh hin, und

sage nun, ich wäre dir gewogen!" (*AW* 2: 379). The animality associated with Damon's sexual advances repels Atalanta—or rather she repels it—which contrasts with the animality that she actively seeks out when participating in a hunt or fighting with wild animals. This might seem like a paradox at first, but it relates to the predator/prey relationship that dictates these two situations in an inverse manner. Among the creatures of the forest, Atalanta retains a clear superiority as an agile huntress with great strength and speed, yet in human relationships she becomes, as Corydon says earlier, the prey that must flee from the shepherds who pursue her with their amorous arrows. However, in this scene Atalanta uses violence against Damon, easily repelling him. In this sense, Atalanta still retains an autonomous Amazonian. Her utter rejection of the libidinal drives that govern the Arcadian men, understood as unchecked sexual impulses, correlates to her excessive *Sprödigkeit*. Atalanta stands firm as an iron maiden, as an Amazon-like huntress with an unbending will. Driven by a desire to protect her virtue, Atalanta attempts to escape the lasciviousness of the Arcadian shepherds, but she paradoxically never escapes wholly into the wilderness and instead always occupies a frictional point between society and solitude. Drawn by her beauty, the shepherds constantly assault Atalanta with their advances, and Johann Gottsched leverages this to prove her virtuousness. The excessiveness of her virtue, however, comes to light through her exaggerated refusal of Arcadian men, which is symbolically reflected through her overzealous obsession with the hunt. The civilized, moral woman becomes the Other to an excessively passionate society; she too becomes animalistic through her violent passion for prey, and the Arcadian civilization also seems to be the realm of instinctual anarchy.

In this scene Johan Gottsched finally grants Atalanta access to a mild form of the Amazonian violence against men that pervades most renditions of the Atalanta story. However, her refusal of Damon pales in comparison with the original myths by Ovid, Pseudo-Apollodrus,

and Aelian, where Atalanta explicitly kills men in the truest Amazonian sense. Thus, when Atalanta claims that she acts justly in her response to Damon's attempts to force himself upon her, one might question whether this response was really appropriate for an Amazon-like Atalanta. Johann Gottsched's protagonist does not act aggressively, in terms of outright violence against men, but merely chastises the Arcadian Damon for his licentiousness. In Gottsched's rendition of the Atalanta myth she does not attack and kill centaurs attempting to deflower her, nor does she murder would-be suitors who fail to defeat her in footraces. Instead, Gottsched has Atalanta defend her chastity against Damon, so that she remains in a defensive role. Her violence is not an outright aggression against men, but a means to preserve her virtue (*Tugend*) against unwanted sexual advances. In the name of enlightened ideals of female virtue, Johann Gottsched mollifies the Amazonian character of the Atalanta myths.

Johann Gottsched further trivializes Atalanta's "violent" reaction to Damon by emphasizing the ridiculous impropriety of his behavior as the foil to his enlightened ideal of rational/virtuous behavior. Nisus, Amaryllis, and Menalkas all laugh about Damon's failed attempt to kiss Atalanta. While comedy is inherent in the genre of the *Schäferspiel*, the comedic tone accompanying Damon's actions has serious consequences for notions of Atalanta as an Amazon. Atalanta's prudery suddenly seems totally justified, precisely because Damon is such a preposterous figure, a caricature of a sexual lout unable to control himself in the face of an attractive woman. Even Amaryllis notes that Damon should have known better than to trifle with Atalanta: "Er kennt ja lange wohl der spröden Schönen Art / Dadurch so mancher schon zurück gewiesen ward. / So geht es, wenn man nascht, wo man nicht naschen sollte!" (*AW* 2: 382). Amaryllis, like Atlanta, also uses the term *naschen* to describe Damon as an animal grazing where he should not be nibbling, which reinforces the fact that Damon was behaving like an

animal. To some extent, it also appears as if Amaryllis underwrites the Amazon-like independence of her sister, in that she reiterates the fact that many suitors have tried and failed to win Atalanta's heart, and that Damon should have been aware of the risk of a violent rejection because he was behaving in a vulgar fashion.

Atalanta stands in opposition to the shepherds' amorous games, not only out of a desire to preserve her own virtue in the face of ignoble intentions, but because she truly loves to hunt. This love of the hunt fundamentally relates both to an independence of will that Atalanta experiences among animals, where she is the huntress and not the pursued object of men's affections, and it demonstrates her symbolic mastery of the male. Keeping in mind Johann Gottsched's moral program for the theater developed in his *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, we might wonder how Atalanta's desire to preserve her chastity can be positively related to a didactics designed for a specifically female audience. Rather than argue that her main character flaw is an excessive prudery, in contrast to a "healthy" chastity (Quéval, *Paradoxes* 77–78), it is not her chasteness that represents her hamartia, but the exaggerated, passionate extremes to which she goes in order to defend it. Even with her excessive resistance, Atalanta presents a strong figure with whose actions German-speaking women of the 1740s could positively identify.[51] Similar to Doris, who Johann Gottsched initially positions as embodying his ideal of an *amor rationalis*, Atalanta's choice to lead an independent life in the forest serves to preserve

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[51] In his *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*, Johann Gottsched connects several genres with one another through their potential to function as means for transmitting moral lessons to recipients: "Die ganze Fabel hat nur eine Hauptabsicht; nämlich einen moralischen Satz" (*AW* 6.2: 319), noting further that "Die Fabeln der Comödie werden also auf eben die Art gemacht, als die tragischen" (350). Thus Gottsched's neo-Aristotelian reflections on Oedipus's character can be used as a lens for understanding the character of Atalanta: "Da er nun also beschaffen ist; so wird dadurch die Tragödie den allermeisten Zuschauern erbaulich: weil nämlich die meisten von eben der Art sind, als er; das ist, weder recht gut, noch recht böse" (314). The emphasis here is on the adjective *erbaulich*; across genres, identification with protagonists should serve for moral edification, in the sense of *Bildung*.

her moral virtue against a gaggle of licentious Arcadians—which seems worthy of laudation from the perspective of bourgeois notions of women's sexual virtue. However, she also places her own pleasure as an individual above interactions with other members of society. As the displeasure arising from these unwanted dealings with the male shepherds increases, Atalanta's seclusion in nature becomes more and more extreme. At the outset of the sixth scene of Act Two, Atalanta exclaims that her gratification from hunting now finds constant interruption by the other shepherds: "So laßt mich doch nur gehn! Was hab ich euch gethan, / Daß ich, wie mirs gefällt, auch nicht mehr jagen kann? / Ihr hindert ja dadurch mein einziges Vergnügen" (*AW* 2: 389). With Erich Fromm's neo-Freudian *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* in mind, Atalanta's aggression towards the Arcadians could stem from her repressed erotic instincts, as an expression of malignant destructiveness that serves no social purpose. But then again, her aggression does concretely arise from a desire to protect her chastity, which has a societal value in the context of a retroactively patriarchal set of moral values for women's behavior during the Early Enlightenment. Hunting, too, seems to be a healthy expression of violence, and one that serves a function, in that Atalanta theoretically gains sustenance from the animals she kills, and this gratification also serves as a symbolic substitution for her dominance over men. Significantly, Atalanta explicitly describes hunting not as a form of work, but as her sole pleasure (*Vergnügen*) in life, with which the shepherds now interfere.

So why does Atalanta enjoy hunting animals above the pleasure to be found in the company of others? Why does Johann Gottsched initially Other Atalanta in his drama? What pedagogical purpose can this possibly serve? Thus, Menalkas asks: "Wie? Schwester? willst du stets die Bestien bekriegen? / Willst du denn allezeit durch Busch und Wälder ziehn, / Und als ein wildes Thier der Menschen Umgang fliehn?" (*AW* 2: 390). Rather than kill the Arcadians like

her mythological forerunners, Johann Gottsched's Atalanta replaces this aggression and dominance over men with her love of the hunt. For Menalkas, Atalanta has become like the wild animals she pursues, and *he* does not understand her lifestyle as one of pleasure, but as a constant struggle (*bekriegen*). Her flight into the combative realm of animals has lasting import for Johann Gottsched's rendition of the Atalanta myth, which, however, seems to severely undercut her Amazon-like independence, capacity for violence, and control over her sexuality in the face of unwanted advances by the Arcadians. Like Damon, who paradoxically analogizes Atalanta with a male buck that flees the hunter, Menalkas also inverts Atalanta's status as a huntress into that of the hunted, who flees (*fliehen*) human intercourse. When among the animals, she is not the prey, but the predator, an indomitable alpha *Tier*. Yet among the Arcadian shepherds, she suddenly becomes the victim of their amorous predations and must take flight. The two Greco-Roman versions of the myth present the figure of Atalanta as a singularly independent woman, skillful in hunting not only wild animals, like the Calydonian boar, but also as an Amazon-like killer of men (and centaurs), although she does admittedly "succumb" to a marriage with Hippomenes in the Boeotian version, as well. Nevertheless, Gottsched's rendition negates Atalanta's violent independence, in that she faces a social stigma as a result of the instinctual pleasures (*Vergnügen*) that she derives from hunting. Far from the man-killer of antiquity, the figure of Atalanta that Gottsched places on the German-speaking stage is cast by the male characters as a frightened maiden, which contrasts with her own image of herself as a woman forced into seclusion in order to preserve her own virtue. Atalanta succinctly explains why she flees the Arcadians: "Du weist die Ursach wohl. In Wäldern bin ich frey; / Zu Hause quält mich nur der Schäfer Phantasey / Mit ihrer Liebespein. Die will und werd ich fliehen: / Und sollt ich endlich gar in eine Wüste ziehen" (*AW* 2: 390). In line with the original versions of the Atalanta

myth, Johann Gottsched's Atalanta is exceedingly beautiful, and is thus constantly bombarded with romantic overtures. However, unlike the Atalanta who kills off potential suitors who fail to beat her at a footrace, the Atalanta born in Saxony evades her would-be suitors and makes for the forest, where she vents her aggressions on animals rather than men. The fact that she suggests removing herself to a desert, however, adds a moral caliber to her flight, since it represents a clear allusion to the anchoritic traditions of the desert fathers, like St. Anthony, who led an ascetic life in the desert to escape from the perceived sins of the earthly world. Atalanta's renunciation of any erotic rendezvous with the Arcadians could be construed as demonstrating a kind of religious piety, albeit in an extreme, self-deprecating form of asceticism. Atalanta's seclusion in nature is characterized as antisocial by Amaryllis, who asks her: "Sind wir denn nicht so gut, als Hasen oder Hunde? / Dort bringst du Tage zu, und hier kaum eine Stunde" (*AW* 2: 390). Amaryllis's comparison of the Arcadians to rabbits and dogs indicates, perhaps indirectly, precisely why Atalanta shuns their company. Atalanta is better than the wild canines and hares that roam through the forests, in that they are her prey and not her peers. Dogs, and especially rabbits, are generally known for their prolific fornication, and they therefore often serve as symbols of fertility or for indiscriminate and frequent copulation. For Atalanta, it is not that the Arcadians are not as good as hounds and hares; rather, they are equally occupied with their sexual relations, at least the Arcadian men, whom Atalanta kills in symbolic effigy. By contrast, the female characters Doris and Amaryllis demonstrate not only their ability to reason in matters of love, but also to remain faithful (even if their love is unrequited). Atalanta's response to both Menalkas's and Amaryllis's questions about her desire for the company of beasts shows that she feels herself to be morally superior to the other Arcadians, and their indiscriminate sexual behavior justifies her extreme prudery, even though her refusal of what she

perceives as an animalistic sexuality ironically places her into another kind of equally indiscriminate, animal state of being. Indeed, it would appear that Johann Gottsched raises the question of rational discrimination in matters of love. The only character who demonstrates circumspection is Doris, the men are indiscriminately libidinous, and Atalanta is indiscriminately chaste. In this sense, Atalanta answers exaggeration with the opposite exaggeration and substitutes one excess for another. Atalanta's seclusion in nature can only stand to be damnably characterized as detrimental to her wellbeing, in that, on a covert level, this represents an Amazonian independence from men is deemed as an irrational Otherness.

Atalanta's Amazon-like Otherness stems not just from her proclivity for violence as a huntress, but from her self-determined life apart from the Arcadians in nature and via her refusal to engage with the erotic economy of Arcadian society. This latter component, her complete renunciation of sexuality, particularly marks her as dangerously different and as having gone too far in defending her virtue, which is deemed as socially laudable via the foil of Doris. Menalkas, shocked at his sister's adamant renunciation of love, asks: "Und warum neigt sich denn die gar zu harte Brust / So gar vom Lieben ab? Es ist ja keine Sünde!" (*AW* 2: 390). Loving, not just in reference to the Platonic ideal of love, but purely in the sense of procreation, certainly retains a positive social value in the Judeo-Christian context of eighteenth-century German-speaking lands, where love relates directly to a fundamental *philanthropy*, a phylogenetic drive towards self-preservation in the face of death and to the continuation of the species. Johann Gottsched's Atalanta, like her mythological predecessors, refuses to enter into sexual relations with men and is completely (*gar*) averse to sexuality, because her breast has become too hard, "Die gar zu harte Brust." Atalanta's hardened breast could be understood as a kind of phallic-breast, not just due to the connotation of erectness associated with hardness, but in the sense of Theweleit's

phallic woman, who castrates the male-onlooker (*Männerphantasien* 78–87), or in the sense of Gottsched's *Atalanta*, as a woman who represents a castrating threat to the Arcadians' phallocentric order. In the context of a broader symbolic order, Atalanta's independence comes to represent a dangerous model for women's behavior, portrayed as too extreme in Johann Gottsched's domesticated version of the fable. Her hardened breast surely relates to the term *Sprödigkeit* from the play's subtitle, which refers not only to a lack of malleability or flexibility, perhaps pointing towards a critique of sexual frigidity, but more importantly this metonymy shows that Atalanta has become "hard-hearted" against the Arcadians, in a sense threatening *misanthropy*. Furthermore, Atalanta's "gar zu harte Brust" inscribes her into the transgressive discourse of the Amazons. The disputed etymology of Amazon as *a-mazos* (missing the breast) would relate to the fact that her breast has become inflexible and unwielding.[52] No longer an enticingly soft secondary sexual organ or a source of nourishment, Atalanta's hardened breast repels men, and like the missing breast of the Amazons, it relates to a negation of a hetero-normative femininity, in the sense that the Amazons were in control of their own sexuality outside of the parameters of patriarchal marriage as an institution. Despite her Amazonian break from the normative bounds of Arcadian society, Atalanta responds to Menalkas's insult with a cutting humor that relies on traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity: "Vom Lieben? weil ich noch nichts liebenswürdig finde. / Die Schäfer unsrer Flur sind gar zu weich und zart: / Und hätten sie nicht noch die Spuren von dem Bart; / So wollt ich ganz gewiß bey allen Büschen schwören, / Daß sie kein Männervolk, und lauter Weiber wären" (*AW* 2: 390). As a castrating, phallic-woman, Atalanta mocks the men of Arcadia for their lack of manhood and manners, playing off of norms and feminizing them as soft (*weich*) and tender (*zart*). A strong, Amazon-

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[52] For a discussion of the various competing etymologies for the Greek term "Amazon," see Intro.

like huntress requires a man of equal physical caliber, and the Arcadians lack vigor. This suggests the myths of Atalanta that emphasize her as equal or superior to men, in the Boeotian myth of the footrace, for instance. While not punished by death, as in the original Greek myths, the shepherds' perceived effeminacy evokes Atalanta's scorn. She does not kill the Arcadians, but castrates them verbally instead, marking them symbolically when hunting animals. Surprisingly, it would seem that Atalanta has not entirely sworn off men, or her sexuality, but that she has simply not yet found an object worthy of her love. Granted, this glimmer of a sexual impulse still seems to stand in opposition to her previous encounters with the shepherds, where although she does successfully fight off Damon, she generally discursively assumes the role of the victim at the hands of the men's unwanted sexual advances. Similarly, the fact that Johann Gottsched has her utilize a hetero-normative definition of masculinity foreshadows her own return into the fold of feminine behavioral norms throughout the course of the narrative.

In order to effect a didactically "necessary" change in Atalanta's potentially disruptive Amazonian character, Johann Gottsched mobilizes the image of the foreigner as a mirror for self-reflection, and indeed the reintegration of Atalanta into Arcadian society and the taming of her Amazonian wildness becomes the main crux of his moral fable. Atalanta's still virtuously connoted desire to fight off the shepherds' attempts to bed her finds further justification in the play's third act, and her Otherness becomes even more prominent with the arrival of the foreigner, Myrtillus. Myrtillus has come to the Arcadian valley to find his long lost sister, Doris, who was given to the Arcadian Damötas, Doris and Atalanta's father. When they meet, Damon broods about Atalanta's prudishness, and Myrtillus responds that he has already heard about her frosty reputation back home. Not without a twinge of antipathy, after Damon asks if he came to see her too, Myrtillus retorts: "Das sag ich eben nicht; ob ich die Schäferinn / Gleich selber von

Person zu kennen lüstern bin. / Ist sie den schön, mein Freund?" (*AW* 2: 395). Similar to Damon's evaluation of Doris's value as a woman, Myrtillus seems most interested in Atalanta's beauty. The valuation of female beauty under an objectifying male gaze emerges as more important than virtue at this point in Johann Gottsched's text, for, as we learn from Damon, Atalanta's beauty is nothing less that superlative: "Sie hat nicht ihres gleichen. / Es müssen hier bey uns ihr alle Schönen weichen; / Allein ihr harter Kopf, ihr unbeweglich Herz / Macht sie mir recht verhaßt" (*AW* 2: 395–96). Obviously, it is not the other women who need to yield to Atlanta's beauty, though she might in fact be more attractive from Damon's purely subjective perspective, but Damon who must yield to her, lest she deal him another blow. What drives Damon's animosity towards Atalanta might be precisely her animus, in that she is valiant like her brother and bravely defends her virtue against Damon's passes. Yet this might also be understood as the source of Damon's obsession with and idealization of Atalanta, the irresistible lure of the dangerous *femme fatale*. Nevertheless, Myrtillus asks if her heart can be won through the usual rituals of *Minnesang*: "Liebt sie denn keinen Scherz, / Kein lustig Schäferspiel, kein Tanzen, oder Singen, / Dadurch man fähig wär, ihr Liebe beyzubringen?" (*AW* 2: 396). These courtly devices for winning a woman's affections are described by Myrtillus as a means for "educating" a woman about love. Thus Atalanta's choice to live ascetically as a wild virgin huntress appears as something that can be repaired through socialization and education, as if an Amazonian Atalanta can be domesticated. But as Damon contends, no such luck is to be had:

> Das alles ist umsonst. Mit aller deiner Kunst / Erlangst du nimmermehr bey Atalanten Gunst. / Seitdem die Mutter ihr vor kurzer Zeit gestorben, / Hat mancher Schäfer sich mit Ernst um sie beworben: / Allein sie fragt nach nichts, als Hund, und Wild und Wald; / [...] So bleibt nun ihre Brust bey steter Sprödigkeit. (*AW* 2: 396)

The death of Atalanta's mother, as we now learn, served to concretize her aversion to men and to love, and this lack of a mother figure seems to have permanently freed her from her bonds to Arcadian society. With a missing maternal link, Atalanta turns to hunting, and, as we shall see, the absence of a mother figure becomes central for the play's conclusion and its didactic message. Her rejection of earnest suitors—and presumably not all of them were such uncontrolled louts as Damon—stems from a lack of desires, "sie fragt nach nichts, als Hund, und Wild und Wald" (396). Perhaps even more specifically, Atalanta's refusal of suitors relates back to an unwillingness to accept gifts in exchange for sex, as with Doris's rejection of the commodification of her person in the play's opening scene. If we recall Doris's words to Menalkas: "Wer weislich leben wird, Verstand und Tugend zeigt, / Und mich beständig liebt, dem wird mein Herz geneigt" (*AW* 2: 359), this bourgeois notion of rational, virtuous love informs Atalanta's desire to protect her virtue. But Atalanta goes too far, repressing her libidinal desires entirely, which she sublimates and invests into an enthusiasm for the hunt. Damon's portrayal of Atalanta naturally excludes any information about the shepherds' constant attempts to make passes at her, and after Myrtillus asks Damon if he was also a victim of Atalanta's coldness, Damon disingenuously replies: "O nein! Ich hab ihr den Handel aufgesagt" (*AW* 2: 396). This metaphor reinforces the notion that the Arcadians understand sexual relations under the economic terms of trade (*Handel*). What is significant at this juncture, is that Atalanta's chastity remains a laudable virtue within an enlightened discourse, but her excessive independence in nature becomes characterized more and more as undesirable and potentially dangerous, not only to herself, but as a potentially "corrupting" *Vorbild*, given that Atalanta's lifestyle as a huntress becomes too Amazonian within the parameters of Johann Gottsched's didactic mission.

Work versus Beauty and Emerging Bourgeois Definitions of Femininity

The negative characterization of Atalanta's atypical solitude and life as a huntress finds increasing disparagement as the play progresses. Arcadians continually critique Atalanta for her lack of moderation when it comes to defending her lifestyle. But another bourgeois category that defines female worth also begins to come under threat as a direct result of Atalanta's refusal of Arcadian society: physical beauty. While beauty is an aesthetic value, it exists in tension with sexuality in Johann Gottsched's poetics, since cultural notions of beauty are in fact products of unconscious sexual desires. Furthermore, if beauty were to deteriorate, it would also reflect damningly on the morality of a beautiful woman, based on the old theological/physiognomic precept that physical beauty reflects a beautiful soul. Indeed, as we learn from both men and women, Atalanta's exceptional physical splendor ultimately begins to suffer as a result of her life apart from civilization. For instance, in the third scene of Act Three, Atalanta is confronted by Menalkas and Amaryllis, as the former accusingly asks her, "Was machst du hier allein? Ist den dein Eigensinn / Und deine Lust zur Jagd nicht endlich überhin?" (*AW* 2: 398). Atalanta continues her previous line of reasoning, maintaining that she is not hurting anyone through her choice to live apart from the shepherds as a huntress: "Mein süßer Zeitvertreib ist aller Unschuld voll: / Drum seh ich keinen Grund, daß ich ihn lassen soll. / Was mir Vergnügen giebt und eure Lust nicht störet, / Dawider wird von mir kein Warnen angehöret" (398). Again, her solitude enables her to preserve her sexual innocence, thus her hunting is "aller Unschuld voll." But both Amaryllis and Menalkas question whether or not she is truly enjoying herself in the woods. Menalkas does not refer to her *Vergnügen* in the forest, in the sense of pleasurable amusement, but to her *Lust*, which points more towards sexual lust and the satisfaction of the appetites. Although Atalanta maintains her notions of her *Vergnügen* versus the *Lust* of the other shepherds,

she also uses the term *Zeitvertreib*, which seems to indicate a semantic shift in Atalanta's own attitude towards her pleasure in hunting. This semantic shift from Vergnügen to Zeitvertreib foreshadows her ultimate integration into the social world—as though by hunting she were merely "passing the time" until ready to re-enter the world she abandoned when her mother died, i.e., she eventually accepts her motherly role in the continuation of the species. As a purely leisurely act without purpose, hunting is reduced to a distraction that fills the void left by untended social interactions, and this becomes critical for Johann Gottsched as he attempts to domesticate the Amazonian Atalanta that he inadvertently lets loose.

But most importantly, hunting not only represents a pleasurable distraction and a way to kill time, but an activity that compromises Atalanta's beauty. Upon seeing Atalanta resting after finishing a song, Amaryllis sarcastically suggests, "Wie wollt ich mich doch so, an Leib und Geist, ermüden? / Und meine Ruhe fliehn?" (*AW* 2: 398), where she seems to insinuate that peace and rest can only be found within the bounds of society, and that she cannot understand why Atalanta constantly exhausts herself physically and mentally. Menalkas additionally makes the crass remark that Atalanta is actually becoming an animal herself: "Indessen raubt die Jagd dir alle Menschlichkeit, / Man spüret nichts an dir als strenge Wildigkeit: / Und wird es länger noch mit deinem Hetzen währen; / So wirst du dich zuletzt selbst in ein Wild verkehren" (*AW* 2: 399). At this point in the text, Atalanta's independence threatens to become a monstrous Otherness that is coupled with this ascription of an animality that resists domestication, that always remains wild. Keeping Kearney's *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* in mind, the dehumanization of Atalanta certainly represents a divergence from Arcadian societal norms, but one that is threatening, particularly because Atalanta now holds a hybrid identity as both human and beast (29–33), which requires that she either be scapegoated and sacrificed, or

reincorporated into society, that is to say, domesticated. Atalanta's becoming-Other certainly relates to her Amazon-like autonomy apart from men in the forest, and, like Herodotus, who places the Amazons next to cannibals and other monsters of the known world (see Intro.), her Otherness is geographically bound to a space outside of society and stems from a break with the norms that govern Arcadian behavior.

At this juncture in the play, Johann Gottsched introduces an important dichotomy between beauty and work that has broad-reaching ramifications for his pedagogy for women. Atalanta's preoccupation with hunting eventually threatens her with a loss of femininity. Her constant hunting will reduce her not just to the level of a wild animal, but to state of an ugly woman! For instance, Amaryllis laments that Atalanta is losing her beauty due to her rough circumstances in the forest: "Die Schönheit der Gestalt verschwindet nach und nach; / Das macht der viele Schweiß, der täglich, als ein Bach / Vom Angesichte läuft: die angenehmen Wangen / Sind blaß und halb zerritzt" (*AW* 2: 399). While Atalanta claims that her hunting was a pleasure (*Vergnügen*), it is actually hard work, which has taken its toll on her pulchritude. As Quéval rightly notes, "Gottsched n'idéalise pas l'état de Nature, comme Rousseau" (*Paradoxes* 78). For Johann Gottsched, the dangerous Amazonian Otherness that typifies the myths of Atalanta seems anchored in an exaggerated conception of nature as wild. Although this does not negate nature as a space of spiritual purity, it nevertheless figures it as a place where a woman's beauty comes under attack,[53] specifically because she is forced to engage in physical labors. Thus the positively connoted notion of bourgeois leisure sneaks into Gottsched's *Atalanta*, where a woman who has to engage in hard physical labor comes to be understood negatively as countervailing ideals of

[53] This antagonism between an Amazonian lifestyle and women's pulchritude comes to the fore in Gottsched's depiction of an imagined Amazonian city in the seventh installment of *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnnen* (1725), which will be discussed in more detail shortly.

pampered beauty. As we will see, Atalanta's loss of beauty echoes the ugly Amazon episode in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, further aligning the figure of Atalanta with Johann Gottsched's moral program for women.

Satirical Masquerades and Reason's Absurd Triumph

Typical for the pastoral genre—and perhaps overly reminiscent of Handel's *Atalanta*[54]—a series of ruses and mistaken identities begin to unfold, culminating when Atalanta finally abandons her ways as a huntress and assents to a relationship. That is, she relinquishes her Amazonian lifestyle and enters back into Arcadian society. Perhaps not surprisingly, the entire course of events begins with Damon's suggestion to Myrtillus that he pretend not to be Doris's brother, with the intent of seeing how Doris reacts to him. Menalkas and Myrtillus agree that this will provide a good laugh or two, so the games begin. Myrtillus, however, has also fallen in love with Atalanta. But unlike Damon and Corydon, Myrtillus finds Atalanta irresistible because of her character, not just due to her beauty:

> Wie machs ichs nun damit? Mein Herz ist schon entführt, / Weil Atalantens Blick mich gar zu sehr gerührt. / O schönste Schäferinn! wie lieblich ist dein Wesen! / Dein Antlitz, Leib und Gang ist edel und erlesen. / Dein Mund ist voller Witz; dein Herz ist tugendhaft, / Und deine Sprödigkeit von seltner Glut und Kraft. (*AW* 2: 403)

Myrtillus is impressed not just by Atalanta's pulchritude, but by the power (*Kraft*) and fervor (*Glut*) of her chastity, along with those character traits praised by Doris: namely, her virtue (*tugendhaft*) and her intelligence (*Witz*). Indeed, these female virtues echo Johann Gottsched's praises of Luise Gottsched/Kulmus as a learned women, and Myrtillus's praise can be taken as reproducing these norms through a textual performance. In his soliloquy, Myrtillus considers

[54] See note 2.

how to win Atalanta's love. He decides against excessive shows of ardor, an angle that the other shepherds unsuccessfully attempted, and instead he reasons:

> Nein, so gewinn ich nichts! Doch wie? vielleicht gehts an, / Daß ich durch Sprödigkeit die Spröde zwingen kann. / Ich will mich ihrer Art in jedem Stück bequemen; / Ihr Lassen und ihr Thun will ich zum Muster nehmen; / Ganz unempfindlich seyn, wann mir ein Frauenbild / Gleich nicht so gütig ist. Wohlan! der Einfall gilt! / Ich hoff und glaube fest, der Kunstgriff soll gelingen, / Die Spröde dergestalt zur Zärtlichkeit zu zwingen. (*AW* 2: 404)

Myrtillus states that he will not just mimic her, but will take her as his role model, which underscores the fact that Atalanta, although she is living in the realm of "monstrous" Otherness in a state of nature, was inspired to choose such a life out of noble intentions. As Potter notes, pointing to Horst Steinmetz's study on early eighteenth-century German comedies, this plot device, where a character reveals a character flaw to another by imitating that person, is a typical form of masquerade (*verstellen*) aimed at anagnorisis (Potter 52), and it is a common tactic of satire. Within the aesthetic program of satire, Myrtillus essentially plays hard-to-get, and he plans to alter Atalanta by imitating her! Myrtillus's desire to free up Atalanta's ardor by playing up his own aloofness manifests a powerful comedic generic device. At the same time, it should be noted that Myrtillus uses the same aggressive rhetoric of domestication, hoping that he will be able to force (*zwingen*) Atalanta's untamable Amazonian heart into loving.

Atalanta becomes something of a caricature of herself from this point on. For instance, she beings to repeat herself, almost like a puppet, with expressions like "Ich liebe Wald und Wild," and "Mein unbezwungenes Herz ist heute noch wie gestern. / Ich liebe meine Jagd; das ist mein Zeitvertreib" (*AW* 2: 405). While Atalanta maintainins that she possesses an

untamable/inconquerable (*unbezwungen*) constitution, she refers less emphatically to hunting as her pleasure (*Vergnügen*) and sticks with the concept of *Zeitvertreib*, which is perhaps not entirely negatively connoted, but indicative of the temporary status of hunting as a way to "pass the time" prior to her eventual re-integration into a normative fold. Amaryllis also continues to characterize Atalanta as an animal: "Du wirst wohl endlich gar noch eines Wolfes Weib" (*AW* 2: 405), further emphasizing her undomesticable Otherness, although she thereby actively tries to convince Atalanta to consider a suitor. When Myrtillus sees Atalanta, Doris, and Amaryllis his charade begins. Doris waves hello to the strangely clothed foreigner, and his reply is described as "*kaltsinnig*," as he quickly takes his leave of the three Arcadian women without saying so much as a word. Doris finds him rather stiff but attractive, remarking: "Er ist nicht ungeschickt an Gleidern, Schritt und Gang" (*AW* 2: 406). When Doris asks Atalanta what she thinks of the tall stranger, Atalanta replies, "Der Fremde? mir? sehr schlecht! Er wies ja vor uns allen / gar keine Höflichkeit. Nein, das war zu grob, / Daß er das Hütchen kaum auf eine Seit schob!" (*AW* 2: 407). Atalanta is offended by the lack of courtesy shown to all three ladies by Myrtillus. His lack of courtly manners (*Höflichkeit*) seems to have struck Atalanta most directly as brutish (*grob*), which is rather ironic, because she has just been chastised by her peers for becoming too rough and animalistic herself, after living alone in the forest for too long apart from society and its aesthetic niceties. This uncanny stranger irritates Atalanta because she (unwittingly) sees herself in his mirror.

While Atalanta's romantic interests might have found some sparks with the arrival of Myrtilllus, her initial prudishness remains intact, and she still refuses to acknowledge the advances of the shepherds. At the outset of the seventh scene of act three, Nisus appears carrying the half lifeless body of Corydon, who has tried to kill himself because of his unrequited love for

Atalanta—much to the chagrin of Amaryllis, who continues to love Corydon in spite of his infatuation with the huntress. When Nisus indicts Atalanta, suggesting that her reticence makes her the guilty party, she coldly responds: “Er sterbe, wenn er will; ich kann ohn ihn schon leben! / Ich will und werde stets dem Lieben widerstreben” (*AW* 2: 408). But Corydon merely pleads, “Entschleuß dich endlich doch, geliebte Schäferinn! / Und schenk mir deine Huld” (*AW* 2: 408). Corydon literally wants Atalanta to unlock herself and allow him entry into her person, a favor she again refuses: “Ich bleibe wie ich bin; / Das Bitten ist umsonst, die Hoffnung ist vergebens!” (*AW* 2: 408). She proclaims that she will never transform herself—in spite of her initial encounter with Myrtillus, which begins to signal her eventual recognition of her own flaws—and Corydon experiences her refusal as a kind of violence to his person: “Der Kummer frißt mein Herz, die Kräfte nehmen ab, / Und deine Grausamkeit bringt mich zuletzt ins Grab” (*AW* 2: 408). Atalanta’s cold shoulder represents a kind of antisocial violence, which causes harm to those shepherds whom she shuns. Only now does she become the Atalanta of the myths who “kills” men.

Myrtillus’s plan to force Atalanta to love him through a dose of her own medicine seems to be backfire horribly, as she becomes totally enraged at him for refusing to accept the flowers offered in her name by her brother, Menalkas, again referring to Myrtillus as “ein grobes Wesen” (*AW* 2: 411). In the first scene of Act Four, Atalanta bitterly complains: “Das war ein grober Streich, den mir der Kerl erwies, / Daß er den Blumenstrauß durchaus dem Bruder ließ, / Und gar nicht haben wollt. Ich kanns ihm nicht vergeben; / Die Ehre schätz ich noch weit höher, als mein Leben” (*AW* 2: 413). Atalanta seems obsessed with Myrtillus’s rude action, coming back to the adjective *grob* once again as emblematic of antisocial behavior. At the same time, Atalanta also seems to discover the concept of honor (*Ehre*), which remains intimately tied to social bonds and

the esteem that persons are granted by their peers, something formerly foreign to the isolated huntress. Menalkas in turn merely replies that Myrtillus is a stranger and not used to the manners of the Arcadians, and that Atalanta should therefore have patience with him for his lack of courtesy. Atalanta, however, is ready for violence, now sensing that her honor has been offended: “Und gleichwohl soll ich nicht den plumpen Schäfer schelten? / Sobald ich ihn nur seh, so soll ers schon entgelten!” (*AW* 2: 413). She continues to rant that people with such debased manners are incorrigible, when suddenly Menalkas reminds her that what she despises in him is nothing but her own exaggerated aloofness:

> Erwäge, was du thust! Du strafst die Sprödigkeit; / Und hast ihr selber doch dein ganzes Herz geweiht. / Da siehst du wie es läßt, wenn man gleich wilden Thieren / Nach keinem Menschen fragt, und sich durch nichts läßt rühren. / Es steht dir eben so; wenn du die Liebe fliehst, / Die Schäfer von dir jagst und dich darauf bemühst. / Sieh nun, wie dirs gefällt, wann andre sich desgleichen, / Bey deiner Schönheit, nicht den Augenblick erweichen! / Und wann ein starrer Kopf, der deinem ähnlich ist, / Nicht alsofort bey dir die Freyheit eingebüßt. (*AW* 2: 414)

Menalkas speaks bluntly to Atalanta and informs her that her obsession with independence has reduced her to a wild animal, without empathy, who wreaks havoc with the shepherds hearts. Through the figure of Menalkas, Gottsched essentially reveals the moral of his play: although she purportedly chose a life in the wilderness as a means to protect her chastity—which remains condonable under enlightened norms—Atalanta’s Amazonian lifestyle is exposed as antisocial. Gottsched surely moves away from love as vulgar passion, as an excess of emotions, which is clearly evinced though the lampooning of Damon. In Atalanta, he also moves towards a notion of love as caritas, which becomes analogous to compliance with social norms. Menalkas holds

up a mirror to Atalanta, showing her that she should recognize that Myrtillus is merely her male pendant, someone who vigorously guards his own freedom at the price of alienating others. For what she lambasts in him as coldness she lauds in herself as independence! Atalanta responds by taking refuge in normative gender roles—much like her joke about the lack of manly men among the Arcadians—claiming that there are fundamental differences of behavior expected of men and women regarding courtship and manners:

> Es ist ein Unterschied bey ihm und mir zu finden; / Uns Mädchen darf man nicht mit solchen Regeln binden, / Wodurch man euer Thun zur Höflichkeit gewöhnt; / Wir würden nur damit vor aller Welt verhöhnt. / Ein freundlich Wort von uns wird ärger aufgenommen, / Als wäre schon die Brust ganz lichterloh entglommen, / Ein Blick, ein schlechter Gruß wird oftmals angesehn, / Als wär es allbereits um unser Herz geschehn. / Euch Männer aber pflegt man nicht so scharf zu messen; / Drum müsset ihr auch nicht das Höflichseyn vergessen. (*AW* 2:414)

An important distinction is drawn here: women cannot show any *Neigung* towards men without immediately being decried as whores! And thus politeness is reserved for men! Atalanta argues that it is not she who is guilty of having a double standard regarding gender roles, but that this double standard has been institutionalized in Arcadian society. While the logic here might seem slightly construed, the essential message is that Atalanta, the wild huntress and Other to Arcadian society, affirms precisely that normative behavior to which she herself does not conform. But that is just the point, she actually *does* conform to Arcadian standards of behavior for women, only in an exaggerated fashion. Her entire exile from the shepherds rests on her upholding this social norm regarding the importance of a woman's chastity and the ban on open displays of affection. Her desire to protect her virtue and defend herself against uncontrolled passions aligns

with traditional bourgeois notions of a woman's virtue, that is, that a woman should not be overly flirtatious or friendly with the opposite sex. Again, Atalanta takes this to an extreme, and rather than refusing politeness, she is openly hostile. After listening to Atalanta's rationalization of the whole affair, Menalkas remarks, "Daß du empfindlich bist, kömmt von der Liebe her" (*AW* 2: 414). In other words, he believes that Atalanta is offended because she has feelings for Myrtillus, even if she is not willing to admit them.

Atalanta's alienation from the Arcadians, however, as Menalkas has pointed out, begins to unravel in the face of a foreign Other, Myrtillus, and this becomes essential for the removal of her radical, Amazonian independence from Johann Gottsched's moralizing stage. In the third scene of the fourth act, Atalanta directly confronts Myrtillus and demands an explanation for his insult, committed when he refused to take the flowers given in her name: "Du scheinst kein Schäfer; nein! ein Bauerknecht zu seyn: / Bey Hirten ist hier nicht die Grobheit so gemein. / Geht alle Höflichkeit in deiner Flur verloren?" (*AW* 2: 417). Atlanta resorts to the *grob*/*höflich* dichotomy once again. Myrtillus explains that he cannot be held up to the Arcadians' social standards because of his autonomy: "Was deine Schäfer thun, gilt darum nicht bey mir. / Ich bins auch nicht gewohnt, in solchen Nebendingen, / Dem Frauenvolk zu gut, mich sonderlich zu zwingen. / Sie bildens ohnedieß sich gar zu leichtlich ein, / Die Männer müssten nichts als ihre Sklaven seyn. / Das steht mir gar nicht an, mich so zu unterwerfen!" (*AW* 2: 418). The deification of the beloved bound to traditions like *Minnesang* appears to Menalkas as absurd, and he mockingly refuses to become a subservient slave to a woman, just as Atalanta previously complains that she would lose her freedom were she to pair with one of the shepherds. Dropping his ruse—although he later admits that courtly manners are also customary in his native valley—Myrtillus also explains that he had seen her behave coldly to the shepherds attempting to court

her: “Und was du dann bey mir durch Sprödeseyn gewannst! / Du selbst hast nicht gedankt; ich hab es wohl gesehen: / Was Wunder! daß es denn auch nicht von mir geschehen? / Was dir erlaubet war, ist mir nicht untersagt” (*AW* 2: 418). Thus Atalanta has met her match, and she now knows why Myrtillus behaved so coldly towards her. He mocks her, but he also implicitly reveals that he admires Atalanta for her virtue, and that her coldness impresses him. Thus Johann Gottsched uses Myrtillus to reinforce his critique of libertinism, embodied by the Arcadian men, and his praise of women’s chastity, albeit while also beginning the process of domesticating Atalanta via rational self-recognition.

In contrast to Johann Gottsched’s domestication of Atalanta via Reason, Corydon’s passion goes completely out of control, marking the danger ascribed to extreme emotional states in his enlightened poetology. As Corydon lets loose a list of complaints about Atalanta’s cruelty and coldness, along with descriptions of his impassioned longing: “[e]in brennendes Verlangen / reiß meine matte Brust zu Atlalanten hin,” ; “Ich nähre mich bisher nur bloß mit ihrer Liebe,” “mein Geist verliert sich oft aus den gewohnten Schranken / So die Vernunft ihm setzt”; and “Allein, ich könnte mich eh von mir selber scheiden, / Als ihre Schönheit ganz aus meinem Herzen ziehn” (*AW* 2: 425–26). Corydon typifies a passionate, vulgar love that ignores the bounds of reason, and this complete lack of moderation nearly kills him as he faints with visions of Atalanta before his inner eye: “Ja Grausame! komm her! und nimm mir Geist und Licht, / Dein Corydon verläßt dich auch im Sterben nicht. / Dein edles Wesen soll im Tode mich erquicken, / Da denk ich noch dein Bild an meine Brust zu drücken. / Da will - - - -” (*AW* 2: 426). As Atalanta’s image pierces his breast, beautiful and horrible at once, in line with the standard trope through which he always saw her, he falls unconscious. Yet Johann Gottsched cannot let such excessive, self-destructive passion appear on his stage without a positive resolution, where

an *amor rationalis* overcomes vulgar passion (Quéval, *Paradoxes* 113). Amaryllis, who suffers from unrequited love for Corydon, naturally comes to the rescue with a healing balsam, whereupon he decides to take her instead of Atalanta, because she saved him and showed her "teuer Herz." Even Damon admits that "bloß durch ihre Treu bist du anitzt genesen" (*AW* 2: 428). Corydon assuages Amaryllis's fear that he would go back to Atalanta if she were to show him love, assuring her of his faithfulness and indebtedness to her: "Nein, nein! sie lachte stets zu meinen treuen Trieben, / Und hätte vor der Zeit mich ins Grab gebracht; / Wenn deine Treue mir nicht Hülfe zugedacht. / Dir hab ich itzo bloß mein Leben zu verdanken: / Von deiner Liebe will ich lebenslang nicht wanken" (*AW* 2: 429). Through her caritas, Corydon becomes bound to her and is in her debt, where the unifying social function of an enlightened love is underlined along with notions of fidelity (*Treue*) and monogamy (*lebenslang nicht wanken*). After proclaiming lifelong fidelity, Corydon suggests that they get married that very day. Through the standard trope of the woman healer, a positive affirmation of loyalty and fidelity manifests itself in Gottsched's play, and even Damon the scoundrel must concede that this pairing is good and true. The fact that Amaryllis saves Corydon's life also marks her as a strong woman—granted, not in the Amazonian sense of defeating enemies in battle. Rather, she functions here as a kind of anti-Amazonian, as an Amazon antidote, in that she has cured Corydon from his preoccupation with Atalanta. Moreover, in her protection of Corydon and the refinement of his libidinal drives from vulgar passion to a rational love, Amaryllis assumes the role of a Minerva-like figure. Indeed, if one accepts that Johann Gottsched borrows this figure from Handel's opera—where Amarilli was the name used by Atalanta to hide her royal lineage—Amaryllis could, like Doris, function as a mirror and model for an emerging bourgeois definition of a rationally virtuous woman

defined by her fidelity (*Treue*) and monogamous love, which will later come to the fore in Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* (see Ch. 4).

Although Atalanta has learned something about herself, she remains fiercely independent almost until the play's closing scene. The fifth act begins when Damon attempts to steal his way into Atalanta's heart by telling her that she has lost an admirer, since Corydon and Amaryrllis are to be wed. Atalanta feigns disappointment at having lost a suitor, and Damon foolishly exploits her lament and again attempts to embrace her. She pushes him away, shouting "Verwegener Buhler! geh, ersticke dein Verlangen. / Verstehst du keinen Scherz? und kennst du mich noch nicht? / Ich hasse jedermann, der mir vom Lieben spricht; / und dich insonderheit, von allen, die ich kenne" (*AW* 2: 431). Thus Atalanta stays true to her old pattern and flatly refuses any kind of sexual advance. Shocked that he was fooled, Damon cries "Verkehrter Eigensinn! was hilft michs, daß ich brenne? / Geh! bleib ein wildes Thier, und fleuch der Menschen Art! / Für Damons treue Brust ist schon ein Herz verspart. / Du sollst einmal das ärgste Thier auf Erden, / Du sollst, was meynst du wohl? zur alten Jungfer werden!" (*AW* 2: 431). Just as Damon is for Atalanta a brash brute with no self-restraint, Atalanta represents an inverted stubbornness, another kind of all-too-human animality, in that she treats him only with violent rejection. Thus he predicts her fate of becoming an old maid (*alte Jungfer*), as if being unmarried were somehow related to a state of animality! Nisus then interrupts their spat and informs Atalanta that Myrtillus has fallen in love with Doris. Atalanta refuses to believe this, however, still thinking Myrtillus capable only of being emotionally distant like herself: "Der Schäfer kann sonst nichts, als spröde seyn und hassen" (*AW* 2: 432). But upon hearing confirmation that this is the case, Atalanta makes some startling concessions: "Gleichwohl gesteh ichs euch, daß, wann ich lieben sollt, / Ich keinen andern Sinn als seinen, wählen wollt; / Und zwar um seiner Art und spröden Minen

wegen: / Denn darinn schien er mir fast selber überlegen. / Doch wann er lieben kann, so acht ich ihn nicht mehr" (*AW* 2: 433). Having thought that she had found her superior in terms of coldness, Atalanta ironically admits that she would have been prepared to choose him as her mate. But as soon as he exhibits love, she loses respect for him. So does like love like, or do opposites attract? Either way, Atalanta finally begins to move away from her independent lifestyle as a huntress and gravitate toward society.

Atlanta begins to reconsider her excessive protection of her virtue when she confronts Myrtillus and Doris as a new couple, which drives her into a vengeful rage. At this juncture Myrtillus's ploy to defeat Atalanta's prudery with prudery finally bears fruit. Still cunningly claiming to be in love with his sister Doris, Myrtillus taunts Atalanta:

> Allein, was kömmst du, uns in unser Lust zu stören? / Und was verlierst du doch, wenn Doris mir gefällt? / Ich habe noch nie zu deiner Hand gesellt. / Du bist der Liebe feind und darfst uns nur verlachen, / Wenn wir so kindisch thun und irgend Hochzeit machen. / Denn Hunde, Wald und Wild sind mehr als Mann und Weib! / Behalte, wo du willst, den schönen Zeitvertreib. (*AW* 2: 437)

Myrtillus again describes Atalanta's Amazonian lifestyle, her holy trinity of "Hunde, Wald und Wild," as *Zeitvertreib* and not as her *Vergnügen*, and he ironically places Atalanta's Amazon-like value of independence above the institution of marriage, using sarcasm to effect a semantic drift in Atalanta's logic. Falling for his logical trap, Atalanta proclaims that she, too, can love:

> Nein, nein! Die Regel steht mir künftig gar nicht an; / Weil sie Myrtillus giebt, den ich gar nicht leiden kann. / Ich will und muß mich itzt an euch, durchs Lieben, rächen; / Und sollt ich drüber gar den alten Vorsatz brechen, / Den ich vorlängst gefaßt. Ich ändre

> meinen Sinn, / Und bin hinfort nicht mehr die spröde Schäferinn. / Ich liebe künftig auch. (*AW* 2: 437)

Strikingly, Johann Gottsched portrays Atalanta as being able to simply flip a switch and her "love" turns on. But is such a drastic revision of her untamable Amazon-like independence just as simple as a rational decision, as Johann would have us believe? Atalanta seems to change her stance in reaction to Myrtillus and is now clearly in a relationship of dependence. The revelation that Atalanta has decided to give in to her erotic impulses shocks all parties involved, who quickly mock her and ask if she is referring again to her love of hunting, or the chase, or shooting her bow that she had symbolically substituted for her repressed desires. Atalanta then sees Corydon and explains that she is finally willing to show him affection: "Vergiß die Härtigkeit, womit ich dich erschreckt, / Und denke nicht dran, daß ich dich abgewiesen: / Die spröde Lebensart die ich vorhin gepriesen, / Die ist mir itzt verhaßt" (*AW* 2: 438). One might ask, however, if Atalanta is only acting. That is, is she merely imitating Myrtillus's imitation? Nevertheless, true to his word, Corydon remains faithful to Amaryllis, even in the face of this torturous temptation. When Amaryllis asks with concern what suddenly prompted her to change her ways so drastically, Atalanta responds:

> Ich weis nicht, was ich mache, / Was ich anitzt gethan, das thu ich nur aus Rache. / Myrtillus trotz mich hier, der wunderliche Gast! / Der nur bloß mir zum Hohn die Doris itzt umfaßt, / Und mir verbiethen will, so wohl als er, zu lieben. / Nein, ihm gehorch ich nicht; und sollt ich mit den Trieben, / Die meine Seele fühlt, gleich ganz verschwendrisch seyn. (*AW* 2: 439–40)

Atalanta retains the illusion that she is acting of her own free will, and ironically the most prudish of the prude now claims that she will wastefully (*verschwenderisch*) set her libidinal

energies free (much to Damon's pleasure, who immediately offers to be her "friend"). Johann Gottsched shifts his Atalanta figure from a cheapskate in love to a spendthrift, but this change seems overly artificial, and the author disregards her character in order to fulfill both requirements of the comedic genre. Not surprisingly, Atalanta's assisted abandonment of her excessive defense of her virtue ironically coincides with a lack of potential suitors. And indeed, it is unclear whether Atalanta really loses control of herself, or if she is just acting out a part in response to Myrtillus's charade.

Finally, in the seventh scene of the final act, Menalkas reveals that Doris is actually Myrtillus's sister. Myrtillus apologizes to Doris for the ruse: "Verzeihe mir indeß mein kühnes Unterfangen, / Wir suchten eine Lust, und das ist angegangen. / Dich lieb ich brüderlich und bin recht sehr vergnügt, / Daß Tugend und Verstand in dir verborgen liegt" (*AW* 2: 441). Emphasis is again placed on Doris's virtue and reason—even though she was easily won over with a bracelet—and now Myrtillus is free to proclaim his love for Atalanta: "[…] Ich kam, und fand dich auch, / Und sah zu gleicher Zeit den seltenen Gebrauch / Der steten Sprödigkeit, die dich zum Wunder machet, / Weil du das schnöde Thun der Buhler stets verlachet. / Dich hab ich hochgeschätzt und habe dich geliebt" (*AW* 2: 441–42). Once more Atalanta's extreme aloofness finds praise by the outsider Myrtillus, who also denigrates the Arcadian men for their distainful behavior. Atalanta's emotional coldness, while extreme, appears as morally justified given the overly libidinous social situation. On the other hand, fleeing from the shepherds' unbridled passions also triggers Atalanta's loss of reasonable moderation, since she exaggerates this single virtue beyond all reasonability. Menalkas then proposes marriage to Doris and the three pairs are ready to wed as the final scene begins.

At the play's conclusion Damötas, the father of Menalkas and Atalanta, is astounded that she has changed her attitude towards love. He is initially happy to hear of the marriage of Corydon and Amaryllis, but is then immediately taken aback when he sees the other couples standing there paired: "Allein, was seh ich hier? ihr steht schon gepaart! / Tritt Atalanta selbst zu dieser Lebensart? / Fürwahr, das wundert mich!" (*AW* 2: 444). Atalanta replies: "Ich habe mich besonnen; / Myrtillens Sprödigkeit hat meine Brust gewonnen" (*AW* 2: 444). Atalanta's hardened breast has been softened by Myrtillus's masquerade, and she now returns to society from her hermitage in the forest, having come back to reason (*sich besonnen*), her "passing the time" (*Zeitvertreib*) is over. Damötas then surprisingy separates both Atalanta and Myrtillus and Doris and Menalkas. As it turns out, Doris and Atalanta were switched as children, unbeknownst to Damötas. As his wife Margaris lay on her deathbed, she confessed that she received a prophecy from a stranger that Doris would live a long life, and that Atalanta would die an early death. Thus, since the two girls looked almost identical, the mother switched them in order to save her own child (*AW* 2: 446). The pairs then switch partners, and it would appear that all three couples will marry and live happily ever after. The masquerade turns into a round dance, and at the play's conclusion Johann Gottsched sacrifices love as passion to cold pragmatics. Menalkas affirms that he will marry Atalanta: „Indessen bin ich auch an deiner Hand vergnügt, / Geliebte Schäferinn! Indem dein sprödes Wesen / Sich dennoch stets zum Zweck die Tugend auserlesen" (*AW* 2: 447). Atalanta's *Sprödigkeit* finds affirmation in the service of preserving her virtue. She herself finally remarks: "Weil ich nun Doris bin, so geh ich alles ein; / Wer Atalanta heißt, mag künftig spröde seyn" (*AW* 2: 448). And what's in a name? After losing herself to Myrtillus's satirizing masquerade, Atalanta's identity is negated once again, after she discovers that she is not actually herself. However, her wild ways as an iron virgin were not for naught, but

served the purpose of preserving her chastity and virtue—and so *Zeitvertrieb* proves to have an ultimate and necessary purpose, in that she is now reintegrated into society.

Atalanta's decision to love effectively negates her lifestyle as an Amazon-like huntress. The play still nevertheless portrays her previous "abnormal" behavior positively. Atlanta's retreat into the forest serves to preserve her virtue, in the sense of her chastity, which retains a positive connotation throughout the play, even if it is mocked by would-be suitors like Damon. Nature, however, remains a space opposed to beauty and civilized human relations, but this demonization of nature merely serves to reinforce that Atalanta is too passionate about defending her virtue, where her exaggerated love of the hunt also reduces her to the level of an animal, putting her into opposition with society. Potter rightly argues that the play loses any pedagogical credibility at the moment that Atalanta transforms into a woman capable of love (55). I would however add that Atalanta's excessive defense of her chastity always remains morally justifiable in the play, even after her loss of identity. One might ask if Atalanta really experiences love, or if for her love has become something purely rational and mechanical. While Atalanta's willful choice to love mirrors the positive examples of female virtue bound to bourgeois values, as represented by Doris and Amaryllis, emotions seem to dictate Atalanta's actions. This is supported by the fact that she is overcome by shame when she discovers that she has been tricked by Myrtillus:

> Mein Herze pocht vor Scham, ich weis nicht, wie mir ist, / Und begreife kaum die ungemeine List, / Womit du mich berückt. Ich habe mich verrathen! / Was fang ich itzund an? In Worten und in Thaten / Entdeckte sich mein Herz. Man sah es offenbar, / Daß mir der Doris Glück ein Dorn im Auge war, / Und dass ich innerlich - - - Genug! ich darf nur schwiegen; / Das andre werden dir schon meine Minen zeigen. (*AW* 2: 442)

Words seem to serve Atalanta as means for tactically expressing herself, because she feels that she has betrayed herself. But in fact she was not untrue to herself, since she did not succumb to the erotic exchange economy of the Arcadians, but instead was forced to recognize herself as Other via an Other. Atalanta feels that she must now remain silent, holding that her pathognomic expressions will be more powerful than words. Myrtillus did not force himself on Atalanta like Damon, nor did he pester her with constant professions of love. While playing hard-to-get involved masking his true nature, according to the logic of the play Myrtillus acts with noble intentions. Johann Gottsched's taming of Atalanta's Amazon-like independence, so that she accepts a normative role and is re-inscribed within the bounds of Arcadian society, remains highly questionable. How does a figure suddenly decide to show love? And how can this "love" be so fickle as to switch objects in an instant? It is almost as though the Arcadian partner-swapping has been re-produced through rational means—perhaps relating to Atalanta's ultimate "choice" to be a mother? This supposition could be related back to the notions of Atalanta's independent, Amazonian lifestyle in the woods was always just a mere "passing of the time," as *Zeitvertreib* for an interim period. In this sense, Atalanta's Amazonian phase was always nothing more than a kind of performance, in order for her to bide her time before re-integrating into society, which correlates with Johann Gottsched's ideology. The pivot point that caused her isolation was the death of her mother (*AW* 2:396). It is curious that at the end of the play a new mother is inserted, since Margaris switched Doris and Atalanta at birth. This switch relates to the mechanical switch of the partners, as though Atalanta were making a decision along the lines not of opening herself up for love and Eros, but for motherhood, which also explains why her ultimate partner is irrelevant. This is the final step in Johann Gottsched's domestication of the Amazonian Atalanta, and this movement towards motherhood, suggested by the notions of "Paar"

and “gepaart” with *Paarung* when the couples stands gathered together in the final scene, lends some justification to the artificiality of the play’s conclusion, in terms of why Johann Gottsched has Atalanta “pragmatically” decide to allow herself to be coupled.

This sudden turn is Johann Gottsched’s fable robs the character of Atalanta of any verisimilitude. Her voice and her emotions at the play’s conclusion seem artificial and forced. Love becomes a purely mechanical, emotionless operation in Johann Gottsched’s *Atalanta*, played out by empty puppets dancing round waiting to be paired off with the next available partner. Atalanta’s ultimate erasure has been brilliantly examined by Potter, who notes: “Gottsched, the famous promoter of women, has given us a text that is powerfully designed to ‘keep women in their place,’ for the powerful, autonomous Atalanta is erased by the more powerful literary text” (60). Atalanta’s loss of identity in the final scene certainly serves to negate her Amazon-like independence, which now is doubly negated, in that Myrtillus also forces her to recognize herself through his feigned Otherness. Furthermore, Potter calls the entire pedagogical effectiveness of Johann Gottsched’s play into question:

> The fact that Atalanta remains unconvinced of the “error” of her ways, up until her very erasure by means of Damötas’s revelation, also calls the pedagogical mission of Gottschedian drama […] into question, for if Myrtillus’s pedagogical playacting can not successfully effect Atalanta’s reform, then the self-reflexive implication is that Gottschedian comedy may be equally ineffectual. (60)

However, Myrtillus’s playacting unfortunately does succeed in transforming Atalanta: she returns to the fold of society, no longer a wild huntress, but a domesticated Amazon. Her hamartia was not that she was independent and loved to hunt wild animals, but that she chose such a lifestyle because of an excessive desire to preserve her chastity, an *unreasonable*

exaggeration. As the subtitle of the play makes clear, it is not her chastity, but her excessive desire to *protect* it that becomes problematic, and her resulting autonomy completely removes her from society and creates a potentially trangressive, Amazonian independence, even though her seclusion ironically results from attempting to uphold its norms for women's behavior. At the same time, Atalanta's virtue is constantly praised by figures like Myrtillus and Menalkas and only criticized by louts like Damon and Corydon. The Amazon-like character of Atalanta finds its transformation into a domesticated husk at the hands of Gottsched, but the pedagogical aim of the text was to emphasize the importance of maintaining chastity in the face of hyper-sexual scoundrels and immoderate advances, and, in this regard, *Atalanta* is a success in terms of transmitting progressive Early-Enlightenment norms still regressively bound to traditional notions of gender difference. The circumscription of women's sexuality and the establishment of a bourgeois set of values for women characters remain highly problematic in Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta*, and the text itself seems to betray an Amazonian unruliness in its structure! Atalanta's improbable decision to be open to love reveals a highly contrived *deus ex machina* that Johann employs to play out the conventions of the comedic genre. This is reflected by the ludicrous round dance of marriage partners at the conclusion, which certainly serves the purpose of parody, but also reveals the artificiality of Johann Gottsched's position. His mechanization of partner choice undercuts precisely the bourgeois ideology of a *Vernunftehe* and an *amor rationalis*. When Johann Gottsched artificially aligns the three Arcadian pairs in a torturously overdone form, his own portrayal of Atalanta's successful "domestication" suffers ironically from the same over-rationalization that he forces onto his Atalanta character. The exaggeration that is forced out of Atalanta is transferred to the very structure of the play that bears her name.

Understanding *Atalanta* in the Context of Early-Enlightenment Precepts for Women's Education

The emphasis on virtue, fidelity, wisdom, and, yes, even physical beauty in *Atalanta* directly relates to Johann Gottsched's involvement with the education of young bourgeois women. A primary venue for educating young German-speaking women was his moral weekly *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* (1725–27). As the main editor, Johann Gottsched surreptitiously cross-dressed as Calliste, along with his fellow contributors, who also assumed auctorial identities as women. As Helga Brandes notes in her afterword to the facsimile edition of the moral weekely, Gottsched only indirectly revealed himself as the main editor of the journal in the fifty-second installment in 1726. As Kaminski notes, Johann Gottsched's fictitious female authorship radically de-potentiates the transgressive elements of the journal, as his feigned feminine authorship becomes a "bloß didaktisch motiviert[e] Fiktion" (116). Several scholars have maintained that the journal, while progressively encouraging the education of women and their literacy, nevertheless placed limitations on female education and the role of women in society. Women were still expected to act as housewives and mothers, despite being half-granted participation in human perfectibility through the improvement of the rational faculties (Bovenschen 108–09; Neumann 20–24; Kaminski 112–16; Schumann 143–44; DiFino 20–63). In *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* learned women are not mocked, and in general women are encouraged to gain as much knowledge as possible, but only as long as this erudition does not detrimentally affect a woman's ability to perform her domestic duties. In this sense, learned women were also domesticated, even though they had found recognition as rational beings! Thus Gottsched's moral weekly makes a move towards including women in the Enlightenment project, only to rescind their participation in the public spheres of employment.

In the very first installment of *Die vernünfftigen Tadlerinnen*, dated 3 January 1725, Johann Gottsched, auctorially cross-dressed as Calliste, rhetorically asks herself from the

perspective of an imagined reader: “Was ist das wieder vor eine neue Hirn-Geburt? Es wird itzo Mode, daß man gern einen Sitten-Lehrer abgeben will. Haben wir aber nicht von Manns-Personen moralische Schriften genung; und muß sich das Weibliche Geschlechte auch ins Spiel mischen?” (1) There is no shortage of irony in these opening lines, in that this “Hirn-Geburt” *is* in fact yet another moral weekly written by men, but surreptitiously under the guise of feminine authorship, and that these female editors are nothing less than the brain-births of men. Calliste’s veiled allusion to Pallas Athena’s parthenogenesis, her virgin birth from the head of Zeus, becomes particularly relevant when we recall the prevalence of Minerva/Pallas Athena in the cultural archive of Europe and how she was often utilized as a protective sign associated with the thirst for knowledge (see fig. 2.5).

Fig. 2.5. *Etching by Benjoit Farjat*, Thesis of the Medicis with Atalanta and Hippomenes *(1691). Hippomenes notably receives his golden apples not from Aphrodite, but from Pallas Athena in*

this representation, which symbolically moves the fable from the erotic to the realm of reason. The maxim reads: "Praeterita est virgo duxit sua praemia victor" / "If the virgin [Atalanta] is first conquered, so the victor receives his prize."

Recalling the fact that the Societas Alethophilorum mobilized this figure for their enlightened ideology, Minerva/Pallas Athena represents a domesticated Amazon who is not entirely threatening, for, as Karl Kerényi notes, this strong female character from ancient myth remains bound up with a patriarchal ideology. But as Marx says in the preface to *Die deutsche Ideologie*, "Die Ausgeburten ihres Kopfes sind ihnen über den Köpf gewachsen" (13). The symbol of Pallas Athena/Minerva protects and promotes the sciences and the arts, but what of warfare? To a certain extent, following Kerényi, her character preserves an Amazonian transgressiveness. The enlightened domestication of this symbol reveals the myth of Reason and the contradictions bound to Enlightenment thought, particularly with regard to progressive notions of political equality, intellectual emancipation, and stagnant notions of normative gender roles, especially if the latter are implicitly/indirectly revealed as performances.

Still under the auctorial guise of Calliste, Johann Gottsched recalls the Greek myth of the Amazons in the seventh installment of the *Tadlerinnen*, from 14 February 1725, and his/her utopian/dystopian phantasy carries far-reaching intertextual implications for the female pedagogy underlying his later portrayal of the once Amazon-like Atalanta. Calliste begins:

> Ich habe ohngefehr etwas von den alten Amazonen gelesen. Dieselbe sollen ein Volck gewesen seyn, so aus lauter Weibs-Personen bestanden. Ihr Haupt war eine Königin; ihre Obrigkeitliche Aemter waren mit lauter Frauenzimmer besetzet. Ihre Soldaten waren tapffere Weiber; wiewohl auf den Nothfall alle mit einander ins Feld ziehen musten. Ich gerieth dabey in eine recht angenehme Betrachtung. Meine Einbildungs-Krafft stellte mir eine Republik vor, die etwa heute zu Tage aus lauter Frauenzimmer aufgerichtet werden

> könte. Ich verbannete in meinen Gedancken alle Manns-Personen aus meiner Vater-Stadt. Ich besetzte alle Aemter und Bedienungen mit lauter Weibs-Bildern. Der Rath wurde nicht mehr aus denen ansehnlichen Bürgern, sondern aus denen vernünfftigen Bürgerinnen erwehlet. Sein Haupt war nicht ein Bürgermeister, sondern eine Bürgermeisterin. Alle Kläger, die vor demselben Rechte suchten, kamen nicht mit Mänteln, Degen und Stöcken, sondern mit leinen Schürtzen, geputzten Köpffen und Fächern aufgezogen. (49–50)

As a learned woman, Calliste has knowledge of the ancient Amazons through her studies, and she envisions a modern republic run completely by women. Of course there is even a regiment of Amazonian soldiers, the executioner is a woman, and even the schools and universities run flawlessly under their guidance; in other words, women participate in politics, have access to (state-sanctioned) violence, thereby satisfying two of three Amazonian criteria.

However, when Calliste retires to bed after contemplating such a lovely scene, she is visited by a horrible nightmare: that missing Amazonian criterion, their sexual independence, comes back to haunt her! Because there were no longer any men, the Amazonian women become horribly ugly creatures. Fashions are no longer brought in from Paris, make-up is no longer worn:

> Man hielte unter ihnen nichts mehr auf die Schönheit des Angesichts, nichts auf die weisse Haut des Halses und der Brust, nichts auf die geschickte Stellung des Leibes. […] Der Zwang der steiffen Schnür-Leiber war ganz verbannet; Die Brust entblössete man nicht mehr, und die meisten Personen waren ziemlich starck vom Leibe, und fast allenthalben gleiche dicke. (52)

Calliste (surprisingly?) mirrors the male gaze, reminiscing about women's former pulchritude, as she envisions a complete loss of beauty in her imagined Amazonian republic. We might recall the horror expressed by the shepherds when Atalanta's beauty comes under assault through her Amazonian independence in the woods! The moral of Calliste's story would appear to be that the fair sex ceases to be fair without men to please, and that somehow women need to remain objects of male attention. The streets are literally littered with broken mirrors, perhaps representing an antisocial disregard for maintaining the appearance of virtue in the eyes of others, i.e. the men who will judge them as virtuous or not. The paratext that frames Calliste's narrative reinforces this sense, as the prefatory quote from Gryphius reads "[…]Frisch! Schwestern / nur gewagt! / Wer weiß wem unser Putz und Locken-Werck behagt?" Thus her anecdotal vision of an Amazonian utopia/dystopia really serves as a moral lesson about the need to pay attention to one's outer appearances: "Diese nächtliche Vorstellung hat mir Anlaß gegeben, die wahre Ursache zu entdecken, woher es komme, daß unser Geschlecht so sehr auf den Putz des Leibes und den Schmuck in Kleidungen hält. […] Mein Traum hat mich überredet, daß es bloß der Manns-Personen halber geschehe" (53). Calliste further contends that she does not want to disregard attention to beauty as something punishable, but seeks to emphasize that women should not get too carried away with superficial appearances either, arguing that a woman should not spend six hours a day in front of a mirror (54). She additionally warns that women should not venture to be too beautiful, that they should avoid "eitle Manns-Personen zu reizen, zu entzücken, zu bezaubern" (54). She goes on to describe her ideal of a women's daily toilet routine, dictating how they should dress and asserting that fifteen minutes is more than enough time to get ready, and above all else that women should aim for modesty and naturalness:

> Sie verdirbt ihre Zeit nicht mit unnützen aus- und aufkleiden, schmücken und balsamieren, waschen und pudern; sondern kan sie zu Hauß-Geschäfften und Lesung nützlicher Bücher anwenden. Daher hält sie jedermann nicht nur vor ein angenehmes, sondern auch vor ein wohlgezogenes und tugendhafftes Frauenzimmer. (55)

Through a gender-bending ventriloquism, Gottsched reveals his enlightened conception of a virtuous (*tugendhaft*), well-raised woman (*wohlerzogen*) as a person of natural beauty, modesty, and learning. In this sense, Calliste's second vision moves women from the chaos of a failed Amazonian republic back to Minerva-like figures under the semi-veiled protection of a patriarchally determined society, where a woman dare not be too powerful sexually or too politically independent, thus remaining modest and virtuous. While women's right to education is characterized as praiseworthy, their intellectual independence remains subservient to fulfilling domestic duties. Calliste's parable of a modern republic of Amazons offers a transgressive vision of image women's political autonomy, but only then to revoke it in the name of patriarchal re-domestication.

Atalanta also implicitly offers advice to a female audience on moderation, but the definitions of female virtue, like Johann Gottsched's proscriptions of female behavior in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, should be understood as representing the norms of an emerging bourgeois class that both valorizes women and carefully circumscribes their independence. Just as Calliste's Amazonian state becomes a dystopia of ugly women, Atalanta's freedom in the forest ultimately ends with the destruction of her beauty. Both texts establish a dynamic in which unbecoming labor detracts from beauty. Still, Atalanta's transgressive autonomy serves to preserve her virtue, although Atalanta ultimately returns to the fold of Arcadian society. Yet her initial Amazonian independence is domesticated, no longer the "wilde Jägerinn," but an empty

marionette for propagating enlightened ideals. Atalanta protectively secludes herself from a society whose double standards for women's virtue and simultaneous demand for erotic availability calls forth her excessive desire to protect her chastity, which she carries out through an exaggerated independence in the forest. But her symbolic substitution of erotic energies for the love of the hunt becomes characterized as an antisocial *Zeitvertreib*, as a mere passing of time before prior to her reintegration. In contrast to the vision of broken mirrors in Calliste's vision of the Amazons, Atlanta's beauty constantly places her back in contact with the lecherous shepherds who incessantly seek her out. Indeed, Johann Gottsched domesticates the traditional myth of an Amazon-like Atalanta when he reintegrates her into the Arcadian society through the figure of Myrtillus. Johann's play elides traditional depictions of Amazonian violence and independence usually associated with Atalanta myths in favor of a figure who is ultimately tamed in the service of his enlightened agenda, as Gottsched tries to proscribe women's behavior and place within society. Johann Gottsched's pedagogical project succeeds in transmitting emerging gender norms and taming an Amazon, but it also fails due to its unruly form, and his adherence to producing a moralizing fable undoes the believability of his characters, especially his heroine.

Because the pastoral actually ends by revealing itself as a masquerade, the potentially endless cycle of mimicry between Atalanta and Myrtillus inadvertently exposes normative gender roles as performances. Indeed, Johann Gottsched places the moral of a poetic fable above believable characters,[55] which relates to a broader trend in "enlightened" poetics. Following

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[55] Reflecting on the didactic importance of a story's moral message "Von der Epopee oder dem Heldengedicht," Gottsched notes "Aesopus sagt uns viel vom Wolfe, vom Schafe, vom Hunde, u.s.w. Nicht, als wenn er uns die Historien dieser Thiere bekannt machen wollte; sondern weil er uns unter ihren Bildern und Namen, gewisse allegorische Handlungen erzählen, und dadurch

Judith Butler's notions of gender roles as performance (*Gender Trouble* 187–93), the identity-erasing masquerade at the conclusion of *Atalanta* offers an implicit parody of normative behaviors for men and women. Johann Gottsched's authorial cross-dressing as Calliste relates to a conservative desire to proscribe female behavior in the midst of the progressive social changes being brought about by the Enlightenment,[56] and *Atalanta* further reinforces his "enlightened" notions of femininity. However, there is a point of rupture in the text's pedagogical mission, when performance reveals itself as an endless and infinitely changeable. Yet the defacement of Atalanta's Amazonian identity marks a disjuncture in an enlightened didactic that is bound to a patriarchally engrained logic, one that seeks a "rational" hierarchical ordering of the sexes. Johann Gottsched grants more intellectual autonomy to women under the enlightened sign of Minerva, but he remains in line with patriarchal, conservative dogma. Like Minerva, Atalanta becomes a domesticated Amazon, since the narrative correlates to the subordination of women in the domestic sphere (in terms of Atalanta's return to Arcadian society and renunciation of her independence). The play ultimately fetishizes women's "natural" virtues in an economy of male desires (since Atalanta's virtue is never called into question).

Finally, one might compare Johann Gottsched's protozoic feminist pedagogy with another depiction of Atalanta by one of his contemporaries. Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* offers a striking affirmation of Atalanta's strength as a norm-transgressing and powerful woman:

> Was sonst von ihr gesagt wird, ist eben nicht verwundernswürdig, indem wir mehr dergleichen Frauenzimmer finden, welche männlichen Muth und Stärcke gehabt haben.

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unterrichten will. Also ist denn die Handlung einer Fabel wichtiger, als die Person, die sie unternimmt und ausführet" (*AW* 6.2: 296).

[56] Steffen Martus's recent work, *Aufklärung* (2015) explores these progressive social advances, including the democratization of the state, the development of scientific networks (*Gelehrten Republik*), universities, and a utilization of the printing press for spreading new ideas bound to the Enlightenment in German-speaking lands.

> Man kan auch diese Geschichte dahin deuten, daß man aus diesem Beyspiel siehet, daß Muth und Tapfferkeit nicht denen Männern alleine eigen sind, und daß eine harte und rauhe Auferziehung die Tugend mehr befördere, als derselben verhinderlich falle. Wehrte sich Atalanta allein wider die beyden Centauros, so erhellet hieraus, daß viehische Stärcke der Tugend und Geschicklichkeit keinen Schaden zufügen können. *Letztlich so ist noch allen und jedem jungen Frauenzimmer anzurathen, daß sie sich an der Atalanta spiegeln* […]. (Zedler 1:1996–97; emphasis added)

Similar to Gottsched, Zedler gives advice for women's education, here recommending that contemporary young women should take the Amazonian Atalanta as a role model. This implies that a violent, Amazonian Atalanta does not necessarily represent a monstrosity, but that the typically masculine virtues of courage and bravery are also suitable traits for women. Zedler's progressive stance towards women's ability to harbor martial virtues and their capacity for extraordinary physical strength do not, however, coalesce with Johann Gottsched's moral program for the education of women, a fact that can be extrapolated from his rendition of the myth under the sign of Minerva. Rather than support Zedler's "promiscuous" Amazonian independence for girls through the strong identification with Atalanta, Johann Gottsched negates and domesticates her Amazonian character. In this sense, *Atalanta* tries to stem the tide of a potential revival of an Amazonian archetype by revising the myth of Atalanta to suit Johann's didactic purposes. Indeed, Johann Gottsched was partially successful, that is, until Amazonian figures reappear in German literature in the later half of the eighteenth century in the wake of the French Revolution, when Amazons were once again turned loose but ultimately re-domesticated by poets like Goethe and Schiller, and consequently imploded by Kleist.

Chapter 3: The Gottscheds' Working Relationship and the Communicative Praxis of Early-Enlightenment Ideals

> "Der Prozess, in dem die obrigkeitlich reglementierte Öffentlichkeit vom Publikum der räsonierenden Privatleute angeeignet und als eine Sphäre der Kritik an der öffentlichen Gewalt etabliert wird, vollzieht sich als Umfunktionierung der schon mit Einrichtungen des Publikums und Plattformen der Diskussion ausgestatteten literarischen Öffentlichkeit. Durch diese vermittelt, geht der Erfahrungszusammenhang der publikumsbezogenen Privatheit auch in die politische Öffentlichkeit ein."
>
> — Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*

If Johann Gottsched's primary poetological goal was to transform the Amazon-like Atalanta into a Minerva-like figure embodying enlightened reason—that is, to propagate new norms while simultaneously reproducing patriarchally determined gender roles—Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* reverses this dynamic, potentially transforming a Minerva-like figure into an Amazonian heroine who throws polarizing gender dichotomies and the bourgeois codification of women's virtues into question. The tension manifest in the relationship of these two plays reflects a tension that also exists in the personal and professional relationship of Johann and Luise. Generally speaking, Luise Gottsched, while praised by her husband as Minerva incarnate, as the ideal learned woman of the Enlightenment, remained at least partially under his tutelage. Yet, as I will try to show here, she also strained against these limitations. There is a broad perception in the scholarly commentary that Luise Gottsched allowed her creative energies to be circumscribed by the gender norms presented in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, where the ideal of the educated woman is supported, but only as long as she would remain content to operate

within the bounds of the hetero-normative roles of mother, wife, and daughter.[57] Her participation in several large scholarly projects—mostly translations—in cooperation with her husband has unfairly damned Luise to incessant reprimand for her submissiveness. But perhaps it is time for a reappraisal, both in the sense of the Gottscheds' working relationship and with respect to Luise's willingness to confront hetero-normative boundaries through her literary projects. A brief look at some of her translations will show that Luise deeply involved herself in emerging academic, philosophical, and political discourses, but that her largely forgotten original drama, *Panthea*, has been neglected in terms of its significance as a subversive, proto-feminist project. Above all else, the play has been continually condemned as a generic failure.[58] Indeed, its implicit critique of socio-politically determined gender roles has recently been explored by Kord, Schönenborn, and Pailer, who make interpretive moves to validate *Panthea* from a feminist, emancipatory perspective. *Panthea* will be explored here specifically as representing the pinnacle of Luise Gottsched's rebellion against emerging notions of gender that were being legitimated by Enlightenment thinkers, against a phallogocentric repression of women with which her husband was largely complicit. While her works often operate under the Alethophilean guise of Minerva, protecting the sciences and the arts and attacking religious dogma and

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[57] See Becker-Cantarino 266–70; Bovenschen 136–38; Brinker-Gabler, "Das weibliche Ich" 64; and Heuser 302–07.

[58] For instance, Kerth and Russell, who although performing Luise Gottsched scholarship a great service by translating *Pietism in Petticoats and Other Comedies* (1994), give a damning critique of *Panthea*: "On a structural level, the work lacks dramatic coherence and seems incredibly cluttered, mostly because the playwright must compress the individual episodes from her narrative source into a five-act drama, the events of which must by classical convention take place during one day" (xxv). Sharpe scathingly notes in an aside that Luise Gottsched "also produced a tragedy (though *Panthea* can hardly be seen as more than a paper exercise in tragedy)" (53), which echoes the same initial criticisms by Bodmer over 250 years earlier in "Beurtheilung der Panthea eines sogenannten Trauerspiels der Frau L.A.V.G," published in 1746.

fanaticism, Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* reveals her—more than merely her husband's industrious apprentice—as a true Amazon of the pen.

Critiques of the Gottscheds' Intellectual Partnership

Much of the recent scholarship on Luise Gottsched reflects damningly upon her relationship with her husband. She comes across as the reluctantly submissive apprentice to an overbearing, patriarchal pedant who misused her (as well as other women translators and authors) as his learned slave in the service of his "greater" Enlightenment projects (Goodman, *Amazons* 196–224; Kording 1–15). Certainly Luise's correspondence, which was published posthumously by her friend Dorothee Henriette von Runckel (1724–1800) in three installments, partially fosters this negative impression about the relationship between the Gottscheds. For instance, in a letter dated 26 November 1756, Luise Gottsched writes to von Runckel: "Ich bin überladen mit Arbeit und untüchtig zu arbeiten; gleichwohl hängt die wenige Zufriedenheit meines Lebens, die mir das Schicksal noch übrig läßt, ganz davon ab" (265). Scholars accordingly tend to emphasize that years of intellectual servitude culminated in an explicit desire for death after a protracted illness (Kording 14–15; Kord, *Little Detours* 7). At the same time, Luise Gottsched also repeatedly praises her intellectual partnership with her husband, and even this sad letter from near the end of her life underscores the fact her meager joy (*wenige Zufriedenheit*) derives from her writing. In contrast, towards the beginning of their partnership Luise Gottsched still reflects positively on her scholarly collaboration with Johann. For example, in a letter to the Baroness of Kielmannsegg she exclaims:

> Soll ich von der Schilderung des Glücks anfangen, das ich in der Gesellschaft eines gelehrten und aufrichtigen Mannes genieße […]? […] Unsere Beschäftigung sind [sic], so

> wie unsere Gedanken, immer gleichförmig. Wir lesen sehr viel; wir machen über jede schöne Stelle unsere Betrachtung; wir theilen oft zum Schein unsere Meynung, und bestreiten einen Satz, bloß um zu sehen, ob die Meynungen gegründet sind, die wir von unsern Schriften fassen. Ich werde täglich die geringe Anzahl meiner Kenntnisse gewahr, und entdecke immer mehr Mängel meines Verstandes. Nichts, als der Will alles zu verbessern, kömmt jedem gleich. (*Briefe* 92–93)[59]

Indeed, this shared Enlightenment project of men *and* women's intellectual perfection is echoed by Dorothee von Runckel, who asserts in the "Vorbericht" to her first installment of Luise Gottsched's letters that "Religion, Tugend, Wissenschaft, Belesenheit, alles was man von einem Frauenzimmer verlangen kann, findet man in ihren Briefen. […] Kurz zu sagen, unsere *Gottsched* suchte ihren Ruhm und die *wahre Ehre* darinnen, immer vollkommener und immer klüger zu werden" (*Briefe* 19–21). Similarly, Johann Gottsched's aforementioned sketch of her life, which was included as the preface to a collection of her poems published in 1763, just a year after her death, offers overwhelming praise of Luise as both a translator and a poet in her own right. Without any feigned ignorance regarding the problems inherent in their complex working relationship, and mindful of the difficult situation facing the few educated women in eighteenth-century German-speaking lands, her husband's panegyric represents not merely the veiled self-glorification of an ambitious professor,[60] but an overt praise of Luise Gottsched's intellectual accomplishments. His lengthy necrology—which details her influence in the literary milieu of the Enlightenment, her active engagement translating contemporary foreign texts (often written by women), and the ways in which her translations and original works demonstrate her superior

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[59] All quotes from Luise Gottsched's letters are taken from Inka Kording's "*Louise Gottsched – 'mit der Feder in der Hand.' Briefe aus den Jahren 1730–1762*," hereafter referred to as *Briefe* unless otherwise noted.

[60] Kord makes this suggestion in "The Politics of Mourning: Epilogue" (*Little Detours* 181–91).

intellect and poetic skills—might, at first glance, seem to support a positive assessment of their relationship, but again, only on an *overt* level of interpretation.

A good deal of research certainly exists that casts a negative light on the working and private relationships of the Gottscheds. In "'Ein kleiner Umweg': Das literarische Schaffen der Luise Gottsched," Ruth Sanders underscores the limitations that were placed on Luise Gottsched's literary activities because she was a learned woman (*gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*) and not a learned man (*Gelehrte*). These German terms already indicate the confinements that women of learning faced, being locked into a room (*Zimmer*), into domesticity, and here—in the context of women's authorship—into forced anonymity when considering publishing their works, as was the case with Luise Gottsched's *Die Pietistery im Fischbein-Rocke* (1736). Admittedly, a male author might also have published such a cutting, public (i.e. published) social critique anonymously, as a means to escape censorship or reprisals, which did in fact ensue, particularly because of the inflammatory nature of Luise's scathing critique of Pietism in this play. She made people think, and that made some people mad, as evidenced by vitriolic reviews in literary magazines and a state-mandated suppression of her work. Nevertheless, Sanders focuses her attention on the circumscriptions placed on the independence of Luise Gottsched's status as an author by both her husband and her father, the latter of whom had explicitly asked Johann Gottsched not to allow his daughter to enter the public sphere through the publication of her poetry—a perspective that, as Sanders notes, Luise Gottsched at least partially internalized (170–71). The tension between the egalitarian ideals of the Enlightenment and the restrictions placed on feminine mobility in many spheres, beyond just that of scholarly pursuits, was not lost on Luise Gottsched, and she found ways to assert women's right to education and Enlightened virtues both through her choice of texts for translation and through the female protagonists in her

original dramatic works. While Sanders concedes that Luise Gottsched's marriage to Johann was an excellent avenue for her to develop her literary career beyond the scope normally available to women at that time (175), she laments the fact that Luise Gottsched was forced to subordinate herself to Johann's often mammoth projects: "Die deutsche Literatur kann als um vieles ärmer angesehen werden, da Luise einen großen Teil ihrer Zeit und ihres Talents in verhältnismäßig geistlosen Beschäftigungen unter der Aufsicht ihres Mannes verschwendete" (176). A similar castigation of the tasks given to Luise Gottsched by her husband finds expression in Inka Kording's *Louise Gottsched – "mit der Feder in der Hand": Briefe aus den Jahren 1730-1762*. In her introduction to this reissuing of Dorothee Henriette von Runckel's collection of Luise Gottsched's letters, Kording emphasizes that upon entering into her marriage with Johann Gottsched, Luise did not expect to have to perform so many tasks in the service of her husband's scholarly pursuits. She argues, referring to Johann Gottsched's *Nachruf* for his deceased wife:

> Gottsched allerdings macht oft genug auf seine *fleißige und arbeitsame Gattinn Rechnung*, wie er nach ihrem Tod gestand. So ist es auch nur folgerichtig, dass der Leipziger Gelehrte in dem über 100 Seiten starken Nachruf auf seine *fleißige Freundinn* und *geschickte Gehülfinn* vor allem Louises Hilfsarbeiten für die Werke ihres berühmten Gatten in den Vordergrund stellte. Ihre eigene dichterische Produktion hingegen streifte er eher am Rande. (Kording 11)

Much like Sanders, Kording views the relationship between the Gottscheds as largely antagonistic, but also praises Luise Gottsched's accomplishments: "Durch ihr immenses Übersetzungswerk trug sie zur Verbreitung aufklärerischer Gedanken in ganz Deutschland und in Europa bei" (1). Yet this was not accomplished by Luise Gottsched alone; it emerged out of an

active intellectual partnership with Johann Gottsched, and Johann was acutely aware and proud of Luise Gottsched's prominent role in spreading Enlightenment ideals via her translations.

A further criticism of Johann's biographical eulogy of Luise is expressed by Susanne Kord, who, like Kording, highlights the translation of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* into German as exemplifying Johann Gottsched's exploitation of his wife's intellectual energies:

> All of her accomplishments appear in the diminutive and as outer-directed […]. While the author of this first biography of Luise Gottsched almost entirely ignores her dramatic work, he places great emphasis on her occasional poetry (in itself considered an inferior genre), works she had written on a dare, and menial labor in her husband's service, such as her triple proofreading of their joint translation of Bayle's dictionary. (Kord, *Little Detours* 185)

Kord scathingly critiques Johann Gottsched's public eulogy, which she essentially understands as a marketing effort (181). For her it is not an advertisement for Luise Gottsched's life and literary accomplishments, but the veiled self-representation of an ailing pedant. Like Sanders, Kord emphasizes that Johann's biography of Luise Gottsched was responsible for her marginalization as a literary figure, since he portrays her merely as his assistant and secretary whose works served only to further his career (Kord 5). Kord performs a very interesting close reading of Johann Gottsched's eulogy for his wife, but unfortunately it remains restricted to the text's first few pages. For instance, she insists that Johann Gottsched continually uses the diminutive *Werkchen* when referring to Luise Gottsched's independent projects: "Throughout the biography, Luise Gottsched's life's work is historicized as incidental (produced during her 'leisure hours' or 'to while away the time' 'Leben'), unimportant ('little works') and secondary:

she did not write for calling, money or fame, but to render 'her husband most important services'" (Kord 185). While Johann Gottsched's text certainly serves as a self-marketing effort, and can thus rightly be understood as at least partially an autobiographical document, this necrology is not entirely a self-serving self-aggrandizement on his part. Rather, his (auto)biography points toward the intimate working relationship that the pair shared in spreading Enlightenment ideals, and Johann Gottsched does indeed proudly foreground the translations, new renditions, and original works produced by Luise Gottsched.

As Hilary Brown rightly points out, "Luise Gottsched was first and foremost a translator" (1). While still pursuing a feminist agenda to reintegrate Luise Gottsched into the German literary canon, Brown wants to reestablish translations as a main genre for feminist analysis and not just a secondary pursuit of female authors/translators. She notes that "[m]any critics lament the fact that she [Luise] spent so long on what they regard as menial commissions from her husband and did not develop her own career as a dramatist" (Brown 3). Thus, in terms of mediating Enlightenment ideals, Brown rightly views Luise Gottsched's translations as occupying a central role in the transmission of enlightened discourses. She therefore begins her book by recounting a scene in which Frederick the Great of Prussia met Johann Gottsched and eagerly inquired about the works of Luise Gottsched. Johann brought the king Luise's translations of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, translated as *Der Lockenraub* (1744), and two translations of French scientific treatises regarding recent theories of the laws of motion. As Brown argues, in line with previous scholarship on Luise Gottsched but with a reversed evaluation, "Johann Christoph seems to have felt that his wife's translations would best represent her achievements and would most interest and impress the king" (Brown 1). Brown thus performs a feminist re-evaluation that refuses to view translations as merely "minor" works.

Luise Gottsched's translations of Addison, Pope, Newton, Molière, Voltaire, and Châtelet, among others, must be seen as an important communicative praxis for the transmission of new knowledge during the eighteenth century.

Similarly, Marie-Hélène Quéval provides the foundations for such an argument in her exploration of the connections between Luise Gottsched's translations and the philosophical ideals of the Societas Alethophilorum:

> Zu einer Zeit, als im deutschsprachigen Raum Frauen keine akademische Laufbahn anstreben konnten und die gelehrte Frau immer wieder Spott erntete, wagte Luise Gottsched sich in die Domäne der Männer, um philosophische und wissenschaftliche Werke nach dem Vorbild von Anne-Thérèse de Lambert, Anne Dacier und Émilie du Châtelet zu veröffentlichen. ("Philosophie und Religion" 187)

It is noteworthy that Louise Gottsched often translated texts written by women, and that this fact is also celebrated by her husband. Louise Adelgunde's translation of Madeleine Angelique Poisson de Gomez's *Le triomphe de l'éloquence* (1730) as *Triumph der Weltweisheit* in 1739 was praised by her husband not as a mere translation, but as an original work. While he does, as Kord points out, diminutively label her original, more direct translation of Gomez's text as a "Werkchen," her second rendition of the text had more merit in his eyes:

> Da sie der Frau von Gomez Sieg der Beredsamkeit übersetzet hatte, wie bereits gedacht worden; und nun mit mehrerer Einsicht, als damals, diese kleinen Reden durchlief: kamen ihr dieselben sehr seicht vor; so dass sie nicht ohne Grund glaubte, etwas stärkeres und besseres machen zu können. Sie fand auch, ihrem nunmehrigen Geschmacke nach, da sie mit den philosophischen Wissenschaften genauer bekannt geworden war: dass nicht die

> Beredsamkeit, sondern die Weltweisheit billig den Sieg davon tragen müsste. (*AW* 10.2: 514)

This work, written by a woman and translated by Louise Gottsched, appeared, significantly, under the auspices of the Societas Alethophilorum. Johann Gottsched saw it not as just a translation, but rather as an original rendition of the text, and he proudly proclaimed: "dass sie, anstatt einer schwachen Nachahmung der Frau Gomez, wie es das Ansehen haben könnte, ein ungleich stärkeres Original lieferte; jenes Vorbild aber sehr weit zurück ließ" (515). Indeed, thinking of Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," translation was often accomplished in the name of transformation during the Early Enlightenment. Additionally, one could ask if it would have been considered possible for a woman to improve on a man's work, or only upon another woman's. But in this vein, Quéval understands Louise's reworking of Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant's *La femme docteur ou la théologie janseniste tombé en quenouille* (1730) as *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke; Oder die doctormäßige Frau* (1736), perhaps her most famous work, as proof to the contrary. This biting satire perfectly manifests the Alethophiles' rationalistic stance against religious fanaticisms and conflicts motivated by differences of belief and superstition (Quéval 196). Johann Gottsched claims that this work has enough significant changes to be called an original: "Sie begnügte sich aber nicht mit einer bloßen Übersetzung [...], sondern änderte Namen und Umstände dergestalt, dass diese ihre Nachahmung ein auf deutschen Boden gewachsenes Original zu seyn schien." He even compares her work to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and his critique of chivalry, calling it "a powerful blow against Pietism" (*AW* 10.2: 518). As Quéval notes, translations were a means to spread heterodox ideas to a broader reading public: "Sehr schnell verstand Luise Gottsched ihre übersetzerische Tätigkeit als Engagement für die Philosophie, gegen Aberglauben und Dogmatismus, wie die

Auswahl ihrer Autor(inn)en zu erkennen gibt" (Quéval 203). Quéval understands translations as one of the most important media for the popularization of Enlightenment ideals, and she therefore reevaluates Luise Gottsched's and Johann Gottsched's translation of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire* in an affirmative manner, against previous scholarship. Quéval emphasizes that Luise Gottsched's participation in such a hugely important popularization of Enlightenment ideals was truly remarkable for the time (218).[61]

Johann Gottsched's *Nachruf* for Luise Gottsched certainly highlights her translations, which were hugely important for the spread of Enlightenment ideals of religious tolerance and the rational love of truth (as the name of the Alethophiles implies). Other translations include: Addsion and Steele's moral weekly *The Spectator*, (*Der Zuschauer*, 1739–1743), Addison's *The Guardian* (1745), several essays by Leibniz (1744), the *History of the Royal Academy of Paris* (1753–54), which she dedicated to Empress Marie Therese of Austria, and also Molière's *Misanthrope* (*Der Menschenfeind*), which appeared along with eleven of her works (seven translations, five originals) in *Die Deutsche Schaubühne*. Her aforementioned translation of Voltaire's *Alzire* was also published in this journal, and Johann notes: "Das zweyte tragische Stück, daran sie sich wagete, war des Hrn. von Voltaire, *Alzire, die Americanerinn*. Es hatte sich noch niemand an die Übersetzung dieses Stückes gemachet, als sie selbige unternahm" (520), clearly showing pride in her audacity regarding the choice of works for translation. She also translated *Cornelie, mère des Greques*, written in 1703 by Marie-Anne Barbier (1670–1742), and it appeared in the second volume of *Die Deutsche Schaubühne* in 1741. Johann Gottsched emphasizes that readers would be astounded by the naturalness, strength, and superiority of her

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[61] Susanne Kord notes that Luise Gottsched was responsible for 330 of the 635 articles in their translation of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionairre historique et critique (Historisches und Critisches Wörterbuch*, trans. 1741–1744), a behemoth four volume work that she proofread three times (5).

translation "so wird man erstaunen, mit was für einer Ungezwungenheit und Stärke im Deutschen die Übersetzerinn alles ausgedrücket. Viele Kenner, die selbige mit dem Original verglichen, haben wohl gar den Ausspruch gethan: dass die Dollmetschung an vielen Stellen demselben an Geist und Feuer weit überlegen sey" (520). Johann Gottsched's eulogy for Luise Gottsched represents the inversion of his own coming-out: just as he reveals himself ex post facto to be the cross-dressing male voice hidden behind women's voices in the moral magazine *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, Johann publicly confesses how much Luise Gottsched actually contributed to their publication projects, which had often been published solely under his name, thus revealing a hidden female authorship behind his works. He gives her credit where it is due and emphasizes the quality of both her translations and her original works, placing them far beyond any kind of diminutive status as mere translations. Moreover, he explicitly champions her as a mediator of Alethophilean values, bound to their shared Enlightenment project.

Echoing the moral advice stemming from Calliste's Amazonian dystopia in the seventh installment of *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, Johann also makes sure to emphasize that Luise was elegant, but not overly obsessed with her outer appearance:

> Der weiblichen Neigung zu kostbarem Putze, vielem Geschmeide, und prächtigen Kleidern war sie gar nicht ergeben. Ungeachtet ihr nichts gebrach, was zu einem standesmäßigen Anzuge gehörte; da sie wohl gar einen Überfluß an schönen und theuren Stücken davon hatte: so sah man sie doch sehr selten damit angezogen und geschmücket. [...] Nichts war ihr lieber, als eine ungekünstelte, einfache und reinliche Tracht. (*AW* 10.2: 581)

Johann contends that Luise was both couth (*rein*) and aware of the dangers of rejecting normative bourgeois (*standesmäßig*) behaviors too completely, and thus he performatively re-

inscribes Luise into prevailing female gender norms. Towards the conclusion of his eulogy, Johann indeed returns Luise to a truly normative definition of femininity by emphasizing that she was always a good housewife and took care of their domestic affairs first and foremost:

> Ihre Wirthschaftsangelegenheiten, an Küche, Wäsche und Kleidungen, besorgte sie ohne alles Geräusch aufs ordentlichste. Ihre Ausgabe und Einnahme hat sie die ganze Zeit ihres Ehestandes durch, von Häller zu Pfennig aufgeschrieben, und jedes Jahr richtig geschlossen. Ja von allen Arbeiten mit der Nadel, die in einem Hauswesen vorkommen können, hat sie sehr wenig durch fremde Hände besorgen lassen; wenn sie nämlich nicht einträglichere Arbeit unter der Feder hatte, die keinen Aufschub litten. Oft hat sie sogar meinen Briefwechsel in meinem Namen geführet, und sehr vielen Gelehrten das nöthige beantwortet, wenn ich mit Geschäfften zu sehr überhäufet war. (*AW* 10.2: 582)

At the same time, he concedes that she would *sometimes* require assistance with housework, but only when more pressing intellectual writing projects were at hand. Conversely, Luise had the "privilege" to act as Johann's secretary when he was too busy, competently answering official scholarly correspondences in his name.

Thus, while Luise Gottsched actively formed herself through her choice of projects and traversed new ground as a woman participating in literary activities in the highest spheres of the Enlightenment, she also remained bound to social norms regarding women's behavior, often choosing anonymity as her husband's willing apprentice over fame. Scholarship often points to her now infamous letter from 19 July 1732 as being emblematic of Luise Gottsched's internalization of Johann Gottsched's "progressive" view of women:

> Ich bin Ihnen Ihr letztes Schreiben mehr Dank schuldig, als Sie vielleicht vermuthen. Sie haben mich dadurch von einer Bahn zurücke gerufen, darauf mich mein Vorwitz zu weit

> würde geführet haben. *Sie haben mir gezeigt, wie leicht unser Geschlecht seine Schwäche vergißt, und wie oft es sich unterfängt seinen Meister zu tadeln; Wie es an denjenigen Fehler zu suchen bemüht, mit deren Erlaubniß wir uns zu einer Stufe erheben, dahin wir ohne ihre Hülfe uns nicht wagen dürften*. Ich erschrack über meine Kühnheit und verspreche Ihnen mich niemals wieder so sehr zu vergessen. Alles was Sie mir mit so vieler Gutheit überschicken, will ich zur Vermehrung meiner Kenntnisse mir zu Nutze machen, und bey zweifelhaften Stellen will ich Sie mein Mentor um Ihr Urtheil bitten.
>
> Die Frau von Z. [Ziegler] kann mit Recht die Aufnahme in die deutsche Gesellschaft eben so hoch schätzen, als wenn sie von irgend einer Academie den Doctorhut erhalten hätte. Aber gewiß, Sie halten mich für sehr verwegen, wenn Sie mir zutrauen, an dergleichen Ehre zu denken. Nein, dieser Einfall soll nicht bey mir aufkommen. *Ich erlaube meinem Geschlechte einen kleinen Umweg zu nehmen; allein wo wir unsere Grenzen aus dem Gesichte verlieren, so gerathen wir in ein Labyrinth, und verliehren den Leitfaden unserer schwachen Vernunft, die uns doch glücklich ans Ende bringen sollte*. Ich will mich hüten von dem Strom hingerissen zu werden. (*Briefe* 32–33; my emphasis)

Luise Gottsched bows deeply before Johann, conceding that women often forget their place. Once freed from intellectual nonage, women often turn the newly acquired power of Reason against their male imprisoners, but Luise seems to internalize Johann's sentiments that reinforce essentialist notions of gender based on biological difference. She emphasizes the intellectual subordination of women to men, whom she describes as women's masters (*Meister*), while simultaneously subordinating her own will to that of Johann Gottsched, whom she lauds as an all-knowing patriarch/mentor. Luise Gottsched objects to the public role attained by Christiane

Mariane von Ziegler through her nomination to the Deutsche Gesellschaft in 1730, even though Ziegler was also a staunch supporter of women's education. In *Amazons and Apprentices*, Katherine Goodman argues that Luise Gottsched voluntarily remained under the wing of her husband and Alethophilean ideals, although it would indeed seem as though both Luise and Ziegler ultimately conformed to the retroactively patriarchal gender norms proposed in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*. For instance, von Ziegler's "Abhandlung, ob es dem Frauenzimmer erlaubet sey, sich nach Wissenschaften zu bestreben?" argued for women's right to education and their rational perfectibility, but still left women's essential vocation limited to the domestic sphere (Heuser 301). Goodman nevertheless argues against the overarching criticism of Johann Gottsched as patriarchal and only assenting to the education of women if they remained subordinate to the disciplining vision of men (Heuser 302), and she paints a much more contentious, lively picture of women's struggles as intellectuals during the Early Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Luise's 1732 letter to Johann reinforces the fact that women were only able to attain enlightenment through the help (*Hülfe*) of forward-thinking men, and she notes that men help women to attain wisdom, but that women need men's permission (*Erlaubnis*). At the same time, she reproduces the patriarchal notion that an inherent difference between men and women's intellectual capacities exists, referring to women's weaker powers of reason and the supposedly inherent dangers of too much intellectual autonomy. Luise connects the notion that there are limits (*Grenzen*) to women's freedom to a need for supervision, lest women fall into some kind of existential quagmire. However, she does allow women a "kleinen Umweg," and one could ponder how small this "little detour" actual remains throughout her extensive literary career, especially considering the fact that many of her early projects begin to articulate a proto-feminist, emancipatory poetology, and that publications were also a means for women to enter into public

discourses. Yet at this early stage, Luise Gottsched/Kulmus still ambivalently hovers between progressive, enlightened support of women's education and a traditionalist adherence to normative definitions of gender; this early letter seems to betray an internalization of that same paradoxical stance towards women's enlightenment held by her husband. One might ask if her stance towards women's subordination to men shifts over the course of her literary career and her marriage to Johann, where a later text like *Panthea* might represent a further articulated stance on gender hierarchies.

Luise Gottsched through the Lens of Johann's *Minnesang*

Even before her alliance with Johann Gottsched, Luise Gottsched, née Kulmus, was already becoming a *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*, an educated lady typical of the aristocracy and the upper-middle class of landed merchants and skilled professionals. As the daughter of a wealthy doctor in Danzig, Luise demonstrated exceptional intellectual talents at a young age and was given instruction in French by her mother, learned how to write proper German from her father, gained knowledge from her half brother, and learned to sing and play the piano (*AW* 10.2: 508–09). As Johann proudly notes in his eulogy for Luise, her amazing faculties of mind were already clear from her performances at Sunday school: "Hier zeigte sie nicht nur allen Kindern ihres Geschlechtes, sondern auch allen Knaben der Johannisschule, ein besonderes Beyspiel des Fleißes und der Hurtigkeit ihres Geistes" (508–09). Johann's adverbs reflect both the inclusion and exclusion of Luise from gender norms: she not only (*nicht nur*) surpasses all of the girls in her class, but also (*sondern auch*) all of the boys as well. Luise seems to transcend gender distinctions, out-vying even her male contemporaries due to her quick wit (*Hurtigkeit des Geistes*) and her outstanding work ethic *(Fleiß)*. Johann then quickly attempts to mollify Luise's

intellectual superiority over men, or at least re-include her into a normative gender role, noting: "Man übergeht hier die Anweisungen zu allen weiblichen Verrichtungen, daran es ihre Mutter ihr nicht fehlen ließ" (509–10). He interestingly skips over traditionally feminine tasks, indirectly marking them as unimportant through this redaction, and Johann's attempt to renormalize Luise's status as a woman beyond her learnedness continues to unravel as he humorously relates that learning to sew nearly destroyed the young girl's eyesight—prompting her father literally to throw her sewing utensils into the fire—while her mother gave her books in French to translate into German to help her pass the time (509–10). Above all else, Johann's biography of Luise emphasizes her exceptional status as a learned woman, while an underlying tension regarding normative gender roles continually reiterates itself throughout his laudations.

Johann Gottsched clearly respected Luise Kulmus as his intellectual equal, if not as his superior, years before their eventual marriage in 1735. However, the love poems written to her at the beginning of their courtship betray an ambivalent tension between Johann's praise of her intellectual abilities and an underlying objectification and categorization of her "feminine" virtues. Significantly, in a poem addressed to the then sixteen-year-old Kulmus, written in June of 1729, Johann exclaims: "Victoria! Du hast gesieget, / Ich bin dein Knecht, Victoria! / Den seine Dienstbarkeit vergnüget, / So bald er deine Schönheit sah. / So laß mich denn die Fessel küssen, / Die deine Macht mir angelegt; / Und wenn dein Strahl mich niederschlägt, / Nicht meiner Schwachheit Fehler büssen; / Die leichter Feinde, Schwert und Mann, / Als deinen Angriff, hemmen kann" (*AW* 1: 26, ln. 1–10). Johann's choice to mobilize the rhetoric of combat to describe his love for the young, erudite Luise Kulmus deserves further examination. He begins by proclaiming her triumphant in the battle over his will, making a point to call her by her third given name, Victoria, as he contentedly designates himself her vassal (*Knecht*). The name

Victoria of course also refers to the Roman goddess of victory (equivalent to the Greek goddess Nike), whom Roman generals worshiped upon returning from successful battles. Like Minerva, Victoria is also traditionally depicted carrying a spear and sometimes driving a chariot (thinking of the iconic statue above the Brandenburg Gate). Johann's mobilization of Luise's alternate name identifies her with this goddess, who—like his previous association of her with Minerva/Pallas Athena—is another strong woman from Greco-Roman mythology identified with war and phallic weapons of warfare. However, rather than merely crowning the returning victors with laurel wreathes, Johann brings Victoria/Luise directly into the fray. Kulmus has conquered and enslaved Gottsched with—surprise—her beauty. Dwelling on his apperception of her corporeal magnificence, the faculty of vision transforms her into a beam of light (*Strahl*), a radiant power (*Macht*) more forceful and penetrating than enemy combatants armed with swords.[62] Gottsched engages in a discourse of submissiveness to a noble lady that is typical of the medieval *Minnesänger*, and hence Johann's poetic praise of her pulchritude—in line with genre conventions—transforms Luise into an abstract entity of absolute beauty (De Boor 215–19), but also connects her to the conquering, militant image of Victoria/Nike. Kulmus is equated with a symbol, and Gottsched simultaneously transforms her into a desirable object of his male gaze, which he then obfuscates and attempts to negate by proclaiming that she has conquered him, desiring to be bound in chains by her, as if he were a slave taken as her spoil of war. But as we shall see, both Johann's appropriation of the *Minnesang* discourse and his initial invocation

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[62] Indeed, Johann's description of Luise's beauty functions phallically here—following Theweleit—in the form of a beam of (En)light(enment), it attacks and penetrates Johann, cutting down the male onlooker. A portent of the educated woman's potential subversion of conservative gender norms evinces itself through his language. Brought into an erotic "combat," Victoria more closely relates to the militant aspect of Minerva and even prefigures the Amazonian. Minerva/Pallas Athena, we recall, is also the goddess of war, and "wise captains always approach[ed] her for advice" (Graves, *Greek Myths* 96). Indeed, Nike/Victoria were also regarded as an aspect of Pallas Athena/Minerva (Kerényi, *Mythologie der Griechen* 39–40).

of the Victoria imago—while overtly representing laudations of Luise Kulmus—begin to covertly unravel as his praises continue.

For instance, in the second strophe, Johann moves away from acclamations about Luise Kulmus's physical beauty and now instead lauds her inner beauty, that is, her talent as a poet: "Des edlen Geistes Frühlingsfrüchte, / Die Werke deiner klugen Hand, / Sind durch das preisende Gerüchte / Mir schon seit langer Zeit bekannt" (*AW* 1: 26, ln. 11–14). Her writing abilities are truly exceptional in his eyes, but Johann projects value onto Luise's person, here focusing on her intellectual productivity, her "edlen Geistes Frühlingsfrüchte." Her diligence as an enlightened handworker, as an intelligent producer of texts, relates to the nobility (*edel*) that Johann ascribes to her mind (relating to an Alethophilean deification of reason). At the same time, he metonymically reduces her to her hand, semiotically transforming Luise into a means of production, which is both desirable and valuable "durch das preisende Gerüchte." In other words, he acknowledges a positive reception of her early poetic works by others prior to his own acquaintance with her. He effuses further in the poem's fourth strophe: "Ich wagte mich, an dich zu schreiben, / Da sah ich bald ein neues Blatt, / Und an des alten Zweifels statt, / Nichts, als Erstaunung, übrig bleiben: / Weil jede Zeile deiner Schrift / Fast Wunsch und Hoffnung übertrifft" (*AW* 1: 27, ln. 35–40). Johann significantly professes that he needed courage to even dare writing to Luise Kulmus, but what was his old doubt? What amazed him so much about her writing? Perhaps the fact that she was a woman who, against the prevailing social norm, was able to express herself with elegance on a highly intellectual level? Nevertheless, his emphasis on her productivity remains paramount, as this relates to his broader project of enabling the intellectual/cultural advancement of women during the early stage of the Enlightenment in German-speaking lands.

Johann Gottsched certainly found a *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer* in Luise Kulmus, the living embodiment of the learned woman so vehemently heralded by Johann, a.k.a. Calliste, in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* only a few years prior. But what can be made of the combative rhetoric? Is Luise truly an emancipated, triumphant Victoria figure, as the second strophe of the poem would have us believe? Or is she just a highly educated woman and potential intellectual partner, an actualized embodiment of the feminine ideal propagated by Johann through the moral didactics that he had already developed for his moral weekly's predominantly female readership? Perhaps predictably, the armed goddess of wisdom, Minerva, enters the poem in the seventh strophe: "Auf deinem holden Rosenmunde / Ist aller Charitinnen Sitz; / Und deiner heitern Augen Blitz / Steht mit Minerva selbst im Bunde; / Weil jeder Strahl, der von dir schießt, / Ein Herold deines Geistes ist" (*AW* 1: 28, ln. 65–70). The rhetoric of combat already associated with the goddess Victoria returns with the notion of Luise's martial alliance (*Bund*) with Minerva, but the rays (*Strahl*) shooting out of her eyes represent not the violence of lightning (*Blitz*), or an evil eye, but her noble intellect (*Geist*). This connects back to his description of Luise's physical beauty and her moral virtue, as her mouth is described as piously graceful (*hold*) and the seat of the three Graces (*Charitinnen*/*Grazien*) themselves. But Johann's moral categorization relates back to her sexuality, to the rose-like redness of her lips (*Rosenmund*) and the lively gleam of her eyes. Here the objectification of Luise's beauty conflates with an idealization of her learning, while both are also connected to the ambivalent figures of Minerva and Victoria. In the second to last strophe Johann takes his deification of Luise's intellect to the superlative: "Die Krone der gelehrten Damen. / Die voller Geist und Klugheit ist, / Und der du völlig ähnlich bist, / Verdient den Philosophennamen; / Und könnte mir in dieser Pein / Durch weise Lehren nutzbar seyn" (*AW* 1: 30, ln. 125–30). Johann Gottsched seems on one hand to posit equality between the sexes,

as he not only metonymically anoints Luise as the foremost-learned women,[63] but also places her in the ranks of those titans known as philosophers. Furthermore, Johann's assertion about the future usefulness (*nutzbar*) of Luise's wise teachings with relation to his love sickness already manifests his plan to utilize the intellectual talents of his future wife as his assistant. His poetic supplication reveals not only his objectification of the intellect (and beauty) of a young learned woman, but a desire to exploit both. At the same time, Johann Gottsched distinctly remains inside the bounds of typical *Minnesang* rhetoric, particularly through this movement from the corporeal beauty of the beloved to notions of spiritual betterment through that love. The contrast between a physical love (*amor carnalis*) and an intellectual love (*amor spiritualis*) relates to the theological distinction between *cupiditas* and *caritas* (Bumke 516). Against the blind instinctual passions that overwhelm the senses and confuse Reason that are associated with *niedere Minne*, the court poets of the High Middle Ages emphasized a *hohe Minne*. In contrast to the follies of love portrayed, for instance, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, court epics posit rational love (*sapienter amare*) as a means for sublimating libidinal energies and controlling destructive, antisocial forms of Eros (Bumke 520). Court literature thus served as a technology for transforming social mores, and idealization of the beloved was appropriated for the social betterment of its recipients (Bumke 525–29). Thus by inscribing Luise Kulmus into this *Minnesang* tradition, Johann Gottsched's *hohe Minne* simultaneously inserts her into his broader pedagogical mission. At the same time, the poem's rhetoric objectifies Luise Kulmus in terms of abstract symbolic capital—

[63] Learned women were regularly catalogued into lexica during the first half of the eighteenth century, for instance, in Amaranthes's *Frauenzimmer-Lexicon* (1715), which provided not only descriptions of exceptional women of learning and artistic talent, but offered practical, that is, normative advice on maintaining a household, raising children, curing illnesses, etc., similar to Johann Gottsched's advocations for women's "proper" behavior in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*.

as an idealized, learned woman—and ambivalently connects her to the militant imagoes of Victoria and Minerva.

In another poem written to Luise on 11 April 1731, the newly appointed professor begins by requesting that she teach him how to write poetry, still very much in line with the rhetoric of *Minnesang*: "Schönste Muse deiner Zeit, / Unvergleichliche Louise! / Hilf doch meiner Schüchternheit, / Die dich itzt so gerne priese, / Lehre du mich selber dichten, / Hilf mein schlechtes Rohr erhöhn; / Denn dein Lob so rein und schön, / Als du singest, einzurichten, / Muss mein Lied so ungemein, / Als dein ganzes Wesen seyn" (*AW* 1: 59, ln. 1–10). Again raising her to a superlative level as the incomparably beautiful (*schönste*) of all the Muses, Johann significantly refers to her as the poet's inspiration, and not directly as a poet in her own right. But he then does directly asks Luise to teach him to write better poetry, but, above all else, to help him get it up… poetically as it were: "Hilf mein schlechtes Rohr erhöhn" (ln. 6). Johann makes good use of the gallant prose of medieval poets, and at the same time he continues the symbolic elevation of the beloved noble woman, similarly transforming Luise into an abstract conception of idealized, enlightened femininity that establishes her virtue within the boundaries of shifting gender norms. More importantly, however, by transforming Luise into *his* muse, he implicitly subordinates her to his own poetic production. She becomes a passive object of inspiration, a vehicle for the male poet who only explicitly finds his voice through articulating his admiration for her. For instance, in the second strophe, his praises of Luise's intellect reiterate the same enlightened paroles from the 1729 poem: "Wahrlich! Ein so edler Geist / Wird nicht überall gefunden, / Der, was Witz und Tugend heißt, / Durch ein festes Band verbunden. / Selbst bey Männern sieht man selten / Solcher Güter Zahl vereint; / Als in deinem Thun erscheint; / Wo sie wahrlich zwiefach gelten: / Weil man niemals mehr Verstand / Bey so zarter

Jugend fand" (*AW* 1: 59–60, ln. 11–20). Kulmus's faculty of understanding, which Gottsched describes as rare even among men, remains ensconced within an objectification of her youthful beauty. Johann Gottsched overtly reiterates the connection between Luise Kulmus's pulchritude and her inner beauty/virtue, in line with *Minnesang* rhetoric and a theological physiognomy, to some extent returning her to a hetero-normative valuation of female beauty and a functionalization of love for communicating enlightened social values. Simultaneously, men are indirectly posited as the standard by which one measures virtue (*Tugend*) and wit (*Witz*), and here Johann covertly confines Luise through the constraints of these normatively masculine categories, "durch ein festes Band verbunden." While Johann argues that her gender and youth count double, this implicitly reveals that Luise is doubly damned in terms of prevailing sexist/ageist social norms, which prescribed lowered expectations of intellect and moral character based on a person's sex/gender or their age. At the same time, as with the 1729 poem, both Luise's beauty and intellect are valuated under the objectifying, desiring male gaze within Johann Gottsched's economy of "enlightened" desires. Kulmus's noble spirit, her "edler Geist," characterized as wit and virtue, underscores a performative act of naming that valorizes these traditional virtues from within the constraints of a normatively masculine perspective. Thus the ultimate standards by which he measures Luise are based on male privilege and social achievement. Luise Kulmus, however, breaches these norms, and what Johann Gottsched characterizes as seldom-found enlightened virtues seem to transcend gender. He holds that virtuous conduct and adherence to Reason are generally found only among an elite social group of educated men, yet Luise Kulmus breaches these normative dichotomies of gender and age as a potentially androgynous exception to the rule, but one still bound (*verbunden*) by the ascension of femininity onto the virtuous norms of masculinity.

Perhaps it is not entirely surprising that Gottsched goes on to outline his views on feminine weaknesses and strengths of character: “Kann doch weder Stolz noch Geiz / In dein starkes Herz dringen, / Noch der Eitelkeiten Reiz / Deine große Seele zwingen! / Deiner Mutter Witz und Tugend, / Einsicht und Belesenheit / Führt dich zur Gelehrsamkeit, / Und vergöttert deine Jugend; / Welche so sch[ö]n, wie du bist, / Englisch mehr, als menschlich ist” (*AW* 1: 60, ln. 2–30). Johann’s praise of Luise’s youth as being more angelic (*englisch)* than human might be deciphered through a homonym[64] that refers to the fact that Luise Kulmus had command of the English language (thinking ahead to her later translations of several works by Joseph Addison, including the moral weekly, *The Spectator*, and Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*).[65] Gottsched perceives Kulmus as immune to the shallow vanities normatively ascribed by men (including himself under the guise of Calliste) to women. Perceiving her as without pride,

[64] One thinks inversely about the scene in Ingeborg Bachmann’s *Der Fall Franza*, when Leo Jordan psychoanalytically deconstructs Franza’s childhood memory of kisses from a British soldier as “angelic kisses” (383–84).

[65] In a letter dated from 7 January 1731, Luise Kulmus writes to Johann Gottsched: “Wenn ich geneigt wäre mich zu rächen, so würden Sie hier einen englischen Brief lesen. Ich wüsste Sie nicht besser zu strafen, als in der Sprache zu antworten, darinnen ich noch eine Schülerin bin. Sie haben mir neulich einen Verweis gegeben, daß ich lieber französisch schreibe; Sie stellten mir die Mannigfaltigkeit des Ausdrucks und die männliche Schönheit meiner Muttersprache so lebhaft vor, daß ich sogleich den Entschluß faßte, mich mehr darinne zu üben […]. Ihr beygelegtes Geschenk läßt mich vermuthen, daß Sie mich für eigennützig halten; ein Laster, das ich verabscheue. Nein, bester Freund! Nie werden Sie mich durch Geschenke gewinnen. Wenn die Vorzüge des Verstandes und Herzens nichts bey mir ausrichten; so werden alle Schätze der Welt mir gleichgültig seyn, so magnetisch auch diese Kraft bey vielen seyn mag. […] Schriften, die den Verstand bilden und das Herz bessern, werden mir allemal ein sehr angenehmes Geschenk seyn” (*Briefe* 25–26). Luise relates that Johann has praised the masculine beauty of her mother tongue, which points towards poetic practice as being defined through normatively masculine criteria. This reported speech could also be interpreted as positing a kind of poetic androgyny between genders. Additionally, Luise continues her half-serious/half-sarcastic reprimanding of Johann, threatening to punish him and informing him that her heart cannot be bought with gifts. She thereby denies love as an economic exchange, which is striking in that it directly replicates a prominent theme in her future husband’s *Atalanta* (see Ch. 2). Kulmus concludes her letter by underscoring her love of learning, proclaiming that good books still serve as appropriate gifts, as long as they promote moral perfection/edification, in line with an understanding of herself as an enlightened, *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*.

greed, or a desire for the fleeting thrills of idle entertainments, Johann again praises her intellect and virtue, determinately placing value on her understanding (*Einsicht*), learnedness (*Belesenheit*), and scholarly wisdom (*Gelehrsamkeit*). But again, he predicates these enlightened virtues on her youthful pulchritude, which congeals alongside his proto-feminist praise of her intellect as a woman. Luise Kulmus's intellectual virtues relate to Johann Gottsched's transmission of enlightened bourgeois norms that he was already actively helping to shape and determine through multifarious periodicals and moral weeklies, particularly with respect to women's education. Furthermore, this strophe retains a latently militant echo with verbs like "dringen," "zwingen," and "führen," and Luise's heart is described not as sweet, but specifically as strong (*stark*). Moreover, Johann praises her as having a "große Seele" (60, ln. 5), the soul of a great thinker; his praise always functions through the utilization of traditionally masculine categories even as he paradoxically proclaims their maternal origin.

The integral component of Johann's praise of Luise as a learned woman relates to his overt elevation of her into a symbol (of wisdom) via the *Minnesang* rhetoric in his love poems to her, specifically through her association with Minerva and Victoria. These powerful female allegorical figures play a central role in Johann Gottsched's identification of Luise Kulmus as a *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*. Minerva, as we recall, represents wisdom and the protection of the sciences and the arts in the Early Enlightenment's cultural archive, and this image of a strong woman had a predominantly sociosemiotic function. Indeed, in the fourth strophe, Gottsched invariably falls back on the Minerva/Pallas Athena trope: "Pallas selbst ist nie so fern / In der Künste Feld gedrungen, / Als es dir, der Weisheit Kern / Gründlich einzusehn, gelungen. / So viele Frauenzimmerspiele / Man bisher bey uns vernahm, / Klingen schlecht, ja matt und lahm / Gegen deinem Dichterkiele; / Welcher nicht nur sie verlacht, / Nein! Auch Männer neidisch

macht" (*AW* 1: 60–61, ln. 31–40). Pallas Athena's militancy immediately manifests itself though her penetration (*dringen*) into the arts. But the goddess's artistic glory appears diminutive next to that of Luise Kulmus, who has moreover succeeded (*gelungen*) in recognizing some core epistemological truth. Johann's comparison of Luise and Pallas Athena begins to reinforce the rebelliousness inherent in women's entrance into the spheres of science and the fine arts, which bucked prevailing societal norms. Athena's warrior-appearance could potentially be understood as symbolically lending her authority to learned women through Johann's associative comparison. Similarly, Gottsched's description of Kulmus's powerful "Dichterkiel," her poet's quill, overshadows not only her (admittedly sparse) female competitors on poetry's playing field, but writing actively enables her to conquer men through her (poetic) feats. Parallel to his supplication at Victoria's feet at the outset of the 1729 poem, the militant, phallic imagery associated with Pallas Athena connects Luise Kulmus's poetic prowess to normatively masculine character traits. The ambivalent imago of Athena signifies Kulmus's auctorial cross-dressing and entrance into a largely patriarchally determined realm of poetic practice and textual transmission. Possession of wisdom, namely Reason writ large in the context of the Enlightenment, constitutes Luise Kulmus calling card for entering into the domain of "progressive" moral didactics. This poetic communiqué irrefutably constitutes an overt praise of the young poetess. But Johann Gottsched's semiotic mobilization of Minerva and Victoria also implicitly constitutes a paradoxical valuation of Luise's intellect, virtues, and talents as female poet within the parameters of patriarchal social norms. Luise Kulmus's poetic gifts remain exceptional, of superlative value according to her husband's written professions, vastly overshadowing the poetic efforts of her female peers. Her poems make "*auch* Männer neidisch" (ln. 40; my emphasis), which *connects* Luise Kulmus's poetic genius to the then traditionally masculine

sphere of authorship. Nevertheless, the overt praise of Luise in his *Minnesang* remains implicitly bound to normatively masculine criteria.

However, his poem also *attempts* to posit a utopian notion of poetic androgyny. In the fifth strophe, he even moves towards a utopian equality between the sexes in the future: "Künftig darf sich dein Geschlecht / Seiner Schwachheit nicht mehr schämen; / Und der Dichtkunst Meisterrecht / Gleich den stärksten Dichtern nehmen" (*AW* 1: 61, ln.41–44). Johann Gottsched emphasizes "Victoria" Kulmus as an exceptional virtuoso whose philosophical enlightenment successfully wins her the right to write for all women, and he even claims that the *Meisterrecht* of the pen will be forcefully wrestled (*nehmen*) from men when women will take their place as masters of poetic practice who no longer need to be ashamed (*sich schämen*) of their "weakness." Does this statement imply women are still weak, but should take pride in weakness (*Schwachheit*), thereby reinforcing traditional gender conventions? Or do women authors like Luise Kulmus trade in their weakness for strength, superseding it through the assumption of "masculine" intellectual virtues? The ambiguity of this statement reveals a great deal about the tension inherent in the Gottsched's private and working relationship. On the one hand, Johann Gottsched supported women's education, praising the Minerva-like strengths of Luise Kulmus, and on the other hand he reproduces conservative restrictions on women's behavior through his "enlightened" pedagogy, as explored in Ch. 2. Similarly, Luise Gottsched initially reinforces a conservative notion of women as somehow inherently subordinate to men, when she defers to Johann as her mentor. At the same time, she also actively translated texts written by women and publicly engaged in contemporary philosophical and intellectual discourses, trading in her weakness (i.e., women's silence resulting from a systematic exclusion from public discourses) for strength (through her dominance of the pen as both a prolific translator of important literary

and scientific works and as playwright and poet). In his pedagogical poetics, dramas, and moral weeklies, Johann attempts to argue for a kind of gender equality, but it is distinctly limited to the right to literacy and to wield the pen in public/published letters. Although professing himself to be Luise's subordinate *Knecht* in his narrative role as a courtly singer, Johann does indeed portend a future where women will not have to be ashamed of their weakness (*Schwachheit*) and will be able to produce poetic works on par with a male-dominated literary canon. This argument, however, presupposes a sexist socio-theological body politics, in that it backhandedly infers that women are constitutionally weaker. Thus, while he overtly praises Luise's poetic abilities, thereby acting as an enabler of women's learning, his rhetoric implicitly subordinates women as well.

Johann's latent patriarchal sentiment reveals itself through his use of *Minnesang* rhetoric. On a certain (perhaps unconscious) level, Johann's utilizes militant imagery when he describes Luise Kulmus's intellect and poetic excellence, which infects his *Minne*, paradoxically reinforcing myths of gender difference that survived the birth of Reason during the Enlightenment, while at the same time pointing to an ambivalent androgyny connected to her poetic praxis. Indeed, his poems to Luise Kulmus inadvertently uncover a threat to sociopolitical norms intimately connected to his support of women's education during the Early Enlightenment. Women's advancement into spheres of learning, arts, and sciences posed a challenge to patriarchal hegemony, and a real battle of letters evidences itself through the language of the poem. The combative verbs and imagery used to describe Luise's poetic talents, wisdom, and learning reinforce women's struggles to establish a right to higher education. Furthermore, Johann Gottsched's vivid re-envisioning of the goddess Victoria as a conquering, phallic woman—and not as just being praised by conquering males—connects to the ambivalence of

Pallas Athena/Minerva as symbol in the cultural archive of the Early Enlightenment. Pen-wielding women like Luise Gottsched/Kulmus were acting as the tips of Athena's spear, using the power of Reason to assert a new position for women in enlightened bourgeois social spheres. This recalls that Johann Gottsched also associates Luise Kulmus with the triumphant goddess Victoria at the outset of his 1729 poem, who is also transformed and made more militant by the poet. This goddess usually aligns herself with male generals in a common fight, and in this light his re-envisioned Victoria analogy could be related to the Gottscheds' common battle against conservative, repressive gender norms through the poetic transmission of an emerging enlightened ideology. On the other hand, Victoria, while reminiscent of strong, phallic women like the Amazons, remains ambivalently bound to patriarchy, traditionally passive and subservient to the male generals who praise her after exacting victories, thereby underscoring the fundamental ambiguity inherent in Johann Gottsched's deification and subordination of Luise Gottsched/Kulmus. In the context of Johann Gottsched's progressive ideology regarding the education of women, Luise Kulmus's beauty, intellect, virtue, and poetic talents are articulated as desirable objects. In this respect, thinking of the many instances where Johann's gender poetics/politics are betrayed by his rhetorical turns and choices of adverbs, his praises of Luise as the goddesses Victoria and Minerva remain highly ambivalent, and the revolutionary potential bound to her participation in the belles-lettres is circumscribed by notions of women as subordinate to men and as objects of exchange. Furthermore, enlightened women seem only to ascend to positions of power and dominance when they appropriate male traits and become *androgynous*.

Luise Gottsched's Support of Androgyny for Staking Claims to Intellectual Autonomy

Whether or not Luise Gottsched remained content with embodying her future husband's subservient Minerva, or if indeed she strove to be an Amazonian aggressor against discriminatory, repressive social norms, becomes the pressing question. While Johann Gottsched's paradoxical stance on women's advancement and simultaneous subordination has been uncovered through the analysis of his poems, this mediated portrayal of Luise Gottsched/Kulmus through her husband should not serve as our only lens for decoding her broader poetological project. In point of fact, several of Luise's poems and translations negotiate the association of learned women with Minerva, which—as explored in Ch. 1—was a wide-spread phenomenon at the outset of the eighteenth-century. Like women rulers who consciously identified with a militant, spear-wielding Minerva in order to insert themselves into patriarchal (and sometimes enlightened) paradigms of absolutist power, it is perhaps not surprising that the "subversive" entry of women into the spheres of science and learning also found a symbolic connection with Minerva, whose Amazonian polyvalence had already begun to emerge.

The prevalent association of learned women with Minerva during the Enlightenment finds an excellent visual representation in the frontispiece to the 1715 edition of the *Frauenzimmer-Lexicon* (see fig. 3.1), where the parlor of a well-to-do, highly educated, and cultured woman is decorated with a ceiling-fresco featuring Minerva among other armed goddesses (Goodman, *Amazons* 275), rather than angels or other divine figures that traditionally adorned ceilings in Baroque-style households of the wealthy. From the perspective of the viewer, these Amazonian figures appear to enter another heavenly realm above, like spiritual advisors that transcend the quadrants of the parlor. Minerva functions here as liminal figure who can penetrate into the higher spheres of poetry and philosophical wisdom, into public spheres outside

of the private *Frauenzimmer*, considering the fact that most professions in the sciences and fine arts were still almost universally reserved for men.

Fig. 3.1. *Frontispiece from Amaranthes's* Frauenzimmer-Lexicon *(1715). Note that the ceiling of the learned woman's opulent quarters is decorated with armed Amazonian/Minerva-like figures.*

The association of Luise Gottsched with Minerva/Pallas Athena relates to more than just receiving a gold medallion form the Societas Alethophilorum; this identification with the ambivalent figure of Minerva correlates to the paradoxical circumscription of her learnedness within the framework of Enlightenment ideals propagated by societies like the Alethophiles and her husband, Johann Gottsched. While this symbol appears noble under the aegis of Reason and human perfectibility beyond gender distinctions, the social valuation of women's learning also connects to a broader communicative praxis that established women as objects of exchange in

the emerging culture of a patriarchal Bourgeoisie in German-speaking lands during the early-eighteenth century. For instance, value is placed not just on female protagonists' intellects, but also on their beauty, fidelity, and virtue. Furthermore, socially determined standards of moral behavior for women, specifically regarding sexual mores, and the public discourse regarding women's social autonomy were actively negotiated and determined through literary productions.

Significantly, Luise's early works already evince inklings of an intellectual emancipation for women via a poetic praxis. As a young teenager Luise had already completed a now lost translation of the Comtess Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Fayette's *La princesse de clèves* (which she apparently destroyed sometime prior to the beginning of her correspondence with Johann in 1729), and an anonymous translation of Anne-Thérèse de Lambert's *Réflexions nouvelles sur les femmes* in 1731, to name just a few of her early projects.[66] These early translations were notably written by *femmes savantes*, and Luise's translations of such literary and scholarly French works into German could be understood as foregrounding learned women in German-speaking lands. Luise Gottsched/Kulmus's efforts to showcase women's learning already reveals an overarching proto-feminist project and an awareness that writing—through the medium of print—holds a practical potential for effecting changes in social perceptions. But to what extent does her youthful promotion of women's learning already represent an Amazonian project against "enlightened" gender norms? While the Enlightenment brought about a loosening of institutionalized religious dogma, it failed to live up to its own ideals. This was due in part, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, to the mythical nature of Reason and the Enlightenment project itself. As we know, humans are not, after all, entirely rational creatures, and irrational prejudices often pervert purportedly progressive social movements, even on an unconscious level.

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[66] For an excellent annotated bibliography of Lusie Gottsched's translations and adaptations, see Brown 207–14.

Thus the Enlightenment was only partially progressive and still largely reproduced conservative mores regarding women's position in—or exclusion from—society.

In her early years, Luise Kulmus did not directly articulate the kind of social criticism she would express with cutting satires like *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke* (1736), which was also published anonymously, or that she would later perfect in *Panthea* (1744). Nevertheless, Luise can be understood as operating to a large degree under the sign of Minerva—that is, under the program of spreading enlightened ideals propagated by Johann Gottsched and the Societas Alethophilorum, the critique of religious dogma and fanaticism, the promotion of the arts and sciences, etc. For instance, in an early sonnet from 1729, Luise Kulmus reiterates this semiotic connection between Minerva and enlightened values, particularly the advancement and protection scientific knowledge and the arts:

> Was nützt die Wissenschaft? Sie zieret unsern Geist; / Weil sie der Einfalt Dampf durch helles Licht zerstöret, / Daß kein gemachter Dunst ein weises Herz bethöret; / Und nicht dem Wahne folgt, der sonst die Faulheit heißt, / Sie macht, daß sich ein Herz, aus seinen Zirkeln reißt: / Die wahre Tugend liebt, die Wissenschaften ehret, / Und seiner Sinnen Kraft durch die Erkenntnis mehret, / Die ihn mit Götterkost und süßer Wahrheit speist. / So prangt der edle Muth, auf fest gegründten Thronen! / Und darf nicht in dem Sumpf, verworfner Thorheit wohnen. / Die Zeit bereichert ihn, er kennet ihren Werth, / Drum wird sie auch von ihm durch wahren Fleiß geehrt. / Es kann kein blinder Witz zum rechten Wissen führen, / Minerva liebet nur ein ämsiges Studieren!" (*Kleinere Gedichte* 159).

While praising Minerva in connection with virtuous moral behavior, love of the sciences, and the escape from superstitious idiocy, she importantly never identifies *herself* with Minerva, and this

connection of her person with Minerva always remains an appellation projected onto her by others. However, the fact that early in her literary career she repeatedly chose to translate works by female authors also points to an underlying project bound to the intellectual emancipation of women under enlightened notions of human perfectibility that could be related back to the symbol of Minerva and the emancipatory potential bound to her Amazonian valency.

In her early years, Luise Gottsched/Kulmus reproduces the symbolic confederacy between learned women and the figure of Minerva/Pallas Athena. Luise understands women writers as *femmes savantes* operating under the sign of Minerva/Pallas Athena, which is clearly demonstrated by a poem addressed to Christiane Mariane von Ziegler written in 1730:

> [...] Du fängst so herrlich an, / Daß man fast nichts von dir, als Wunder hoffen kann. / Man wird dich künftig hin als Deutschlands Pallas preisen. / O! möchtest du mir doch die seltne Huld erweisen, / Daß ich in deinem Chor könnt eine Nymphe seyn! / Ich weis die Antwort zwar! Mein Rohr ist zu gemein, / Und wer Minerven folgt, der muß viel reiner singen, / Allein es wird durch dich sich noch wohl höher schwingen. / Ja! denn dieß Meisterstück war auch das erste nicht, / Das deiner Laute Schlag, und deine Hand verricht, / Die Hand, die deinen Kiel trotz allen Männern führet, / Und die das Musenchor mit neuer Ehre zieret. (*Kleinere Gedichte* 106)

Several aspects of this poem are striking, beyond the fact that Luise seems to perpetuate Johann's notion that female poets can be equated to the Muses. Luise Gottsched/Kulmus's connection of Ziegler with Pallas Athena/Minerva depends on a purity of voice, which connects not only to Luise's feigned subservience through the rhetoric of praise, but also evokes the notion that her poetry serves under the banner of an enlightened moral code indicated by terms of purity (*rein*) and elevation (*höher schwingen*). But the poem also importantly directly connects Minerva and

Pallas Athena to an emancipatory project of overturning the social repression of women. With "trotz allen Männern," Luise emphasizes that Ziegler's hand has already created great poetic against prohibitive behavioral norms for women during the Early Enlightenment. Ziegler seems to embody the androgynous ideal of Minerva, writing from a position of strength—not that of subordination or a position of "inherent" weakness that is no longer shameful—and in this sense her *Trotz* connects to a prefiguration of the Amazonian inherent to Minerva's militantly connoted embodiment of wisdom and a rebellion against the prevailing discriminatory ideologies still embedded in enlightened culture.

Women's intellectual struggle against male oppression is reflected further in a poem addressed to Sidonia Hedwig Zäunemann from 1734. Here Luise makes sure to communicate her enlightened poetology: "Die Vernunft prüft stets mein Seyten spiel! / Die Tugend ist mein Zweck, die Wahrheit ist mein Ziel. / Das, was der Wohlstand haßt, was reine Seelen melden, / Das kann ich ewig nicht in meinen Schriften leiden" (*Kleinere Gedichte* 108). But at the same time, she heralds Zäunemann as a female poet, calling her a "muntere Dichterinn" with "Verstand" and "Muth," appropriating traditionally masculine virtues, and she even goes so far as to compare her to greats like Optiz and Gryphius (107). Luise Gottsched also lauds several other female poets in this poem, emphasizing Christiane Mariane von Ziegler as her ultimate role model (*Vorbild*), relating that thoughts of Ziegler's poetic genius often caused her to cast her own quill aside in envious frustration. She goes on to list further great women poets: "die Schurmanninn, die ganz Europa kennt, / Die Lambert, und Dacier sich unsre Schwester nennt" (109), which points to a proto-feminist solidarity among women engaged in intellectual pursuits during the Early Enlightenment, even if a certain level of friendly competiveness remains discernable throughout the poem.

Yet Luise Gottsched's 1736 translation of two poems from Antoinette Deshoulières's *Epitre chagrine* (1685) evinces an even more critical stance towards the appellation of Minerva or Pallas Athena for learned women, which does not necessarily disrupt her affirmation of an androgynous combination of "feminine" and "masculine" character traits bound to this figure. Rather, her re-working of Deshoulières's poems lament that learned women were mocked via this moniker. The second poem published in the *Sämmtliche kleinere Gedichte* particularly underscores her frustration with prevailing social norms:

> Was quält, o Freundinn! dich für ein verkehrter Wahn? / Wo rührt der Ehrgeiz her, der dich so fässeln kann? / Du willst ja gar gelehrt, und zur Poetinn werden! / Ach, Iris! kennst du auch die Menge der Beschwerden, / Die der verwünschte Ruf der Dichtkunst nach sich zieht? / So hoch man ihren Werth in alten Zeiten sieht: / So niedrig steht er jetzt. Ihr Lorber ist zerrissen! / Das ist das höchste Lob: nichts schreiben, und nichts wissen! / Wann der verhaßte Ruff in einer Stadt erklingt, / Daß wieder eine Frau nach Art der Dichter singt: / So wird sie, ganz gewiß, zum Lohne solcher Gaben, / Nicht die geringste Gunst des Glücks zu hoffen haben. / Ein jeder tadelt sie, man sagt ihr übels nach. / Warum? Sie hat Verstand! das ist genug zur Schmach. / Und wenn Verstand und Witz sie zur Minerva machen; / So wird sie alle Welt, zum wenigsten verlachen. (*Kleinere Gedichte* 141)

As Katherine Goodman notes, Luise Gottsched's "translations actually subvert the perspective of the source material and present a contrary view" (*Amazons* 237). Upon comparing her translations with Deshoulières's original poems, Goodman notes that Luise Gottsched has added four lines of verse to the second stanza, and that she significantly adds terms like "gelehrt" and "Pallas" and "Minerva" to her rendition of the poem (241). These supplemental lines particularly

emphasize the social stigma attached to women who were courageous enough to breach social norms by entering into public discourse via their published verses. While Luise herself supported enlightened ideals of reason (*Verstand*), she sarcastically relates that women who demonstrate their intellect publicly win only ignominy (*Schmach*). Hence, the association with Minerva becomes a cause for social mockery of learned women. Like *femmes savantes*' transgression of normative behavioral boundaries, Minerva/Pallas Athena, as the armed incarnation of wisdom, embodies an allegory of wisdom that threatens gender norms: due to her cross-dressing and militancy, her representation of women's intellectual autonomy, and her prefiguration of the Amazonian. Of course, the narrative/auctorial perspective communicated through this poem does not indicate that Luise Gottsched in any sense refutes her enlightened ideals, but shows how the Minerva moniker was turned against educated women (thinking ahead here to how the term "Amazon" would later come to be used abrasively against independent women in the wake of the French Revolution). Indeed, Gottsched's improved version of Deshoulières's poem emphasizes that social norms remain stagnantly repressive for women: "Das ist das höchste Lob: nichts schreiben, und nichts wissen!" Women receive the most praise by society when they remain subservient and do not strive for intellectual betterment or emancipation from ignorance, and a desire to become a *femmes savante* equates to "verkehrter Wahn," to social suicide. Thus a self-identification of the learned woman with Minerva might seem to fall to the wayside, but only insomuch as the powerful image Minerva was misappropriated by detractors of women's right to education. The androgyny inherent in Minerva (and the Amazons) remains crucial for understanding Luise Gottsched's later poetic works.

After examining the two poems to Zäunemann and Ziegler and this rendition of Antoinette Deschoulières' epistle, Luise Gottsched seems to combine Johann Gottsched's

enlightened ideals with a renewed emphasis on promoting women of letters amidst a social environment hostile to the betterment of women, particularly emphasizing—against her husband's covert domestication of her as a learned woman—the fact that women of letters, as Minervas, can take on typically masculine character traits like courage (*Mut*) and counter prejudices through their intellectual strength. To this effect, the poem's epigraph from Juvenal serves as an excellent cue for discerning Luise Gottsched's emancipatory poetics: " Si Natura negat, facit indignatio versum!" / [If nature denies power, indignation produces verse] (*Kleinere Gedichte* 141; my translation). In other words, if circumstances are repressive, women should take to the pen and rebel through their poetic voices. Luise Gottsched's rendition of Deshoulières's poem from 1736 disavows the Minerva appellation, but only insofar as the term was misappropriated by conservatives as a means for mocking learned women when confronted with women's intellectual equality. At the same time, Luise never disavows a self-identification of female writers with Pallas Athena/Minerva, and in fact her rhetoric emphasizes Amazonian androgyny as a way for women to assert themselves into intellectual and aesthetic discourses, where writing becomes a form of rebellion for women against prevailing behavioral norms that would rather see learned women subserviently confined to their *Zimmer*. For instance, a later poem written to the Marquise de Chatelet in 1742 reveals that Luise Gottsched had embraced the projection of masculine traits onto women: "Frau, deren kühner Geist mit Männerstärke denkt, / Frau, deren Fähigkeit sich in die Tiefen senkt, / Wo Gott, was die Natur sich heimlich vorgesparet, / Den Grund deß, was man sieht, nur Weisen offenbaret. / Vernimm von deutscher Hand ein wahrheitliebend Lied, / Das, so wie Du gethan, die Vorurtheile flieht" (120). Luise describes de Chatelet's intellect through male strength (*Männerstärke*) and emphasizes her enlightened morality via her praise of an aversion to prejudice (*Vourteile*). Indeed, Goodman

argues that "[i]n Germany she [Luise] desired rational, moral discourse and a single, genderless standard for literary excellence. On both counts she arguably held stronger positions than her husband" (Goodman 244). While both Gottscheds made efforts towards transcending gender differences, Johann's cross-dressing, that is, his auctorial assumption of a female voice always relates to a covert domestication of women under the guise of spreading enlightened ideals. Conversely, while Luise Gottsched initially colludes with a subordination of women in the early stages of her personal and intellectual partnership with him, her later emphasis on women's assumption of masculine strength (intellectually) relates to a conception of authorial androgyny that raises women's intellectual and moral perfectibility past the empty *Minnesang* rhetoric mobilized by Johann Gottsched during their courtship. While Johann praises Luise's intellectual abilities through the tropes of Minerva and Victoria, he ultimately tames these ambivalent allegories of female power in favor of more conservative notions of gender, specifically through inherently repressive notions of women's "weakness" and subordination, even placing Luise, a highly gifted thinker, back into the domestic sphere, just as he ultimately tames Atalanta's "dangerous" Amazonian independence.

The tensions inherent in the Gottscheds' relationship are reflected in the tensions between their two plays, *Atalanta* and *Panthea*, and these two dramas also differ greatly in terms of textually transforming and contesting emerging bourgeois notions of gender. While *Atalanta* represents an *attempt* to rationally domesticate the Amazonian independence of its eponymous protagonist—thereby reinforcing normative values for women's behavior in line with Johann Gottsched's "enlightened" pedagogy for women—*Panthea* represents an Amazonian rebellion against the circumscription of women's autonomy, particularly through the play's emphasis on Panthea's androgynous character, which the following close reading shall seek to demonstrate.

Again, although Johann's early love poems similarly utilize myths of strong women like the militant goddesses Minerva and Victoria, his early idealizations of Luise also relate to an implicit circumscription of female agency, as a means to enable the male writer's poetic productivity and to overcome a shame resulting from the notion that women were inherently "weak." His relationship to Luise was that of a mentor to an apprentice, but with *Panthea*, Luise turns the tables, with Johann himself referring to her play as a "Meisterstück" (*AW* 10.2: 530). *Panthea* should be explored not only for its liberating, Amazonian potentials—as a textual protest against socially constructed gender norms of the early eighteenth century—but also as a public response to Johann Gottsched's attempt to proscribe women's virtue, beauty, morality, etc. in *Atalanta*. The domestication of the once Amazonian Atalanta under the sign of Minerva should be connected to Luise Gottsched's whole-hearted support of the strength gained from this androgynous appellation for learned women. In this regard, *Panthea* shall be explored as potentially disrupting gender norms that were constantly being performed and legitimized through the cultural productions of conservative bourgeois thinkers and artists. It is important to reflect on the fact that over ten years separate the Gottscheds' initial letters and poems, and a decided shift occurs within the thoughts of Luise Gottsched over that time period, as demonstrated by her poems, letters, translations, and arguably by her dramas as well. Her initial subordination to her husband as his willing apprentice shifts drastically in favor of an Amazonian androgyny that surpasses the images of Minerva and Victoria utilized by her "mentor." As will be shown, Luise does not articulate that women write from a position of weakness that they are no longer ashamed of, but instead she embraces the idea of female androgyny in writing because it models something different, something better. Her greatest work, *Panthea*, brings this argument to the fore, as women's intellectual independence emerges through her protagonist's

positively connoted androgyny. Panthea's hybrid vigor eventually sets her free, but tragically only at the cost of her life.

Chapter 4: Amazonian *Freitod*: The Agony of Androgyny and the Freedom of Death in Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched's *Panthea* (1751)

> "There is a specific economy of imaginary discourses as they have been produced within Western tradition […]. The experience of a *nameable melancholia* opens up the space of a necessarily heterogenous subjectivity, torn between the two co-necessary and co-present centers of opacity and ideal. The opacity of things, like that of the body untenanted by meaning—a depressed body, bent on suicide—is conveyed to the work's meaning, which asserts itself at the same time absolute and corrupt, untenable, impossible, to be done all over again. A subtle alchemy of signs then compels recognition."
>
> —Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*

Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* offers a striking, masterfully executed dramatic retort to her husband's *Atalanta*. Instead of a heroine who is semiotically inscribed into the emerging bourgeois mythologizing of Reason—which corresponds to the poetic instrumentalization of Minerva as the goddess signifying wisdom during the Early Enlightenment—Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* poetologically contests the domestication of the once-Amazonian Atalanta under the sign of Minerva. Luise Gottsched's *Trauerspiel* shares several leitmotifs with her husband's *Schäferspiel*, which relate in particular to the sociosemiotic codification of women's beauty, moral virtues (specifically women's chastity and fidelity: norms that stem from a patriarchal/patrilineal desire to control women's sexuality), and political autonomy. These parallels invite a comparison of the two plays in terms of their respective takes on emerging Early-Enlightenment gender norms. *Atalanta* and *Panthea* might seem juxtaposed as genres, but, as argued in Ch. 2, according to Johann Gottsched's understanding of Aristotelian poetic, both comedies and tragedies should be similarly structured, specifically with respect to an audience's

need to identity with a protagonist who is neither wholly good nor wholly bad (*AW* 6.2: 312–13).[67] Both dramas feature strong, radiantly beautiful female protagonists forced to defend their virtue from unwanted sexual advances, and both works appeared in *Die Deutsche Schaubühne*, Johann Gottsched's primary vehicle for the publication of plays that exemplified the moralizing poetics established in his renowned *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*. However, rather than ending her tragedy with Panthea's reformulation into a Minerva-like figure, per her husband's moral pedagogy for women, Panthea appears shaped by the Minerva trope already at the drama's outset, portrayed as the superlatively beautiful, virtuous, faithful, and wise wife of Abradates. Luise Gottsched's play initially poses bourgeois values associated with the protective image of Minerva, only to throw traditional assumptions about gender differences into question, since Panthea ultimately becomes aligned with the sign of the Amazon through a final act of violence, her Amazonian *Freitod*,[68] when she kills herself after her husband's murder. With this tragic failure, *Panthea* will be read as potentially subverting Johann Gottsched's pedagogical repurposing of the once Amazon-like Atalanta, not only because Panthea's suicide, her erasure,

[67] Specific to the genre of tragedy, Johann Gottsched frames the audience's identification with a protagonist between sympathy (*Mitleid*) and preservation of divine providence (*Vorsehung*): "Und das will eben Aristoteles haben, wenn er sagt, die Helden einer Tragödie müßten weder recht schlimm, noch recht gut seyn: nicht recht schlimm, weil man sonst mit ihrem Unglücke kein Mitleiden haben, sondern sich darüber freuen würde; aber auch nicht recht gut, weil man sonst die Vorsehung leicht einer Ungerechtigkeit beschuldigen könnte, wenn sie unschuldige Leute so hart gestrafet hätte" (*AW* 6.2: 312–13). Thus the protagonist's fatal flaw does not necessarily destroy his/her moral character, but serves to justify his/her ultimate ruin.

[68] The German word *Freitod* literally translates as "free death," and in this sense evokes the existential notion that suicide represents the ultimate self-determination through the absolute negation of subjective being. The freedom associated with death at one's own hands has a long history in European culture, but suicide always retains a certain moral ambivalence in the Judeo-Christian context, normatively condemned on one hand, and exceptionally praised on the other, with specific reference to martyrdom. Certainly, the enlightened world-view stemming from Leibniz's *Theodicée*—that this world is the best of all possible worlds, a rational universe with humanity as its telos—ruptures in the face of suicide inspired by irrational and uncontrolled passions. For more information regarding the moral problem that suicide presented to the enlightened thinkers of the early-eighteenth century, see Buhr 14–28.

is tragic instead of comic, but because Luise's rendition of the Panthea figure promotes a positively connoted androgyny that is not negated through her protagonist's death.

Panthea's self-determination via suicide maintains an odd degree of ethical rectitude—from a hetero-normative perspective—in that she commits suicide in order to "protect" her virtue and fidelity to her dead husband in the face of a forced marriage, a fact that remains problematic and that mandates further analysis.[69] Panthea's suicide will also simultaneously be explored as an aggressive, Amazonian disruption of emerging bourgeois norms on a symbolic level. In particular, Luise Gottsched's protagonist will be understood through the lens of the ascension of the feminine through the male, representing a thoroughly androgynous heroine. In this sense, the play will be read as resisting the codification of women's virtues through the communicative praxis of literature during the Early Enlightenment. In other words, should Panthea's suicide be understood as a tragic failure of virtue, as an overzealous desire to protect her chastity and remain faithful to her deceased husband, thereby affirming the predominant values of patriarchal authority? This would align Panthea with Atalanta's overzealous defense of her virtue, which serves as a crux for unpacking Johann Gottsched's text in contrast to Luise's. Panthea's suicide can also be read as a heroic refusal of her sexual objectification, where *Panthea* valorizes a new kind of female virtue, wisdom, loyalty, and chasteness that transcends polarized notions of gender. Luise Gottsched's representation of Panthea's "masculine" virtues will therefore be

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[69] Scholars like Baumgärtel and Neysters vehemently reject the absence of critical thought regarding the "heroic" suicides of strong women undertaken for the sake of preserving their virtue, for instance, in Pierre La Moyene's *La galerie des femmes fortes* (1647), which includes both Panthea and Lucretia among other prominent historical and mythological figures (Baumgärtel, *Die Galerie* 12–13, 170–75). This reading will similarly explore the possibility that Panthea is the victim of a violent phallocracy whose forced logic leaves her no choice but to kill herself, and that Panthea's suicide could potentially be understood as being endemic to preserving a patriarchal moral code. In this sense, *Panthea* also prefigures elements of the bourgeois tragedy, looking ahead to G.E. Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*.

examined as a dramatic counterpoint to the enlightened taming of the Amazonian Atalanta mythos in her husband's play. The Gottscheds' texts—two cultural artifacts destined for the Early Enlightenment stage and disseminated to even broader audiences through *Die Deutsche Schaubühne*—will be examined as both reinforcing and contesting embryonic middle-class ideologies regarding gender norms. The sociosemiotic codification of women's virtue in Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* moves away from the domesticated sign of Minerva promoted by her husband, to a poetics that posits an Amazonian hybridity and a radical autonomy for women.

Luise's *Panthea* will additionally be examined as an autofiction[70] that transcends Early-Enlightenment notions of gender and thus—keeping in mind Johann's limited endorsement of female education and his ultimate rejection of Amazonian independence in *Atalanta*—considered with respect to *Panthea*'s relation to the sociopolitical context of the Enlightenment and its emerging normative frameworks. Admittedly, detractors of this play often attempt to deny its poetic and poetological merits based on the perceived autobiographical bridge between the author and her protagonist, beginning with Johann Jakob Bodmer's scathing review, *Beurtheilung der Panthea, eines sogenannten Trauspiels der Frau L.A.V.G. […]* (1746). Bodmer maintains that "die Panthea des Trauspieles weit mehr von dem Charakter, den Lebensregeln und Gesinnungen seiner [Johann Gottsched's] Gattin als der Königin von Susiana an sich hatte" (Bodmer 4), a sentiment that was then used as a springboard for chauvinist doubts regarding women poets and their ability to write tragedies, the "noblest" of classical stage genres (Kord, *Detours* 108–09, 124–25). Susanne Kord, by contrast, boldly moves to affirm Luise Gottsched's play as a heroic failure, and she does so with a decidedly feminist twist, arguing that "only by considering the possibility of a conscious subversion of the dramatic world order can the play's

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[70] For more regarding various theories of autofiction and autobiography, see Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Auto(r)fiction* 7–21.

deaths (and survivals) be interpreted in a way that is supported by the teleology of the drama" (119). In this sense, Christa Bürger's suppositions about women's autobiographical writing during German classicism and romanticism can be related to Luise Gottsched's situation as a female writer during the Early Enlightenment: "Dem Schreiben der Frauen, die sich kenntlich zu machen suchten, ist immer Undeutlichkeit wesentlich, weil es sich vom Leben nicht trennen will" (VII). In Bürger's words, women's writing—as an emancipatory project—rejects a classical, phallogocentic aesthetics that strictly divides life and art and that therefore discredits women as dilettantes. This proto-feminist affirmation of self through a subversion of genre conventions relates to the rejection of genre rules that Kord identifies in *Panthea*. Hence Kord slyly affirms Bodmer's critical assertion that *Panthea* is merely a "so-called" tragedy, since it calls the entire genre into question, as a didactic instrument for the propagation of Enlightenment ideals (109). Luise Gottsched's subversion of genre voices an implicit critique of a dogmatic, conservative aesthetics that marginalized women's literary productions and, more importantly, that semiotically codified the sociopolitical subordination of women in the midst of "enlightened" social transformations. Therefore, this amalgam of fiction and autobiography can also be connected to the hybridity inherent to Panthea's character. The androgyny articulated by Luise Gottsched in her drama, like the *Männerstärke* that Luise ascribes to the Marquise de Chatelet's intellect (see Ch. 3), directly relates to a proto-feminist project that seeks to redefine feminine virtues and deconstruct gender differences through the traditionally "masculine" heroic qualities that Panthea embodies.

Panthea will therefore be investigated as potentially undermining ideological constructions of masculinity and femininity precisely by means of an autofictional projection of Luise Gottsched's own situation as an educated woman onto the Panthea myth. *Panthea* is

clearly not an autobiography per se, but rather a fictional drama written in the French classical style with strictly metered alexandrines and based on an episode from Xenophon's princely mirror, the *Cyropaedia*.[71] Significantly, however, Luise Gottsched's work centers on a strong woman, who functions as an indirect mirror for the imaginative projection of the author's own identities, phantasies, and fears. Taken as an autofiction, *Panthea* transcends generic categorization as a tragedy. As a "Zwischenraum der Gattungen" (Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Auto(r)fiktion* 10), and as a proto-feminist project, the failure to uphold genre conventions potentially relates to an implicit, revolutionary poetology geared towards women's emancipation from discrimination and repression under the "enlightened" norms of the emerging Bourgeoisie, which revolves around the utopian vision of Panthea's androgyny. Although Luise Gottsched appears to uphold her husband's notion that authors should bend their characters to suit the purposes of the moral fable that they wish to impart,[72] by doing so she subverts his didactics that were designed for a specifically female readership/audience; instead of domesticating Panthea, she presents a strong, autonomous protagonist who is marked by her intellect and bravery, and who refuses to be reduced to a somatic object of desire.

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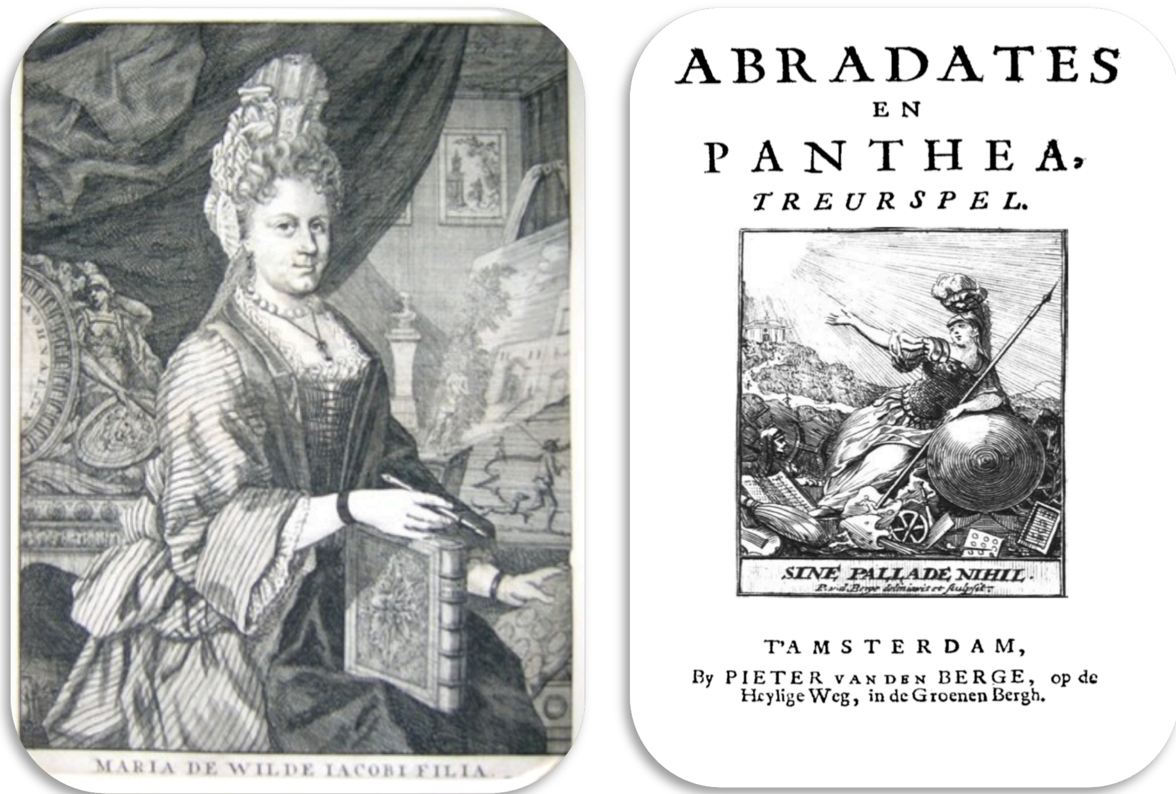
[71] The story of Panthea and Abradates spans bks. 5, 6, and 7 of the *Cyropaedia*; the events took place around 548 B.C. In 1735 an English translation and expansion on Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* was published in London, six years before the Gottscheds' German translation. It includes several thousand additional short biographies, particularly that of Abradates (there is no entry for Panthea!), which describes the story of Abradates and Panthea along with several passages translated from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (Bernhard et al. 86–88).

[72] According to Johann Gottsched, to make a good tragic fable: "Der Poet wählet sich einen moralischen Lehrsatz, den er seinen Zuschauern auf eine sinnliche Art einprägen will. Dazu ersinnt er sich eine allgemeine Fabel, daraus die Wahrheit eines Satzes erhellet. Hiernächst sucht er in der Historie solche berühmte Leute, denen etwas ähnliches begegnet ist: und von diesen entlehnet er die Namen für die Personen seiner Fabel, um derselben also ein Ansehen zu geben" (*AW* 6.2: 317). Just as Luise Gottsched reworks the Panthea myth to suit her own didactic purposes, this statement also justifies Johann's reworking of the Atalanta myth under the sign of Minerva.

To what extent does Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* autofictionally reflect her actual sociopolitical situation as a learned woman during the first half of the eighteenth century? How do Panthea's struggles against men attempting to possess her as a sexual and fetishized object (in terms of the reification of her virtue, beauty, fidelity, and wisdom) relate to Luise Gottsched's struggles against bourgeois gender norms that left very little room for educated women? Does Luise narrate from a position of an Other at the margins of bourgeois society? Thinking about Simone de Beauvoir's notions about the alterity of the feminine Self in a phallocratic Western culture, how might *Panthea* present a self-reflexive expression of female subjectivity, a "Doppelheit des weiblichen Blicks" with regard to the reproduction of hetero-normative cultural determinations of feminine selfhood and an awareness that the authorial self diverges from those norms (Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie* 96–103)? To what extent could narration from a position of subaltern alterity be related to the Otherness of Amazons? Luise Gottsched's play advocates—in terms of its didactic message—for an Amazonian androgyny, for a revolutionary, hybridized conception of women's intellectual strength and virtues via the assumption of typically "male" character traits, which counteracts the commodification of women's virtues, beauty, and intelligence in her husband's poetics. Luise's text also reveals the performativity of gender—where gender roles have already been inadvertently undone in an endless masquerade of satirical imitating in *Atalanta*—but her text positively adds to a notion of a strong, liberated, independent femininity, rather than taking these character traits away.

Maria de Wilde's *Panthea* (1710) and the Sign of Minerva

While scholars generally agree that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was Luise Gottsched's main source, it seems likely that *Panthea* was also influenced by the Dutch playwright and engraver Maria de Wilde (1682–1729):



ABRADATES
EN
PANTHEA,
TREURSPEL.

SINE PALLADE NIHIL.

T'AMSTERDAM,
By PIETER VAN DEN BERGE, op de Heylige Weg, in de Groenen Bergh.

Fig. 4.1 & 4.2. *To the left, an engraving of Maria de Wilde as a* femme savante *from circa 1700 (note the figure of Minerva/Athena in the background directly to her left). On the right, the title page of* Abradates en Panthea*, published anonymously in 1710, featuring Pallas Athena and the motto* sine pallade nihil*, nothing without Pallas.*

De Wilde, another learned woman of the Early Enlightenment, published *Abradates en Panthea* in 1710, and—relevant for an interpretation of Luise Gottsched's rendering of the story—Maria de Wilde's work appeared with a title page featuring Minerva and the accompanying credo "sine pallade nihil" [nothing without Pallas Athena]. Like Luise Gottsched, she was also a learned woman associated with the symbol of Minerva. While a thorough comparison of Luise Gottsched's and Maria de Wilde's Panthea plays would be beyond the scope of the present project, it is already interesting to note that Gottsched drops Abradates from her title and thereby

makes Panthea the definitive focus of her play. Nevertheless, taking Maria de Wilde as a role model for Luise Gottsched, as a successfully published *femme savante* in two spheres of the fine arts (engraving and dramatic works), it is of great import that de Wilde herself identified with Minerva/Pallas Athena. In the portrait of de Wilde from circa 1700 (fig. 4.1), she holds a book and brush prominently before her to denote her learning and her trade as a writer/engraver, as indicated by the half-finished work to her right. In the left-hand background, she sits literally shoulder to shoulder with Minerva, in terms of the image's composition, and also symbolically as a learned woman. Minerva subtly lends force to her authorship/artistry in professional fields then dominated by men, as her militant countenance subliminally conveys authority, while the figure also appears relaxed and non-threatening, in a position of repose in her function as protector of the arts, and she also seems strangely seductive, lounging like a clothed nude. Similarly, on the title page of *Abradates en Panthea* (fig. 4.2), Pallas Athena also reclines in a comfortable manner and gestures optimistically with her hand toward the light radiating from the sun. Minerva's protective affirmation of the light of Reason finds further expression through the numerous musical instruments, texts, and scientific instruments that surround her. At the same time, the play's eponymous heroine kills herself, which stands directly at odds with a rationalist, enlightened outlook. Indeed, building upon the inherent ambivalence bound to the figure of Minerva/Pallas Athena—not just as a female embodiment of enlightened ideals, but also potentially as a prefiguration of Amazonian revolt—Luise Gottsched's and Maria de Wilde's choice of the Panthea fable will be explored here as communicating and contesting traditionally bifurcated gender roles for men and women during the Early Enlightenment. Thus, the representation of Panthea's autonomy will be related to women's efforts to achieve autonomy as Minerva-like intellectuals. Moreover, such assertions of female independence are presented as

necessarily (socially) self-destructive, considering Luise Gottsched's lamentations of the Minerva moniker explored in the last chapter. So how does *Panthea* inversely affirm women's "dangerous" autonomy in comparison to *Atalanta*?

Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* and the Deconstruction of Gender

The following close reading of the play is based on the revised version of *Panthea* from 1761, which contains minor changes made by Luise following this work's initial publication in *Die Deutsche Schaubühne* in 1744, and which was included as a supplemental text in the third and final volume of Dorothee von Runckel's collection of Luise Gottsched's correspondences from 1756–1762.[73] Luise Gottsched's *Panthea,* like de Wilde's play, builds upon the account of Abradates and Panthea found in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. The Persian King Cyrus and his army stand ready for battle with King Crösus's Lydian army. In order to win the trust, loyalty, and military might of Abradates—the king of the Assyrian city of Susa, whom Cyrus had recently defeated and taken prisoner—Cyrus magnanimously returns his wife Panthea to him, since she would have otherwise been forcefully taken as a spoil of war. Panthea is praised not only for her unparalleled beauty, but also for her unmatched virtue, here manifest specifically as monogamous fidelity (*Treue*). Panthea's beauty, however, proves to exert irresistible power over Araspes, one of the young noblemen in Cyrus's army. In order to have Panthea for himself, Araspes conspires a murderous plot where Abradates is treacherously killed during combat with the Assyrians. Panthea seems to have no recourse but to remarry, but she stays true to her husband even in death, and promptly joins Abradates through the violence of her own hand.

[73] The title page to *Panthea* published in Runckel's supplement interestingly includes an additional paratext indicating that the play had been performed in Vienna at the court of Empress Maria Theresa in 1751 (177), an important *femme forte* and contemporary of Luise Gottsched who was also often associated with Minerva (see Ch. 1).

Upon her suicide, Araspes also kills himself—using the same dagger as Panthea—and two of Panthea's servants also take their lives in commiseration with their mistress. Cyrus then erects a monument to Abradates and Panthea and orders the corpse of Araspes to be publicly desecrated, as a form of postmortem punishment for his crimes.

Panthea's opening scene immediately confronts the reader/viewer with a starkly negative characterization of femininity by Hystaspes, a field marshal in Cyrus's army, who in an effort to praise his king derides their defeated Assyrian enemies as feminine: "Du bist dem Himmel lieb, der dir den Sieg verspricht: / Des Feindes weiblich Heer bekämpfet Männer nicht" (180; I.i). While the attribution of femininity to men serves here both to deprecate the enemies of Cyrus and to Other[74] them in the face of his divinely sanctioned military campaign, I would first like to examine Luise's Gottsched's positive depictions of womanhood, with specific attention to how female virtues are represented and valorized by characters in the play and the import that this has for Luise Gottsched's proto-feminist poetology. As mentioned, Panthea first appears as a prisoner taken as a "present" by Hystaspes for Cyrus; the first woman on the stage in Luise Gottsched's play—after Hystaspes has insulted Cyrus's enemies as effeminate—appears as an object of exchange between men. Cyrus, however, noble ruler that he is, commands that she be given back to her recently defeated husband, Abradates, as a gift of friendship. Surprised by this move, Hystaspes exclaims to Cyrus: "Du giebst ihm ein Geschenk, das du noch nie gesehn, / Sieh erst die Panthea. Sie ist zwar göttlich schön, / Doch muß ihr äußrer Reiz der innern Tugend weichen; / An Weisheit kann sie fast dem Cyrus gleichen" (182; I.i). While scholars like Pailer

[74] From a post-colonial perspective, one might ask if Luise Gottsched legitimately gains access to narrating from a position of repressed Otherness by specifically choosing a story set in Persia, thinking of Said's *Orientalism* or Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" For an excellent theoretical framework for regarding works that thematize Persian Otherness in German literature, see Tafazoli, 24–59.

rightly make light of the fact that her wisdom remains only comparable, but not equal (*fast*) to that of Cyrus,[75] it is interesting to note that another hierarchy of specifically feminine virtues is also established here. Inner virtues (*innere Tugend*) outweigh exterior beauty (*äußerer Reiz*), and Panthea's wisdom (*Weisheit*)—that is, her intellect—is praised by Hystaspes above all else. Here Luise Gottsched already posits Panthea's androgynous assumption of "masculine" virtues, when she compares Panthea's wisdom to Cyrus's. But her intellect is not almost the same (*fast gleich*) as the king's, it is something different, and arguably better, again thinking of the hybridized *Männerstärke* that Luise claims for learned women through the power of Reason, which supersedes the power of her physical beauty. However, in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* it is not Hystaspes who describes Panthea to Cyrus, but Araspes, the young nobleman enflamed with an uncontrolled passion for her. Araspes' description of Panthea's beauty in Xenophon's original text is far more scopophilic and focuses on her as a physically superior sexual specimen, objectifying and valuing her as a mere trophy of war. When Panthea believes herself to be damned to slavery and forced marriage after Cyrus's army has taken over her husband's war camp, she tears off her upper garments in extreme, violent lament, thereby revealing her face and neck to male onlookers. This gesture confirms her unsurpassable "virtue" in Araspes' eyes.[76] His

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[75] Pailer notes "Wenn sie dem männlichen Herrscher nur fast gleichen kann, so impliziert dies die hierarchische Ordnung der Geschlechter, wie sie für die Frühaufklärung üblich ist. Cyrus auf der anderen Seite wird als ein Muster männlicher Herrschertugend präsentiert, weil der nur 'vernünftige' Kriege führt und durch sein vorbildliches Verhalten [...]" (54).

[76] Thomas Hutchinson's translation from 1727, included in a footnote to the "Abradates" entry in the 1735 English expanded edition of Bayle's dictionary, reads: "But I saw her, said Araspes, when I chose her for you; and indeed we did not know her, upon our first going into her tent, she being seated on the ground, with all her female attendants round her, and cloathed in the very same kind of habit as they were. But after we had surveyed them all, in order to discover which was the mistress, she immediately seem'd to excel all the rest, though she was sitting veil'd, and her eyes fixed on the ground. When we bid them rise, all her waiting women rose up with her, but then it was evident how much she excelled them all, in stature, in strength, in grace and beauty, although meanly attired. Then her tears were seen to trickle down, some upon her

desiring male gaze centers on Panthea's exposed visage as an object of superlative value in a masculine economy of libidinal wants, which has been unleashed by warfare's uninhibited economic and sexual exploitation of the enemy. Notably, Luise Gottsched redacts this opening scene from the *Cyropaedia* entirely: "Sie ist zwar göttlich schön, / Doch muß ihr äußrer Reiz der innern Tugend weichen" (182; I.i). Panthea's acknowledged god-like beauty is superseded by her inner virtues, and, while both have value in an enlightened economy of patriarchal desires, Luise Gottsched's text clearly establishes Panthea's subjectivity, her protective Minerva-like wisdom and virtue, as paramount to her beauty. While the play's opening scene overtly echoes the praises she garnered as learned women, emphasizing women's virtue, beauty, and wisdom as desirable, Luise already subtly foregrounds Panthea's "masculine" intelligence and marks her as a strong woman.

Throughout *Panthea*, a tension between generalized negative assertions about femininity, which discriminate against and objectify women as sexual commodities, and specific positive assertions that tout Panthea as a role model for women's wisdom and virtues, begins to reveal the conflict between Panthea's intellectual/spiritual pursuits and her sensual beauty, which causes men—the supposed embodiments of rational virtues—to reduce her to a somatic object of desire.

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clothes, and some down to her feet. Upon this the eldest of our company said to her; Woman be not dejected, for though we have heard that you have an excellent husband, we have now designed you another, who is not inferior to Abradates, in person, understanding or power; and this is Cyrus, whom we declare, (if any man living) is worthy of admiration, and he shall possess you. The moment Panthea heard this, she tore her upper garment, and began to bewail her self, and her attendants made no less moan. And then it was that most of her face, her neck and her hands were seen; and know, Cyrus, says Araspes, that my self and all who saw her were of opinion, that there never was known or born of mortals so beautiful a woman in all Asia" (Bernhard et al. 86–87; *Cyropaedia* bk. 5, pt. 1: par. 3–6). Luise Gottsched excises Araspes' scopophilic objectification of Panthea's physical attractiveness as described in Xenophon's text, along with any detailed physiognomical information about Panthea's beauty (her height, strength, grace, facial features, etc.), and her beauty remains part of an abstract value category throughout the play.

Indeed, Luise Gottsched allows Panthea to transcend a polarized gender dichotomy. *Panthea*'s play with gender norms begins to manifest itself just before the heroine is reunited with Abradates, as he meets one of his captors, Hystaspes, who callously informs him that Panthea is still alive and happy (187; I.iii). The thought that his wife could be content without him, moreover specifically happy as Cyrus's captive, immediately bedevils Abradates, who wonders to himself: "Kann ihre reine Brust der Untreu Laster lernen? / Nein, weg verhaßter Wahn! (zum Hystaspes) hat Cyrus sie gesehn?" (188; I.iii). Here the value placed on the purity of Panthea's heart (*reine Brust*), i.e. her marital fidelity, comes into conflict with the value her husband places on her beauty, and the protective Minerva-like power of her inner virtues succumbs in Abradates' mind to the threat of her extraordinary attractiveness. Hystaspes' initial description of Panthea as virtuous above all else seems to be outweighed when he provokes Abradates, saying: "Die stärkste Tugend ward durch Schönheit oft gemindert" (188; I.iii). Here Panthea's strength of character seems literally to come directly into conflict with her pulchritude, but Hystaspes actually refers to the virtue of Cyrus, not Panthea; he is toying with Abradates and suggesting that Cyrus might indeed take interest in Panthea once he finally lays eyes on her radiant beauty, regardless of his high moral caliber. Abradates retorts: "So nimmt doch Panthea das Laster niemals an. / Die Tugend wird von ihr noch mehr als ich geehrt," to which Hystaspes curtly responds: "Ist sie kein Weib?" (188; I.iii). Abradates' claim that his wife's love of virtue surpasses his own, again, significantly posits her virtue according to a masculine value system, as surpassing not only his own love of virtue, but traditional gender stereotypes as well! Through the character of Abradates, Luise Gottsched contends that a woman's loyalty (*Treue*) is even greater than a man's, and not just any man, but the militantly charged loyalty of the warrior, and this suggests a radically hybridized vision of empowered femininity. Conversely, Hystaspes, who

offers the first disparagement of women in his boast/toast to Cyrus in the play's opening scene, returns to a polarized, normative distinction between male and female virtues, as he flatly refutes the idea that a woman could be virtuous. Abradates, in turn, emphasizes that his wife's excellence lies in the fact that she is faithful: "Dieß ists, was ihren Ruhm vermehret! / Ein Weib und schön, und treu!" (189; I.iii). Panthea's fame/glory (*Ruhm*) lies not in the normatively masculine spheres of combat and conquest, but in the fact that she "overcomes" her femininity and sexual appeal through her fidelity. Abradates places a value on her fidelity that indeed seems to conform to normative notions of gender and monogamy, but, at the same time, Luise Gottsched's text covertly begins to throw traditional character traits for men and women into question, with respect to how virtue (*Tugend*) should be defined between genders, seeing as how Panthea's wisdom and fidelity only find comparison to men thus far.

Loyalty (*Treue*) remarkably seems to surpass Panthea's wisdom and beauty on the scale of desirable character traits for women at this early juncture in the play. However, as scholars like Kord have already been keen to observe, Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* partially reinforces emerging bourgeois norms regarding fidelity in marriage (against prevalent perceptions of and moral judgments about wide-spread aristocratic libertinism[77]), which, part and parcel for dramas of the Enlightenment, involved projecting eighteenth-century bourgeois values onto these antique, aristocratic figures, which seems inconsistent with Cyrus's situation as absolute ruler.[78]

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[77] See Quéval, "Bourgeoisie et aristocratie," *Paradoxes* 127–45.

[78] Kord correctly adduces the imposition of 18th century moral standards onto the play: "He [Cyrus] is torn between the morality superimposed on the drama by the historical setting (in which the conqueror would have no qualms whatever about helping himself to female captives in the sexual sense) and the bourgeois eighteenth-century morality informing the play (wherein Cyrus is described as faithful husband to a woman who never enters the stage and marital fidelity is defined as sexual monogamy)" (Kord, *Little Detours* 111–12). However, it should also be noted that in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus is also depicted as respecting Panthea's fidelity to her husband, as treating her in a very honorable, respectful fashion, and as offering his guest

Yet, in light of the fact that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* functions didactically as princely mirror, Cyrus's praise of fidelity and his reunion of Abradates and Panthea could be related to his status as a role model, as the archetypical enlightened leader with an exceptional love of virtue. At the play's outset Hystaspes proclaims: "Wie muß es sich nach dir, erlauchter Held, nicht sehnen! / Der durch sein Beyspiel es zur Tugend kann gewöhnen" (179; I.i). Cyrus virtuously refuses Hystaspes' offer to see Panthea, when he contends that he has indeed already heard of Panthea's phenomenal beauty and inner virtue: "Man liebt nichts würdigeres; allein sie ist vermählt" (183; I.i). Cyrus underwrites the power of physical beauty in a woman who remains "virtuous" within the bounds of normative behavior. However, Cyrus's desire to preserve Panthea's virtue outweighs baser instincts. Indeed, Cyrus is described throughout the play as a virtuous ruler. When Hystaspes strategically suggests that Cyrus send Abradates into battle in order to get him killed, Cyrus stands fast as a paragon of virtue, professing his respect and friendship. As Hollmer notes: "Cyrus' Respektierung des Ehegelöbnisses zwischen Panthea und Abradates [...], und seine generelle Anerkennung der Monogamie manifestierten darüber hinaus die private Sittlichkeit des Regenten bzw. den Konnex von politischer und individueller Tugendhaftigkeit" (197). Similarly, Buhr contends, "Die strenge eheliche Monogamie beachtet Cyrus uneingeschränkt" (99). Buhr builds upon Hollmer's reading of the play and reinforces that Cyrus acts as a role model for private fidelity, although Buhr rightly emphasizes a moral conflict between public and private duties (*Treuepflichte*) that emerges in the text.

Perhaps inescapably, Luise Gottsched's text initially appears to reproduce a phallogocentric discourse that subjects women by shackling them to concepts like virtue, beauty,

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friendship (*Gastfreundschaft*), which ultimately convinces Panthea to persuade Abradates to ally himself with Cyrus (Bernhard et al. 86–87).

and grace, and especially via the emphasis on Panthea's fidelity to her husband.[79] Nevertheless, a rupture in this discourse begins to emerge, because Panthea's loyalty (*Treue*) and her intellect (*Weisheit*) break from standard expectations. She is an exceptional woman, whose virtues equal, or even exceed those of Abradates and Cyrus. The need to compare Panthea with men reflects a projection of masculine strengths onto her femininity. Panthea's androgynous character makes her great and exemplary, but it also destabilizes polarized notions of gender. Thus, when Hystaspes suggests that such extremely virtuous loyalty is inconsistent with Panthea's gender: "Ist sie kein Weib?" (188; I.iii), he reasserts a misogynist perspective. Hystaspes essentially suggests that women are incapable of loyalty, that they are swayed by *desire* and not by Reason, reproducing the typical competing male visions of women as the "Madonna" or the "whore." In this sense, Panthea's husband idealizes her by emphasizing her marital fidelity to him above all else, whereas Hystaspes preemptively damns her as completely devoid any moral fiber purely based on her sex. But Luise Gottsched's text already breaks from typical, discriminating assertions about femininity, for Panthea shares a love of virtue with Abradates and Cyrus, the wise warrior king, taking on typically masculine virtues in a fashion akin to the Amazons' assumption of traditionally male trades and behaviors (see Intro.), and echoing Luise's praise for *femmes savantes* (Ch. 3). Counter to the notion that "Cyrus and Panthea are centered as epitomizing masculine and feminine virtues respectively" (Kord, *Little Detours* 111), I would

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[79] In "Wider den Zwang zum Positiven – negative Textpraxis," Sigrid Weigel concisely argues: "Betrachtet man die Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis, so fällt auf, dass die meisten Schriftstellerinnen sich tatsächlich als 'gute Töchter' präsentieren. Die Weiblichkeits-Gebote von Schönheit, Anmut und guter Moral scheinen bis in die Schrift der Frau hineinzuwirken. Zwar gibt es zahlreiche klagende Stimmen, un-schöne Texte, in denen die Opfer der Frauen beschrieben werden, weniger aber Texte, in denen Frauen sich ein Spiel daraus machen, die Regeln der herrschenden Ordnung zu erlernen" (*Stimme der Medusa* 169). While Luise Gottsched's text is a tragedy, I would like to suggest, in line with Kord, that she does indeed make a mockery of the genre. This allows us to explore the extent to which her text replicates or subverts norms of feminine and masculine behavior.

like to suggest that Panthea and Cyrus's shared zeal for virtue ultimately disrupts polarized notions of gender, and that the abstract concept of *Tugend* reveals its etymological root throughout the play as having to do with *Taugen*, in the sense of measuring up to notions of honor through one's actions irrespective of gender. Kord is certainly perfectly correct in asserting that Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* recapitulates hetero-normative definitions of traditionally masculine and feminine virtues, but only at first, for the text ultimately deconstructs hetero-normative gender distinctions. "Manly" virtue, for instance, initially colludes with notions of strength and bravery (*Tapferkeit*) in battle, as already indicated in the play's first scene by Hystaspes, whose proclamations about Cyrus's greatness and virtue are bound to combat. Thus, he exclaims on behalf of Cyrus's entire army: "Dein großes Beyspiel hat uns Tapferkeit gelehret" (180; I.i). Similarly, Cyrus praises Abradates for his bravery when welcoming him as an ally, even after his defeat: "Komm, tapfrer Abradat, du erndtest mit uns heute / Des Sieges Lorbeer ein, im blutbespritzten Streite" (190; I.iv). In other words, even though he has lost to Cyrus's army, Abradates' bravery in combat earns his enemy's respect. However, this hetero-normative definition of a masculine, heroic behavior in warfare does not entirely define virtue for Abradates or Cyrus in Luise Gottsched's play. Abradates' response to Cyrus's flattering peace offering begins to evince her enlightened poetics:

> Ja, deine Tugend, Herr, hat mich hierher gebracht, / Und den, den du bezwangst, zum Freunde dir gemacht. / Du hast mich mehr durch dich, als deine Macht besieget: / Und wenn sich jetzt mein Schwerdt zu deinen Schwerdtern füget, / So feuert mein Muth nur der Gedanke an: / Das Land, von euch besiegt, herrscht ein Cyrus dann. (190; I.iv)

Luise Gottsched has Abradates play down Cyrus's military might and instead makes his reputation as a virtuous ruler the active force that brought him over to Cyrus's camp, to which

Cyrus responds: “Ein Held muß Menschlichkeit mit Tapferkeit verbinden” (190; I.iv), prompting Abradates to reply: “Wer liesse sich nicht gern vom Cyrus überwinden” (190; I.iv). While the figure of Abradates still uses the language of combat (*überwinden*), here the play valorizes an enlightened notion of humaneness (*Menschlichkeit*) in union with bravery (*Tapferkeit*), which suspends the initial valuation of masculine virtue via physical force (*Macht*), and instead privileges a leader’s moral compass. Similarly, Abradates’ admiration for Cyrus and his express wish to commit his sword to Cyrus’s many swords and his happiness at allowing Cyrus to conquer him relate to a homosocial bond that is intimately bound to the concept of political fidelity (*Treue*) between men. This bond is grounded in the mutual virtue that both men recognize in each other. Transcending the hero’s “legitimate” violence on the battlefield, their friendship prioritizes political virtues of ethical leadership and morally accountable behavior. Thus, just as Hystaspes’ praise of Cyrus’s virtue at the play’s beginning echoes Abradates’ adamant praise for Panthea’s love of virtue via her *Treue*—the assertion that prompted Hystaspes to misogynistically question her gender in response to Abradates’ “absurd” notion that women could be capable of loyalty—Abradates’ love of his wife’s *Treue* mirrors his newfound loyalty to Cyrus as well. Luise Gottsched’s play thus posits a conception of *Treue* that begins to blur strict definitions of gendered virtues, instead implicitly praising an androgynous notion of humanity (*Menschlichkeit*).

Dwelling on this shared devotion to fidelity, it becomes apparent that Panthea’s intelligence and devotion to spiritual/moral integrity are constantly challenged by her sensual allure, where her sensual beauty threatens to undermine her moral pursuit of *Treue*. This strikingly echoes the predicament faced by Atalanta in Johann Gottsched’s pastoral, where his protagonist removes herself from Arcadian society in order to preserve her virtue/chastity in the

face of lascivious advances. This conflict between carnal and spiritual desires becomes more clear when Cyrus benevolently offers Panthea to Abradates as a gift:

> Jetzt zeigt der Himmel mir das erste Mittel an, / Wie ich mir Gnüge und dich belohnen kann. / Die Gattin, die du liebst, und die, wie ich gehöret, / Ein jeder, der sie sieht, bewundert und verehret, / Die als Gefangene hier ein nahes Schloß bewohnt, / Ist wohl der schönste Preiß, mit dem man dich belohnt? / Ich weis, daß ich durch sie dein Glück von neuem gründe, / Und keinen höhern Lohn für deine Tugend finde. (191; I.iv)

Cyrus appears to reduce Panthea to a means (*Mittel*) to an end, to win Abradates as an ally, which he perceives as being naturally provided by heaven to him as a great ruler entrusted with a political authority that manifests divine will. At this juncture, one can easily question whether Cyrus is actually a noble ruler, or if he is merely using Panthea as a living bribe for winning Abradates' military support. Luise Gottsched's text seems to reproduce the normative objectification of women as sexual objects. She is portrayed as a strong woman in terms of her integrity, her unparalleled beauty threatens to compromise her morality: literally every man who beholds Panthea becomes entranced by her outward appearance. As a result, Panthea is locked away in a nearby castle by Cyrus to "protect" her virtue—thinking here again of Atalanta's seclusion in the forest. One could conversely understand her pulchritude as threateningly seductive to the male onlooker. Indeed, Panthea's famous combination of beauty and inner virtue initially intimidates the king, who exclaims to Abradates and Hystaspes: "Man schilderte die mir so klug, so treflich schön, / Daß meine Tugend sich gefürchtet, sie zu sehn; / Jetzt darf ich sie vor dir zum erstenmal erblicken, / Denn ich will dich durch sie, und sie durch dich beglücken" (191; I.iv). Here the enlightened value categories ascribed to Luise Gottsched as a learned woman in Johann Gottsched's love poems seem to resurface. However, now Panthea's astounding beauty

and, notably, her intelligence, while potentially threatening to Cyrus's virtue, motivate him to overcome selfish desires and take pleasure vicariously through *their* pleasure. At this juncture in the play, an ennobled monogamous, bourgeois love comes to be understood as the guiding ideal informing Cyrus's logic of mercy with his enemy, which reinforces the homosocial bond between himself and Abradates. Indeed, the fidelity that defines their male friendship/military collaboration actually connects to the *Treue* between Abradates and Panthea. The power of Panthea's virtues—here defined through the enlightened categories of fidelity, beauty and intelligence—is recognized by both Abradates and Cyrus, and her fidelity serves as the character trait that unifies these three protagonists. While the virtue of fidelity begins to cross conceptions of gender, heroic bravery—while partially negated by Luise Gottsched in favor of enlightened values of tolerance and humanity—ultimately becomes a pivotal "male" virtue assumed by Panthea.

Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* does not merely replicate normative ideas about gender, rather it performs them in order to undermine and reveal these roles as performances that are not bound to one sex or the other. The shared love of virtue between Panthea, Abradates, and Cyrus begins to dissolve the perceived polarity between men and women. For indeed, Cyrus's decision to reunite the couple and honor their *Treue* upsets the standard logic of warfare, where the victors violently take conquered peoples as "booty." While Cyrus refers to Panthea as "der schönste Preiß" (191), seemingly reinforcing that women are merely tradable commodities between men, his virtuous generosity actually subverts this logic, since he refuses to take her for himself. Cyrus is marked by his beneficence, and he treats women—in this instance, an exceptional woman, Panthea—with enormous respect and dignity. When he finally reunites Panthea with Abradates,

she attempts to prostrate herself before Cyrus according to Persian custom, but Cyrus stops her before she can supplicate herself:

> Nein, Prinzessin, nein! du sollst dein Knie nicht beugen, / Um Ehrfurcht gegen mich, mich, deinen Freund, zu zeigen. / Wer Tugend über Stand und Macht und Schönheit setzt, / Wird als Gefangner auch von mir gleich hochgeschätzt. / So bist du jetzo auch bey mir nicht mehr gefangen: / Du wirst die Freyheit hier und den Gemahl erlangen; / Ihn, dem des Himmels Wink, an der Belohnung Statt / Für seine Tugenden, dein Herz geschenket hat. / Er war allein es werth dasselbe zu besitzen. (194; I.vi)

Cyrus expresses virtue (*Tugend*) as the pinnacle of a hierarchy of values and as transcending social differences, as his respect for Panthea's moral stance supersedes considerations of class, power, beauty, and even cultural boundaries. Thus her moral caliber and not her feminine pulchritude move Cyrus to grant them both freedom and his friendship, which gives Cyrus cause to prevent her from kneeling subserviently before him and her husband. The fact that Cyrus refuses to allow Panthea to bow before him and treats her as his equal creates one of the most powerful scenes in the play, as the great patriarch offers her his friendship and declares her as his equal. The androgyny that started with Panthea's sincere dedication to fidelity (*Treue*) and her exceptional intelligence (*Weisheit*), which initially cast her into a typically masculine role—much to the chagrin of Hystaspes—elevates Panthea to a position of equality with King Cyrus, and Luise Gottsched's text strikingly affirms gender equality based on enlightened virtues via *Menschlichkeit*.

At the same time, Panthea's virtue remains bound to her fidelity to Abradates, where the theme of "protecting" a woman's chastity introduced in Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta* reappears in Luise Gottsched's play, but under the guise of tragedy, not comedy, which has far-reaching

implications. For in fact the supreme purity of Panthea's virtue, that is, her fidelity, informs Cyrus's mercy upon both Abradates and Panthea. Additionally, Cyrus identifies the intimate connection between Panthea and Abradates as reflecting his own marriage. He thus admonishes Panthea to continue being true to Abradates:

> Sey ihm noch ferner treu; ihr müsset noch der Erden / Ein Muster wahrer Lieb in später Ehe werden. / Dies neidenswerthe Glück, nur wenigen bekannt, / Gab mir der Götter Huld durch Cassandanens Hand: / Drum kann ich eure Lust und euer Wohl erkennen, / ich muß euch tugendhaft, ich muß euch glücklich nennen. (196; I.vi)

The imperative proclamation that Abradates and Panthea should serve as an example (*Muster*) of idealized love creates a serious didactic problem, if both role models ultimately expire violently as the direct consequence of their respective fidelities. However, there are in fact two types of *Treue* that operate in Luise Gottsched's drama: political and private, yet this passage is crucial, because Cyrus clearly communicates the reason that he magnanimously chose to preserve the marriage of Abradates and Panthea, namely as a model for his own happy marriage to Cassandane. All four individuals are named virtuous (*tugendhaft*) through their marital piety. The normatively masculine notion of *Treue*—which is defined via military allegiance and willingness to sacrifice oneself for one's ruler—is reinforced by the concept of feminine fidelity to a partner, which further reinforces the homosocial bond between Cyrus, Abradates, and Panthea. Nevertheless, Cyrus's praise of Panthea's virtue always remains limited to her marital fidelity to Abradates and does not (yet) find relation to the militaristic notions of virtue bound to men in the play. Here, a wife's *Treue* becomes congruous with the happiness of a couple's union. As with her husband's initial valuation of Panthea's *Treue* as preeminent, Cyrus, too, underscores the fact that Panthea's inner virtue, i.e. her fidelity, beyond her beauty, wisdom or

intelligence, has value for patriarchal authority as a Minerva-like self-protecting mechanism for the chastity of women against other men's advances.[80] At this point in the drama, Panthea's virtue still figures her as a Minerva-like character operating inside the bounds of a patriarchal logic, and the narrative has yet to present outright Amazonian rebellion against this domestication via categories of virtue. While Luise Gottsched's drama initially reinforces a domestication of Amazonian energies via moral categories, her text does not remain within these hetero-normative bounds. Instead, Luise significantly portrays Cyrus as refusing to allow Panthea to bow before him, creating a striking image of equality between genders, which connects to a conception of rational recognition through a shared *amor spiritualis*.

Interestingly, especially in light of the play's conclusion, Cyrus mobilizes spiritual love as a means for strengthening a warrior's resolve in combat. In contrast to claims that the carnal desires (*Wollust*) aroused by women serve to soften men's military resolve (*Tapferkeit*), Cyrus affirms that it is the image of his wife and of a true, ennobled love that continually strengthens his arm in battle: "Des Himmels gütige Hand / Läßt, glaub es, selbst im Streit bey drohenden Gefahren / Durch Cassandanens Bild mein treues Herz bewahren; / Dann stößt dies theure Bild mir neuen Eifer ein, / Und stärket meinen Arm, um ihrer werth zu seyn" (196–97; I.vi). Rather than flight from combat for pleasure in the arms of his beloved, Cassandane's image, in his mind's eye, infuses him with new resolve and strength to fight on in order to be worthy of her. Thinking of Goethe's later assertion at the end of *Faust II* that "Das ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan," spiritual love becomes a force that strengthens the male warrior in the face of death, and

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[80] This is echoed when Cyrus tells his general, Gobrias, to take his daughter to Panthea: "Indessen, Gobrias, führ die Prinzeßin nur / Zur Fürstin Panthea: den nie schuf die Natur / Ein seltner Meisterstück von Anmuth und von Tugend. / Hier lerne dein Kind, daß zwar der Reiz der Jugend / Ein großer Vorzug sey, doch allen Werth verliert, / Wenn nicht den schönen Leib ein schöner Herze ziert. / Dieß ist die größte Zier, die alle Schönen schmücket, / Wenn sich die Tugend auch dem Herzen eingedrücket" (216–17; II.iv).

the image (*Bild*) of the beloved in the mind's eye becomes pivotal to Panthea's assumption of male bravery.

The Battle between Rational *Treue* & Irrational *Wollust*

The protective, Minerva-like virtues associated with Panthea—her wisdom, fidelity, and intelligence—contrast sharply with the danger presented to Panthea's *Treue* by her extraordinary attractiveness. Hystaspes initially heralds her god-like beauty (182; I.i), Cyrus reiterates that all men who see her fall in love with her (191; I.iv), and Panthea's irresistible beauty allows Hystaspes to toy with Abradates before he is reunited with her (186–90; I.iii). Indeed, Panthea's beauty remains inscribed within a set of enlightened values that also emphasize her intelligence and wisdom (which completely mirrors Johann Gottsched's praise of Luise Kulmus/Gottsched as learned woman under the sign of Minerva). But, like the Amazonian huntress Atalanta, Panthea's beauty presents a threat to her virtue, in the sense that the preservation of chastity/fidelity comes under constant attack from salacious men. Indeed, Abradates confesses to Panthea that he was afraid that she was not faithful to him during her initial captivity: "Ich dacht an deinen Reiz, gefährlich für die Tugend, / Ich dacht an die Gefahr, und nicht an deine Tugend" (198; I.vii). Abradates' fear proves to be founded, when she admits: "Ja, theuerster Gemahl, was du besorgst, ist wahr. / Mein Reitz, so klein er ist, erregte mir Gefahr" (199; I.vii). Panthea does not abandon her fidelity, but her attractiveness (*Reiz*) is rather characterized as inciting (or potentially even as inviting) violation! She reports that there was indeed a threat to her chastity, summarizing her encounter with Araspes: "Ein junger Wollüstling, der sich Araspes nannte, / Und dessen niedrig Herz schnell gegen mich entbrannte, / Entdeckte mir die Glut, die immer strafbar ist, / Wenn sie der Ehe Band und dessen Recht vergißt" (200; I.vii). Panthea clearly communicates an

awareness of the dangers to her virtue via the carnal desires that her beauty arouses, characterizing Araspes diminutively as a "Wollüstling" unable to control the fires of his erotic energies (*Glut*) with a "niedrig[es] Herz" denoting a vulgar carnality. She resists Araspes' unwanted advances by referring to Cyrus's example, but Araspes succumbs to his baser instincts: "Er war nicht edel gnung [*sic*] zur Pflicht zurück zu kehren" (200; I,vii). Panthea therefore reports his misbehavior to Cyrus, who sends him into battle as punishment. Araspes' uncontrolled sensual desire (*Wollust*) mirrors that of the undisciplined, "feminized" Lydian enemies,[81] and Cyrus attempts to treat Araspes' lack of virtue and sense of duty (*Pflicht)* with a normative antidote, i.e., proving his "masculine" bravery via *Tapferkeit*.

Against the three positive role models Abradates, Panthea, and Cyrus—who all embody the emerging enlightened norms of wisdom, reason, and monogamous fidelity—stands Araspes, the "Wollüstling" unable to control his desires for Panthea, who comes to serve as a negative didactic example, as proposed by Johann Gottsched in his introduction to the fourth volume of *Die Deutsche Schaubühne* in which *Panthea* first appeared, noting that Araspes' "unzüchtige Neigung" and his "heftige und brünstige Liebe" should be understood poetologically "zum Abscheu der Zuschauer gemacht" under an enlightened pedagogy (11). Conversely, the love between Abradates and Panthea "ist doch zugleich eine tugendhafte und keusche Liebe" (11). Indeed, the villainous Araspes becomes the instrument of Abradates' destruction, as he

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[81] For instance, when first forming his alliance with Cyrus, Abradates colludes with Hystaspes' misanthropic denigration of the enemy Other at the play's opening: "Herr, wenn man auf dem Muth den Sitten nach darf schließen; / So wird der Sieg so schwer, als du besorgst, nicht seyn, / Bey Weiberseelen ist die Tapferkeit sehr klein. / Zur Wollust ist der Leib des Lydiers geübet, / Ein Weib wird von ihm mehr, als sauer Ruhm geliebet. / Nichts ist so leicht besieget, als ein verzärtelt Heer, / Doch deinen Persern fällt nie eine Last zu schwer. / Gern wollen sie den Sieg mit ihrem Tod erringen, / Und gern mit ihrem Blut den theuern Lorbeer düngen" (192; I.v). In contrast to positive androgyny associated with the *Männerstärke* projected onto female intellectuals by Luise Gottsched and her husband, the ascription of female character traits onto men strikingly carries a decidedly negative connotation in *Panthea*, at least at initially.

formulates a malevolent plan to have Abradates surreptitiously killed in combat in order to steal Panthea for himself. Both Buhr and Hollmer note that Araspes represents the only figure in Luise Gottsched's play who does not follow the dictates of reason and virtue and who completely fails to control his affects: "Die rationale, sozialharmonische Disziplinierung der Gefühle kann er nicht realisieren" (Buhr 105). According to Hollmer, Araspes reveals himself as a "Triebmensch" through his uncontrollable passion for Panthea and he thus contrasts with Cyrus, who epitomizes the rational control of instincts and "universale Vernunftgesetze" (197). But Araspes ultimately unleashes the Amazonian potential bound to Panthea's Minerva-like strength of character, which initially set up in terms of her *Treue* and *Weisheit*, serves to protect both her and the honor of her husband, but her androgynous strengths turn into an Amazonian/daemonic force that attacks the corrupt social order that spawned it. Thus at the outset of the second act Araspes, having returned from his punishment fulfilling his duty as a soldier, complains to Hystaspes that he is unable to have Panthea: "Nur nicht bey Panthea, die nicht gleich andern denket; / Der blinden Liebe Trieb, die sie dem Gatten weiht, / Stählt ihre harte Brust mit Unempfindlichkeit" (204; II.i), and further: "Nein, nein! wen Panthea in ihren Fesseln hält, / Der wird so leicht nicht frey" (217; II.v). The language Araspes employs here certainly mirrors the militant rhetoric of the young Johann in his letters to Luise, which, unlike the love poems, begins to move Panthea's virtue, that is, her fidelity, into a combative realm. While her Minerva-like fidelity functions primarily as protective, guarding her chastity, the fact that her love "steels" or covers her breast with insensitivity (*Unempfindlichkeit*) to Araspes' romantic overtures seems to correlate with the armor traditionally worn by Minerva/Pallas Athena. Nevertheless, Panthea remains a seductive somatic object for Araspes, which is underscored by the fact that he projects his own unchecked desire for her onto her virtuous, spiritual love of Abradates, ironically defined here as "Der blinden

Liebe Triebe." However, the chains that hold him captive (*fesseln*) stem not from her beauty, but from Araspes' own inability to rationally govern his erotic wishes, which defines him as an *inhumane* and vulgar villain figure.

Buhr correctly notes that there are two forms of love outlined at this juncture in the play: the uncontrolled, licentious passion of Araspes, and the rationally controlled love of married couples (107). Buhr remains inside hetero-normative categories and refers to Araspes' love as "lasterhaft," and to the "tugendhafte, vernunftkontrollierte und institutionalisierte Liebe der Eheleute" (107). However, he makes a crass value judgment regarding Panthea's hamartia, which he interprets as arising in response to Araspes' unwanted advances. Because Panthea has so absolutely pledged herself to Abradates, her excessive virtue spawns her hamartia, according to Buhr—again, thinking here of Johann Gottsched's Atalanta figure, whose "excessive" desire to protect her virtue also comes across as detrimental, even though her seclusion was instigated through double standards of Arcadian society. Similarly, Buhr ascribes guilt to Panthea, in that her "violent" emotional rejection of unwanted sexual advances and her hatred for Araspes supposedly indicate that she is no longer behaving rationally: "Statt sich gefaßt mit dem Beschluß des Cyrus abzufinden und Araspes distanziert-vernünftig zu behandeln, provoziert sie ihn durch haßerfüllte Kränkungen" (107). Certainly, Panthea asserts that she does not forgive Araspes for his inappropriate and unwelcome sexual advances. While initially content that he was punished and removed from her presence by Cyrus, she bluntly remarks to her husband "Allein ich haß ihn noch, und werd ihm nie verzeihen" (200; I.vii). This damnation of Araspes reinforces her pledge of fidelity, but Buhr reads her response too strongly when he asserts: "Besessen von der ehelichen Treue zu Abradates kann sie die Rücksichtlosigkeit des Araspes nicht beherrscht hinnehmen, um dann seine jugendliche Aufwallungen zu besänftigen, sondern

handelt ebenfalls affektdeterminiert" (107–08). Buhr's line of reasoning ends with a legitimation of Panthea's suicide as a punishment for her intemperate response to Araspes' attempts to have his way with her. In other words, she is condemned by Buhr to "legitimately" die at her own hands, because she was willing to stand up to Araspes! Rather than condemn Panthea, one could also understand her harsh refusals as a further exaggeration of her androgynous virtues. Indeed, her "harte Brust" and "Unempfindlichkeit" reinforce a reading of Panthea as entering into the virtues usually reserved for the praise of hardened male warriors. While she affectively hates Araspes for his despicable behavior, she remains rationally determined by the concept of *Treue*, which initially sets up her androgynous character at the play's outset when she is characterized as a superwoman, exceeding even her husband's love of loyalty; as having the intelligence and moral caliber on par with the magnanimous King Cyrus; and even standing, not bowing, to the king as his equal. Thus Panthea's resistance to Araspes continues a trend in Luise Gottsched's text that promotes a positive image of hybridized femininity, again, although this positive fusion of genders remains one-directional, in that the appellation of "feminine" traits to men appears only as negatively connoted thus far. Hystaspes' advice to Araspes to give up his desire for Panthea underscores her militarized fidelity when he tells Araspes that his bride-to-be, Nikothris,[82] is also almost equally as beautiful: "Dieß, kenntest du dein Glück, kannst du für höher schätzen, / Als bey der Panthea dich in Gefahr zu setzen. / Sie ist so streng als schön**,** und liebt den Gatten sehr: / Thu alles, was du kannst, sie hört dich nimmermehr" (219). He thus gives fair warning that Panthea will stay true to Abradates, and that she is indeed dangerous, but this admonishment does not succeed in dissuading Araspes from going forward with his murderous

[82] Gobrias initially gives his daughter to Cyrus as a gift (213–14; II.iv), where a woman once again functions as an object of exchange between in the play. For more on the figure of Nikothris, see Schönenborn, 59–67.

plan. Several new adjectives describing Panthea enter into the play through Araspes and Hystaspes. Where she was previously always characterized as virtuous, beautiful, wise, intelligent, and faithful, these disreputable characters label her as insensitive, callous, stern, and blindly obstinate, which all strikingly resemble the term *Sprödigkeit* used to describe Atalanta in Johann's pastoral. But *perspective* becomes important in this text, in that a "Wollüstling" governed by carnal desires attempts to denigrate Panthea's rationally determined behavior. Significantly, however, Luise Gottsched's protagonist never gives up her Amazonian resistance to unsolicited advances, in sharp contrast to Johann's protagonist. Panthea's Amazonian autonomy/androgyny is not comically erased in Luise Gottsched's text, but becomes ever more poignant and disruptive as the tragedy progresses.

Panthea's *Männermuth*: Overcoming Gender via Violence

Panthea does not yet completely operate under the sign of the Amazonian at this juncture in Luise Gottsched's play, and her increasingly "masculine" virtues still remain firmly rooted in her role as the faithful, wise wife of Abradates. First and foremost, Abradates needs to get dressed for battle. As Abradates, Gobrias (one of his generals), Cyrus, and his troops prepare to fight against the Lydians, the women cry and lament, and through this conventional trope Luise Gottsched's play again seems to perform hetero-normative conceptions of gender roles. Gobrias, the father of Nikothris, addresses his crying daughter asking: "Du weinst, mein einzig Kind? jetzt musst du standhaft seyn. […] / Halt dich zur Panthea, der Königinnen Zier! / Die laß dein Vorbild seyn; sey in der frühen Jugend / Groß, edel, so wie sie, durch Weisheit, Muth und Tugend" (228–29; III.iii). Scholars like Schöneborn and Pailer have astutely pointed out that the character traits that Gobrias wants his daughter to emulate—wisdom (*Weisheit*), courage (*Mut*),

and virtue (*Tugend*)—are generally reserved as masculine virtues. But *Mut* does not directly equate here with bravery (*Tapferkeit*) on the battlefield. Thus, it is especially interesting when Panthea responds to Gobrias: "Sie soll mir theuer seyn; ihr Beyspiel lehre mich, / Daß sie an Geist und Muth dem tapfern Vater glich," (230; III.iv). Panthea's ascription of masculine virtues to his daughter are one-sided, in that male virtues remain the standard by which to measure; Panthea does not see herself as a role model for Nikothris, rather her "tapfern Vater." At the same time, this actually confirms that the virtue of bravery might transcend a polarized conception of gender, in that both Panthea and Gobrias are described by each other as intelligent (*Geist*/*Weisheit*) and courageous (*Mut*), and Panthea implicitly espouses *Tapferkeit* as a positive character trait for women.

Also departing from the previous depiction of women fearful for their husbands' lives, Panthea, in Amazonian fashion, wishes that she could go into battle alongside Abradates. As she dresses him in new armor that she has had made for him she cries: "Du gehest in die Schlacht. O könnt ich dich begleiten! / So säh ich Tod und Graun getröst an unsrer Seiten: / Doch hier von dir entfernt in stetem Zweifel stehn, / Daß läßt mich schon voraus den herbsten Jammer sehn" (232; III.vi). Abradates coolly responds: "Denn glaub, es würde mich die Unruh deiner Seelen, / Bey Leichen, Blut und Todt, mehr als dich selber quälen" (232; III.vi). Abradates indirectly admits that Panthea could deal with the horrific realities of combat. Interestingly, he then emphasizes that it was her handiwork that will protect him: "Selbst diese Kriegestracht, auf welche deine Hand / Aus treuer Zärtlichkeit so vielen Fleiß gewandt, / Soll ein beständig Herz voll Muth und Ehre decken, / Und den erhitzten Feind mit Tod und Wunden schrecken" (232; III.vi). Panthea's faithful tenderness (*treue Zärtlichkeit*) is injected into her handwork, literally protecting his virtues of constancy (*beständig[es] Herz*), courage (*Mut*), and honor (*Ehre*).

Importantly, this is the first instance in the play where a feminine virtue is explicitly projected onto a male character in a positive sense, where Abradates also acquires tenderness (*Zärtlichkeit*) via the war-costume, perhaps not imbuing his character, but instead love is invested, literally, into his vestments. Conversely (and ironically), the armor should serve to inspire fear in Abradates' enemies, who are negatively characterized as "erhitzt," that is, as no longer being rationally in control of themselves. Panthea firmly replies: "Wohlan, so stellt mein Sinn die schwache Zagheit ein. / Ja, lieber Abradat, dein Schwerdt muß glücklich seyn" (232; III.vi). While Panthea seems to emphasize her husband's happiness and argues that Abradates needs to preserve his authority through battle, she also distinctly retains rational agency, controlling her fears (*Zagheit*). She accordingly motivates Abradates to go into battle to pay back their debts to Cyrus:

> Kein Antrag wilder Glut hat mich und dich beleidigt, / Der Held, der mich besiegt, der hat mich auch vertheidigt, / So geh, und mach uns denn von diesen Schulden loß. / Es wird auch Panthea durch seine Siege groß, / Damit mich einst die Welt bey deinen Thaten nenne, / Und, weil du mich geliebt, auch liebenswerth erkenne. (233; III.vi)

Panthea's value is established as a reflection of Abradates', and *his* deeds make her more memorable, *his* love makes her more love-worthy. Panthea defines herself through her relationship with Abradates. She appears to subordinate herself to him, but he remains unnamed in Luise Gottsched's title, recalling Maria de Wilde's *Abradates en Panthea*. At the same time, she is the one who motivates him to fulfill his duty (*Pflicht*), reminding him of the fidelity (*Treue*) owed to Cyrus, who treated Panthea with respect and rational care as opposed to with "wilder Glut." While Panthea's fidelity to Abradates gives cause for her to reinforce his commitment to Cyrus, and counter to her Amazonian desire to join him on the battlefield,

Panthea then breaks down and cries, in line with the trope of the left-behind woman. Nevertheless, she successfully motivates Abradates for battle, acting in this sense in a role parallel to a Muse or Victoria that we recall from Johann Gottsched's poems (see Ch. 3), where an active woman is tamed and transformed into a means for the male to express himself, be it with the sword or the pen.

Luise Gottsched portrays her protagonist as a strong woman who desires to go into battle with her husband, which is not just a rhetorical device, but relates to a broader trend towards her assumption of masculine virtues throughout the play. Indeed, emperors and generals bow to *her*, and her private *Treue* to Abradates successfully motivates his political *Treue* to Cyrus. But perhaps Panthea has a premonition of Abradates' death: "Ach mein beklommtes Herz hofft keine Wiederkehr! / Grausamer! rühren dich die Thränen nicht mehr? / Und eilst du nur von mir, um in der Schlacht zu wissen, / Daß sich für Gram um dich ein Leben enden müßen" (235; III.vi.). Surprised by this outburst of emotion, Abradates reacts angrily, scolding her: "Wie sehr bestürmst du noch durch diese Furcht mein Herz! / Gemahlin! fasse dich! bezwinge deinen Schmerz! / Die Zagheit schickt sich nur für niedre Sclavenseelen" (235; III.vi) and questions: "Ist dieses Panthea, die so verzweifelnd spricht? / Sie? Die vor kurzem noch mir selber meine Pflicht / Mit mehr als Männermuth so eifrig vorgeschrieben? / Wo ist in deiner Brust dies edle Herz geblieben?" (235; III.vi). In line with previous valuations of Panthea's virtues as masculine, or as even surpassing men's ethics, Abradates explicitly asserts that Panthea just demonstrated *more* courage than men, "mehr als Männermuth." He equates her fear (*Zagheit*) with uncontrolled "Sclavenseelen," another irrational emotion that is negatively characterized, like the enemies that are "erhitzt," and her fear assaults (*bestürmen*) his own heart as he urges her to conquer her emotions. He also uses the militaristic term *bezwingen* to describe her emotional

struggles, which re-inscribes her into the military duty that she had supported only moments ago.

Hollmer harshly reads this scene as indicating some kind of moral guilt on the part of Panthea, because she suffers a moment of weakness and pleads for her husband to stay after initially encouraging him to fulfill his duty. As if having emotions in the midst of carrying out difficult responsibilities were a crime! Analogous to Buhr, Hollmer sees Panthea's hamartia as arising from her inability to control her affects, which collides with her virtue and obedience to social norms when Abradates leaves for war: "Panthea gibt im Konflikt von Sittlichkeit und Sinnlichkeit letztlich den Emotionen nach und trägt damit zum Tod ihres Mannes bei" (199). Indeed, Hollmer actually contends that Panthea is responsible for her husband's death in battle, in that she has clouded his mind with doubts directly before he goes into combat. But this scene could also be interpreted as indicating the intense bond of love between Panthea and Abradates, as she anticipates her husband's death in battle and foreshadows her own suicide. Indeed, before departing, Abradates again adamantly asserts that he will gladly pay his debt to Cyrus with his life (236; III.vii), echoing his earlier praises for the Persian soldiers willing to die for Cyrus's victory (192; I.v). In a feat of Amazonian imagination, Panthea then puts herself next to her husband in battle:

> Er eilt dem, was ihm droht, / Dem nahen Unglück zu; er eilt in seinen Tod! / Ja, ja! ich sehe schon des Feindes Mörderklingen / Sich um das theure Haupt, mir zum Verderben, schwingen! / O Anblick voller Schmerz! Verwegene, haltet ein! / Fehlt euch ein Opfer nun, so lasst mein Haupt es seyn. / Ich sterbe, wo er stirbt. (236; III.vii)

Unable to repress the possibility that Abradates could lose his life in battle, Panthea foresees her husband's death, again imagines herself in the midst of the mêlée, and wishes to substitute her head for his. Certainly, all this remains within her imagination, and one could only claim that she

is perhaps a virtual, or rhetorical Amazon here, motivated more by fear of losing him than by bravery or a sense of duty. But Panthea has *more* than *Männermuth*, and like her masculinely characterized intelligence and loyalty, when Panthea reasserts that she wants to go with him into battle, she asserts an Amazonian wish. Thus, when Nikothris asks: "Was kannst du in der Schlacht ihm wohl für Hülf erwerben?" Panthea bluntly responds: "Was? ich kann mit ihm sterben" (238; III.vii). She does not imagine herself to be of any actual use on the battlefield, in terms of slaying enemy combatants, and instead evinces a chthonic solidarity with her husband in death that transcends the exclusion of women from combat. Her willingness to die for/with someone she loves to some extent mirrors Abradates' willingness to die in order to fulfill his duty/debt to Cyrus. At the same time, this prefigures her suicide and her motivation via their ennobled, virtuous love, just as Abradates' debt to Cyrus springs from the latter's virtue.

In the fourth and fifth acts of *Panthea*, typical gender roles, specifically regarding bravery, are thrown further into question, particularly through the continued contrast between Araspes and Panthea. Perhaps not surprisingly, Araspes is left in control of the military camp while the other men go off to fight the Lydians. Panthea promptly derides him: "Ein Feiger bleibt zurück; ein Held eilt in die Schlacht. / Und du Araspes sollst dich dieses Amtes schämen, / Da jeder Perser ficht, bey Weibern Platz zu nehmen" (244; IV.ii). One might ask if Panthea insults her own femininity here, but the main point is that she is able to attack Araspes with her word. Indeed, her characterization of Araspes corresponds to the negative hybridization of the Lydians as feminized men that pervades the text. Panthea appears "grausamer" than battle to Araspes, and he in turn seems a coward to her, as she compares him to her husband, who knows his duty: "[…] doch kennt er seine Pflicht. / Er liebet Ruhm und Sieg, die Tapferkeit begleiten, / Und wird in der Gefahr für Cyrus Ehre streiten" (245; IV.ii). While she had only moments before

bemoaned Abradates' commitment to his duty to Cyrus, she now uses his *Tapferkeit* as a means to denigrate and insult Araspes as a coward. Panthea's unbending will stands fast against Araspes' ungoverned libido. Her bluntness, however, has consequences for Abradates, as Araspes makes the veiled threat: "[…] allein du sollst erfahren, / Daß es oft rathsam sey die Sprödigkeit zu sparen. / Vielleicht erfährst du noch, eh sich der Abend naht, / Die Wirkung meines Zorns an deinem Abradat" (246; IV.ii). Again, Hollmer interprets this course of events as Panthea's fault, as if by refusing his advances she had provoked Araspes to murder her husband![83] Verbally, however, Panthea exhibits an Amazon-like bravery in defending herself from Araspes' advances. Indeed, echoing the uncontrolled shepherds in Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta*, Araspes can only understand her strong refusal as unwarranted coldness (*Sprödigkeit*), ignoring the fact that she is married and deeply devoted to Abradates.

In the fourth act, Panthea nevertheless hovers between being a Minerva-like figure bound to virtue and wisdom, who protects her honor and that of her husband through her fidelity, and an Amazon-like protagonist who is willing to face death like a warrior. When a false messenger in the service of Araspes returns and informs them that Abradates was killed by the enemy (when he was in fact murdered on the command of Araspes), Panthea makes an attempt to escape the encampment with Nikothris for the battlefield. Both women articulate a desire to enter the battlefield, and Panthea's desire to die with Abradates becomes even more reminiscent of typically defined male heroism. Her androgynous virtue thus comes more and more to resemble her husband's *Tapferkeit*, since Panthea is completely unafraid of death. Spellbound by

[83] "Im Zustand der Erregung als Konsequenz aus einem übertriebenen Affekt bedenkt Panthea die Wirkung ihres Verhaltens nicht und macht sich auf diese Weise mitschuldig an der Katastrophe. So […] provoziert auch Panthea durch ihren Stolz und ihren Hohn gegenüber Araspes, durch die unzureichende Affektkontrolle also, die Ermordung von Abradates" (Hollmer 206).

Panthea's incomparable virtue and willingness to die without fear, Nikothris follows her as if she were the female equivalent of Cyrus. But they are stopped by Araspes, who can only exercise his will against an increasingly Amazonian Panthea and her acolyte Nikothris through a direct physical threat. In the next scene, another messenger arrives, this time a real one, revealing the first as an imposter, who Araspes then incriminatingly takes under his protection. Finally, this true messenger reveals that Abradates did perish valiantly in combat, much to Panthea's horror.

Following Schönenborn, Pailer, and Kord, Panthea's suicide can be read as a tragically heroic act, but I want to extend their analyses by exploring her suicide as a kind of successful failure, as a prefiguration of Amazonian emancipation via Luise Gottsched's proto-feminist poetology, which gradually and subtly emphasizes an androgynous conception of women's virtues culminating with her *Freitod*. Panthea's positively connoted androgyny subverts the domestication of women's autonomy via bifurcated conceptions of gender. Indeed, the shared virtues of intelligence, loyalty, and bravery ultimately unite Panthea with Cyrus and Abradates and indicate a multiplying trend in Luise Gottsched's text that continually ascribes typically masculine characteristics to a woman, whose superlative virtues then androgynously transcend categorization. In contrast to their shared love of virtue and fidelity, the treacherous henchman, Araspes, succeeds in defeating the very characters who represent these enlightened values. In this sense, Araspes is much more like Marinelli in G.E. Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, the embodiment of corruption. Indeed, the tragedy of Luise Gottsched's play seems to be the defeat of these virtues. Nevertheless, the martial component that underlies Cyrus's and Abradates' fidelity to each other does not entirely frustrate Panthea's love and loyalty to her deceased husband, as Luise Gottsched emphasizes Panthea's total assumption of a warrior's virtues. In the midst of a feeling of helplessness in the face of fate, Panthea attempts to reclaim her autonomy:

“Jedoch was klagt mein Schmerz der Götter Fügung an, / Da, wenn ich standhaft bin, ich selbst mir helfen kann? / Ja! theurer Abradat! der Himmel kann uns trennen: / Doch wieder dein zu seyn muß er mir gleichfalls gönnen” (256; IV.vii). Panthea proclaims her will over divine destiny, essentially arguing that if she is unshaken in her resolve—and here her perseverance (*Standhaftkeit*) represents the assumption of yet another masculine character trait—heaven *must* sanction her death in order to allow her to rejoin her husband. At the same time, paradoxically, just as Panthea asserts her autonomy, she also makes herself the possession of her husband “wieder dein zu seyn” via death. At this juncture in the play, Panthea officially crosses from ambivalently operating under the enlightened sign of a Minerva-like protection through traditionally masculine virtues to the more transgressive sign of the Amazon, in that she willingly takes up a weapon, attacking both political and private injustices. Like an Amazon, Panthea gains access to violence usually reserved for men, albeit she might at first glance appear only to ultimately transgress against herself.

Panthea ultimately places the guilt for Abradates’ death upon herself, in that she condoned and encouraged Abradates’ military service as a means to pay the debt of freedom and honorable treatment granted by Cyrus. The king conversely blames himself for Abradates’ death: “Panthea, dein ganzes Glück ist hin! / O Schmerz, daß ich dazu die erste Ursach bin” (260; V.ii). His lamentation reveals a tension between political and private fidelity, since Abradates swore him his political (and military) fidelity in exchange for Panthea’s safe return. Cyrus places the happiness of Panthea and the life of Abradates above his military victory, again demonstrating his magnanimity and respect for Panthea and Abradates as his equals. Panthea blames neither Cyrus nor the gods, but places responsibility squarely on her own shoulders:

> Ja, Cyrus, Abradat ist für dein Recht gestorben; / Doch meine Zärtlichkeit hat ihm den Tod erworben. / Ich weis, wie oft mein Mund, o unglücksvoller Rath! / Ihn, deiner Freundschaft stets sich werth zu zeigen, bat; / Wie sehr ich ihm den Schutz, den Cyrus mir erwiesen, / Und das beschützte Recht der Unschuld angepriesen. / Dies, dies hat ihn erhitzt, und ihn so kühn gemacht, / Daß er aus Dankbarkeit den nahen Tod verlacht. Daß er dem besten Fürst mit seinem eignen Leben / Für seine Panthea das Lösegeld gegeben. (261; V.ii)

Because Panthea so convincingly motivated Abradates to cancel their debt to Cyrus and prove themselves worthy of his friendship, she proclaims that she in fact killed Abradates softly, as he shares tenderness (*Zärtlichkeit*) for her via love, just as Cyrus shows tenderness to Abradates and Panthea because of his own loving relationship with Cassanadane. Panthea does not perceive herself as having clouded Abradates' mind directly before he went off to battle, as Hollmer and Buhr would have it, and instead argues that she motivated him too much, to the point where he became overly bold (*kühn*) and emotionally heated (*erhitzt*) in the face of death. This would then connect Abradates to the negative characterizations of the Lydian enemy, emphasizing his loss of rational control. Thus, when she again questions the wanton will of the gods, her own subjectivity and agency become the object of her frustration: "Sein Grab umschließet ihn: und mich umschließt es nicht? / Unglückliche! du lebst, da Abradat erblasset? / Wen hat der Götter Grimm so grausam noch gehasset? / O Schmerzen!" (261; V.ii). Like her husband, who has already returned to the primordial womb of the earth, Panthea wishes to be enfolded by the same negation of being. Indeed, Panthea's fearlessness in the face of death marks her Amazonian turn, in that in facing absolute negation, she assumes the bravery (*Tapferkeit*) and courage (*Mut*) of a warrior.

In line with the play's partial recapitulation of an enlightened discourse regarding normative notions of women's virtues, *Panthea* initially presents character traits like beauty, intelligence, and fidelity/chastity (above all else) as definitive for a woman's worth, echoing Johann Gottsched's praise of Luise in his love poems, and in *Atalanta* and *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*. However, the covert emancipatory project operating in Luise Gottsched's play works to draw parallels between strong men, like Abradates and Cyrus, and strong women, like Panthea. This androgynous ideal begins to evolve through Panthea's continual assumption of typically masculine virtues: *Treue*, *Weisheit*, and *Tugend*. Gottsched's poetics work to elevate feminine virtues through the assumption of traditionally "male" strengths. Indeed, Luise Gottsched adds the normatively "masculine" categories of steadfastness (*Standhaftigkeit*), courage (*Mut*), and even bravery (*Tapferkeit*) to Panthea's character. At the same time, Panthea, like her Amazonian sister Atalanta, constantly needs to defend her virtue from the ungoverned *Wollüstling*, Araspes. But Panthea does not give up her Amazonian independence like Atalanta, she claims it in the moment of her death. Recalling Abradates' comment that Panthea displays "mehr als Männermuth" when motivating him to repay Cyrus for his honorable treatment of her, or that her *Treue* exceeds his own, or that she need not kneel before the great King Cyrus, Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* definitely asserts a new notion of women's autonomy through the androgyny of her protagonist.

Fig. 4.3 & 4.4. *On the left, the portrait of Panthea from Pierre le Moyne's popular treatise*, La galerie des femmes fortes *(1647)*. *On the right, the frontispiece from Maria de Wilde's* Abradates en Panthea *(1710), which foregrounds her suicide rather than her figure*.

When Panthea does kill herself, it is Nikothris who brings the news to King Cyrus. Strikingly and importantly, Nikothris describes Panthea's suicide as heroic, as a "heldenmüthgen Tod" (266; V.iv). Panthea finally acquires the character of a courageous hero through her suicide. In the final scene, Nikothris appears before Cyrus, Araspes, and Gobrias holding a bloody dagger. After she regains some composure, she takes the dagger into her hand and proclaims: "Sogleich nahm ihre Hand dies tödtliche Gewehr / Mit mehr als Heldenmuth" (266–67; V.iv). Nikothris's description of Panthea's final deed as possessing "Mehr als Heldenmuth" echoes her dead

husband's earlier praise that Panthea had demonstrated "mehr als Männermuth." Reporting Panthea's last words, Nikothris quotes her as saying:

> 'Mir steht der Weg zum Tod, nicht ihm zum Leben offen. / Ich kann nur glücklich seyn bey meinem Abradat! / Schon strafbar, dass mein Arm bis jetzt gesäumet hat!' Hier stürzt sie sich in Dolch, und endigt so ihr Leben, / Ihr treuer Geist wird schon um ihren Gatten schweben. / [...] / Mein König, so geschah der klägliche Verlust. / Schlug je wohl gleicher Muth in einer Weiberbrust? (267; V.iv)

Nikothris's depiction emphasizes that Panthea has transcended gender boundaries. She does not condemn Panthea's suicide, but praises her for her heroically courageous deed, ultimately evaluating her *Liebestod* as an autonomous, brave decision, as a *Freitod*. Admittedly, Luise Gottsched does not use the term *Freitod*, and a great deal of ambiguity remains regarding the moral validity of Panthea's suicide. On one hand, Panthea's suicide reinforces her fidelity to her husband, as Nikothris describes her spirit as clinging to her husband's body. She literally chooses to die in order to preserve her *Treue* to Abradates. But does this resurrect his patriarchal authority over her, determining her identity from beyond the grave? Conversely, the union of Panthea's spirit with Abradates' body—and the negation of her feminine body—completes Luise Gottsched's transformation of her protagonist into a heroine who truly transcends gender. At the same time, Panthea's suicide frees her from a forced marriage in the wake of her husband's death, and her suicide thus subverts the economy of masculine desires fixated on her beauty, wisdom, intelligence, etc. Unlike Atalanta, who rejoins the Arcadians and gives up her "dangerous" independence in a comedic round dance of exchangeable identities, Luise Gottsched's protagonist—again, due to her exceeding beauty and sensual allure for male characters like Araspes—forces Panthea to defend her *Treue*, but with utterly tragic consequences. By taking

the dagger into her own hand, Panthea liberates herself from subservience and takes on a more absolutely androgynous character through the negation of her body.

After producing the dagger covered in blood and relaying Panthea's tragic final moments, Nikothris then also reveals that Abradates' death was an act of *Meuchelmord*.[84] In response, Araspes concedes his guilt, takes the same dagger, and kills himself with it. Thus the corruptor is not left to survive his virtuous victims. Panthea, now absolutely autonomous and androgynous through her self-penetrating suicide, destroys Araspes with her phallic dagger, and it is ultimately *she* who penetrates *him*. As Schönenborn notes, women are not passive, but speak and act effectively in Luise Gottsched's play, even making the ultimate self-determination, in choosing to die (in the sense of the German word *Freitod*). Pailer also positively reads Panthea's suicide, "Ihre finale Selbstentleibung ist nicht Folge eines solchen Fehlers, sondern wird als tugendhaft markiert. Den blutigen Dolch vorzeigend, preist Nikothris den Freitod Pantheas als Akt der Selbstrettung und Liebesbeweis zugleich" (55). I completely agree with the assessments of Pailer and Schönenborn, and I would further question if Panthea's suicide cannot also be understood as a covert call to arms, redefining women's virtues during the Early Enlightenment. Women are not merely beautiful, intelligent, loyal objects of desire, but should strive for Panthea's androgynous strengths of character. Indeed, her protagonist's Amazonian character echoes Luise Gottsched's praise of learned women as also possessing "Männerstärke." Panthea's suicide reveals an implicit critique of traditionally bifurcated conceptions of gender that runs

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[84] Schönenborn notes: "Im Drama Louise Gottscheds verweigern sich die Frauen, greifen verbal ein und bestimmen für sich selbst den Ausweg in den Tod, falls es keine andere Lösung gibt. […] Darüber hinaus ist es Nikothris, die am Schluss des Dramas die aus Wollust resultierende Unaufrichtigkeit des Araspes entlarvt. Die Protagonistin Panthea ist charakterstark, nicht gemütskrank wie später die Protagonistinnen der Dramen des Sturm und Drang. Sie repräsentiert mit ihren Handeln keine Weiblichkeit, sondern Heroismus, der üblicherweise männlich konnotiert war." (73)

throughout Luise Gottsched's play, and the text posits through Panthea's self-destruction that women are also capable of not just loyalty and wisdom, but also of heroic feats of bravery and courage. Thinking here of shadow feminisms discussed by Judith Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure*, what other choice might there have been besides freedom in death? Does Luise Gottsched already propose a shadow feminism that, in Halberstam's words "fails to replicate itself, a feminism that finds a purpose in its own failure" (128)? Is Panthea's death a victory for women, as a prefiguration of Amazonian emancipation? I would argue that gender differences implode in Luise Gottsched's *Panthea*, and that the androgyny exhibited by Panthea is not erased through her death, but tragically preserved by the text, which radically throws gender into question, while also conveying an implicit critique of the "comedic" domestication of the Amazonian Atalanta in her husband's play. Her protagonist does lose her identity, but preserves it through death, whereas Atalanta's independence is reduced to nothing as she is reintegrated into the libidinal/procreative economy of Arcadian society. Panthea's death, on the other hand, prevents her reintegration into society, and thus provokes a critique of Persian values, i.e. the same values of intelligence, beauty, loyalty that used to constrain educated women of the German-speaking bourgeoisie.

Remembering that Cyrus places Panthea on equal footing with himself—through their shared virtues of intelligence, courage, and bravery—he rewards Panthea's bravery with the erection of a monument in her and Abradates' honor, while condemning Araspes' corpse to be publically defiled. Panthea ends as a monumental maiden, but the allegorization of an androgynous feminine identity via her final institutionalization as a monument has deep implications for Luise Gottsched's text within the context of her and her husband's mobilization of the stage and print media as means for communicating the evolving ideals of the Early

Enlightenment. Under their progressive Alethophilian didactics, the moral lesson imparted by Panthea's suicide is heroic—via her transcendence of gender norms—but this liberation is paradoxically predicated on her self-destruction.

Nikothris's and Cyrus's praises of Panthea's suicide have confounded interpreters of the play for years. Araspes' condemnation of himself to death for acting with what he now remorsefully recognizes as "unumschränkten Triebe" (269; V.iv) generally finds no objections, as this relates to the general opprobrium with which negatively characterized instinctual drives like *Wollust* and being *erhitzt* are associated. Conversely, Bodmer, one of the Gottscheds' most critical opponents, asks exasperatedly: "Soll nun dieses die Vorstellung der tugendhaften und zärtlichen Liebe einer Ehfrau seyn, welche unsern Frauen zum Muster vorgelegt wird, und dienen soll, gleichmäßige Empfindungen von tugendhafter ehlichen Liebe in ihre Herzen einzuprägen?" (23) In other words, how could Panthea function inside the enlightened moral didactics of her husband's poetics if she ultimately kills herself? According to Hollmer and Buhr, the audience should understand Panthea's suicide as a moral failure that results from her excessive love and fidelity to her husband: "Angesichts des Versagens von Panthea soll das Publikum über die Wirkung der Triebhaftigkeit [...] nachdenken und die eigenen Triebe disziplinieren" (Hollmer 208). Hollmer rightly understands that Bodmer feared the play might awaken the "false" impression that a virtuous, monogamous love does not pay dividends (209).[85]

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[85] Buhr similarly condemns Panthea for her excessive love for Abradates, even going as far as to argue that it was actually Panthea's duty to mourn her husband's death: "Zwar erweckt ihr Entschluss zur Selbsttötung den Eindruck einer bewussten Entscheidung, er basiert jedoch auf dem unbeherrschten Liebesaffekt. Letztlich übertreibt Panthea die Ehetreue, indem sie ihrem Gatten in den Tod folgt. Anstatt sich zu töten, wäre es ihre Pflicht, für ein angemessenes Andenken an den Gefallenen zu sorgen und ihn zu betrauern. Dieses Gebot verletzt die Königin jedoch durch ihre Selbstentleibung und handelt demgemäß zum wiederholten Male unvernünftig" (109–10).

Indeed, damning sentiments by critics like Buhr and Hollmer can be taken as a springboard for a feminist critique of the sociopolitical context into which Panthea finds herself inscribed. Perhaps the aversion to Panthea's suicide goes beyond a moral objection to suicide, but relates more to fear of an Amazon-like, emancipated woman, whose suicide upends gender differences. Thus scholars like Pailer have noted that the ambivalent representation of women in Luise Gottsched's play relates to an overly determined division of the genders via emerging enlightened norms: "Während Cyrus in seiner männlich codierten politischen Tugend Fehleinschätzungen unterliegt, ist Panthea durch die Zuordnung weiblich codierter natürlicher Tugend, repräsentiert in der äußeren Schönheit ihres Körpers, in ihrem Informations- und Handlungsspielraum eingeschränkt" (57). Pailer confirms Panthea's suicide as virtuous, at least within the text's diegesis: "Der Akt der Selbstentleibung stellt tatsächlich Pantheas einzige Handlungsmöglichkeit dar" (60). She importantly argues that Luise Gottsched's play undermines conceptions of natural and political virtues, especially with regard to gendered conceptions—thinking again of Cyrus's, Abradates', and Panthea's shared "masculine" virtues—as differences between the sexes are ultimately leveled in the play. True, many critics were and are confounded by the fact that no characters on the stage express condemnation of Panthea's suicide, which relates to a socially prevalent condemnation of suicide as explicitly antisocial; but on a latent level, some critics also resist the notion of a woman who takes initiative to emancipate herself and who thereby transgresses normative categories of gender. As Kord rightly notes: "Critics who have asserted that Gottsched fails to make Panthea's suicide reprehensible are guilty of a vast understatement: Panthea's suicide is not only condoned, it is *celebrated*" (*Little Detours* 121). Kord convincingly argues that Panthea's *Freitod* secures her virtue, but this should not necessarily be understood as being without its complications. Kord makes a brilliant assertion

when she posits that Luise Gottsched deliberately undermines the telos of tragedy: “Unthinkably, Panthea is not, as tragic teleology would otherwise seem to demand, pitied and forgiven *despite* her suicide, but rather, and ostentatiously, reaffirmed as the play’s epitome of virtue *because* of her suicide” (122–23), again thinking ahead to Emilia in Lessing’s *Bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. Kord contends: “Perhaps Panthea’s virtue-by-suicide lies in the very fact that she emancipates herself from their domination” (125), and in this sense Luise Gottsched’s text succeeds through Panthea’s failure.

However, Kord’s positive assessment of Luise Gottsched’s play as a *didactic* failure requires further thought, precisely because the generic failure deduced by Kord actually makes her tragedy a successful didactic tool at a very early stage in women’s struggle for emancipation. Kord argues that “[p]erhaps *Panthea*’s purpose is *not* to enlighten the viewer” (125). Taking this a step further, perhaps Luise’s play is designed to shock them into a disassociation from the protagonist, which—thinking ahead to something like Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*—could serve to encourage the audience to consider what social mechanisms led a figure who was described as the epitome of virtue throughout the play to kill herself and be lauded for it in the process. As Kerth and Russell contend, “As critics [starting with Bodmer] pointed out, this work is not really a tragedy in the classical sense, where a tragic moral flaw or error in judgment causes a character’s downfall: Panthea’s ‘flaw’ is that she loves her husband” (XXV). But this seeming contradiction is precisely the liberating aspect of Luise Gottsched’s play. Panthea’s *harmatia* fails to manifest itself, in that she remains loyal to Abradates. While her virtue is a failure, in the sense that she feels that she must die in order to be with her husband, her failure is also a virtue, in that she escapes the masculine economy of desires, precisely through transcending gender

boundaries through her androgynous heroism, and finally by killing her sensual body in order to attain a higher moral perfection.

The virtues of *Treue*, *Weisheit*, and *Tugend* initially serve as the virtues that first unite Panthea, Abradates, and Cyrus, which subtly paves the way for Panthea's positively connoted, heroic androgyny.[86] Indeed, she dies with "mehr als Heldenmuth." While her Amazonian androgyny is coded through the normatively "masculine" character traits of courage (*Mut*), steadfastness (*Standhaftigkeit*), and bravery (*Tapferkeit*), this remains problematic, in that the fluidity between gender roles remains one-directional. As we recall, when male characters assume feminine traits, *Panthea* characterizes this negatively as a lack of rational self-control, always *erhitzt* and guided only by *Wollust*. Luise Gottsched's protagonist, however, emphasizes that a woman's assumption of the normatively *male* virtue of courage should be understood positively, implicitly replicating a hierarchy between men and women, since it is a woman's assumption of male virtue that is idealized, and where "manly" *Mut* becomes the evaluative standard. Nevertheless, Panthea prefigures the symbol of the Amazon, in that Amazons paradigmatically embody this hybridization of female fidelity and male courage. *Panthea* ultimately emphasizes and condones this confluence of gendered identities, and indeed, this is the play's ultimate proto-feminist assertion. At the same time, the text represents a proto-feminist intervention into an enlightened discourse, in that women are not just praised for being beautiful

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[86] As Inge Stephan notes: "[D]ie Rückbesinnung auf die alten Amazonenmythen, die phantasierende Vergegenwärtigung im mythischen Dunkel versunkener matriarchalischer Kulturen, die spielerische Vertauschung der Geschlechtsrollen und der Entwurf eines neuen, androgynen Menschentypus hat nicht nur sein poetisches Recht, sondern hat wie jedes utopische Denken auch eine emanzipatorische Kraft, wenn es zu einem Denken über mögliche Veränderungen führt" ("Dass ich Eins und doppelt bin" 172).

and virtuous, but also for their intelligence and, most importantly, their courage and independence.

The drama asserts that women also need to display those normatively masculine virtues of courage and bravery that men exhibit, since Panthea's *Treue* overcomes gender distinctions. In other words, through Panthea's suicide, Luise Gottsched's play posits that women must be more than mere Minervas; the audacious Amazon is a more fitting symbol for the idealized hybridity embodied by the figure of Panthea, although Panthea's self-castigation remains problematic in terms of the text's didactics. At the same time, her name itself, *pan-* and *thea*, meaning "common to all the gods," lends itself well to an understanding of Panthea as an amalgamation of the enlightened symbol of Minerva with the Amazons and a movement towards androgynously celebrating human virtues. Panthea successfully appropriates and manifests the male virtues of bravery and courage; while her assumption of a hybridized, androgynous identity directly results in her demise, she is continually resurrected by the monument that is Luise Gottsched's text itself.

Between an Enlightened Minerva and an Amazon of the Pen

Returning to the auctorial situation of Luise Gottsched as learned woman during the Early Enlightenment, what implications does Panthea's ultimate androgyny have for her poetics as an allegory of feminine identity? In "Zur Androgynitätsauffassung in Kunst und Wissenschaft" Inge Stephan notes that androgyny can serve to elegantly and seductively dissolve gender differences, and that androgynous characters in literature thus promote an attractive utopian model for women writers. But she also warns that "Androgynitätsvorstellungen vor und nachher [sind] sehr problematisch, weil sie—wie könnte das angesichts der patriarchalischen Rahmenbedingungen

auch anders sein—in erster Linie vom männlichen Interesse diktiert sind" (121). Androgynous figures in texts written by women are not unproblematic, in that they often reproduce the same normative images of women as those found in texts written by men. However, at the same time, as Stephan contends, fictional works written by women that feature hybridized protagonists often reevaluate and repurpose conservative conceptions of femininity in order to explode the confines of the *gelehrtes Frauenzimmer*. In this sense, Luise Gottsched's play initially reproduces the Minerva-like virtues of beauty, intelligence, wisdom, and fidelity in Panthea, just as these feminine virtues were first propagated by Johann Gottsched in his moral weekly *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, and later in his pastoral play *Atalanta*. At the same time, Panthea explodes normative boundaries through her assumption of *Männermut*/*Heldenmut*, which to some extent replicates the bourgeois concept of monogamy that was ideologically supported by notions of an *amor spiritualis* borrowed from the medieval tradition of *Minnesang*.

Panthea appears to combine her feminine *Treue* with its militant, masculine counterpart, and her ennobled conception of a virtuous love logically carries her to suicide, which remains emancipatory even in its failure. Panthea's self-sacrifice is meaningful, or forces an interpretation of meaning, in that this disjuncture of Panthea's superlative virtue and her tragic death at her own hands can potentially awaken a critical awareness of the limitations set on women in society, and that women possess the ability to actively determine themselves. This is continually marked in the text by Panthea's continual acquisition of typically male-coded virtues like *Treue, Weisheit*, *Tugend*, *Mut* and *Tapferkeit*. On the other hand, one might remain critical, thinking ahead to the fact that the sacrifice of women in order to preserve their virtue predominates bourgeois literary works, with Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* as a prime example of a female protagonist who must die in order to "protect" her innocence (Weigel, "Die geopferte

Heldin" 142). Weigel rightly argues that "Frauen, die als Schreibende das ihnen auferlegte Schweigen durchbrachen, haben zunächst beim Entwurf weiblicher Hauptfiguren die männlichen Frauenbilder weitgehend nachgeahmt" (144). She posits that most women chose to make their protagonists survive as figures that make self-sacrifices. Luise Gottsched does not sacrifice her protagonist, but chooses a role model that emphasizes an androgynous bravery that potentiates her death as representing something larger. Indeed, as Martina Schönenborn notes: "Viele ihrer Texte beinhalten einen Subtext, über den Botschaften transportiert werden, mit denen nicht selten gegen das aufklärerische Frauenbild Stellung bezogen wird" (70). And in this sense *Panthea* can be interpreted as an attack on, or expansion of the Minerva-like virtues associated with both learned woman and her protagonist. Luise Gottsched's text implicitly calls upon women to actively fight for their ideals, as the play deconstructs a strict dichotomy of gender through the provocative self-destruction of a virtuous female character who transcends essentialization. Katherine Goodman questions whether or not Luise Gottsched truly believed in the notion that reason could overcome discrimination, noting that "the call for objective criticism merely avoided confronting the core of the issue of discrimination and assured women intellectuals secondary status" (*Amazons* 252). Indeed, Luise Gottsched might have had doubts about the Enlightenment project, specifically with respect to leveling the genders, but this is precisely what *Panthea* overturns through its Amazonian twist, since Panthea's suicide evinces a courage that exists beyond gender.

The androgyny of Panthea can be related to Luise Gottsched's person, specifically within the emerging discourse regarding women's education and intellectual perfectibility. As we recall from Ch. 3, Luise Gottsched often used masculine norms to describe the wit of female intellectuals, praising the Marquise de Chatelet, whose "kühner Geist mit Männerstärke denkt"

(*Briefe* 104). Moreover, her husband often seeks to validate her intellect through a comparison to men. Significantly, in her introduction to the third volume of Luise Gottsched's letters, Henriette Dorothee von Runckel describes Luise's character in a unique way:

> Eine glückliche Mischung von dem Ernste, der Standhaftigkeit und Entschlossenheit des männlichen Geschlechts mit der Sanftmuth, Zurückhaltung und Bescheidenheit, die die größte Zierde des unsrigen ausmacht, versprach uns bey dem ersten Anblick den liebenswürdigsten Character. Sie konnte auf Kenntnisse stolz seyn, die bey Frauenzimmern so selten angetroffen und deren einige fast niemals vermuthet, geschweige verlangt werden. (*Briefe* 249)

Panthea's assumption of male character traits and their fusion with normatively feminine virtues finds its perfect counterpart in von Runckel's description of Luise Gottsched, who similarly assumes the virtue of steadfastness (*Standhaftigkeit*) in combination with tenderness (*Sanftmut*), and thereby exceeds a more conservative gender role as an exceptionally learned woman by taking on typically masculine character traits. While the relevance of the Gottscheds' childless marriage should not cast light on their intellectual fruits, Johann Gottsched also sometimes promulgated an ambiguous image of his wife's androgyny, even as he covertly worked to domesticate her as his learned apprentice. He physiognomically marks Luise as unique and outside of the norm, in the necrology that accompanied a posthumous collection of her poems, he relates a story about her giant head at birth:

> In der Schwangerschaft ihrer Mutter, gaben es alle Merkmaale, dass ihre erste Frucht unfehlbar ein Sohn seyn würde. Darauf wurden also auch die Anstalten mit dem Kinderzeuge gemachet. Zu großem Erstaunen aber, war das neugebohrne Kind eine Tochter; und das Knabenkäppchen konnte also bey der Taufe nicht gebrauchet werden.

> Was für Häubchen aber in der Familie auch vorhanden seyn mochten; die waren dem neugebohrnen Kind durchaus zu klein: und man sah sich genötiget, demselben eine Art von Binde um den Kopf zu winden, die einer türkischen nicht unähnlich war. Alle Angehörige aber sagten: das Kind hätte einen Poetenkasten mit auf die Welt gebracht: eine Weissagung, die dereinst vollkommen eingetroffen. (*AW* 10.2: 507–08)

For Johann, the initial confusion about Luise's gender connects to his wife's future poetic genius when he describes her oversized head as a "Poetenkasten." Interestingly, he does not allow her to cross-dress as a newborn baby (she cannot wear the bonnet of a boy), but her skull is predominantly larger than that of babies of both sexes. This aberrance from "normal" sexual dimorphism projects an element of masculinity onto Luise Gottsched, but only on a latent level. J.C. Gottsched makes various efforts to re-insert his wife into a typically feminine role in her biography, just as von Runckel emphasizes that Luise Gottsched always maintained her household in addition to her intellectual pursuits (*Briefe* 249). The play on physicality and notions of sexual dimorphism can be related back to the figure of Minerva, as the avatar of educated women, and the fact that Panthea combines Minerva-like traits with Amazonian boldness. This makes Luise Gottsched's play all the more striking, in that, in a way, the drama serves a communicative practice that negotiates and contests strict notions of gendered identity, asserting a prefiguration of Amazonian rebellion that is masked by the immediate demise of her virtuous protagonist. While Panthea might let her dagger fall after her death, Luise Gottsched's text lives on though its recipients, and thus Luise Gottsched's pen becomes analogous to a weapon wielded by a strong woman for greater gender equality. Again, *Panthea* can be considered as an autofictional text, in that her protagonist shares many of the same enlightened virtues ascribed to Luise Gottsched as learned women. There is not a one-to-one correlation

between author and text, but a transformation of identity takes places through the symbolic order of her text,[87] which connects back to notions of an Amazonian androgyny that heralds the assumptions of traditionally male virtues by women, including both bravery and wisdom. As an autofictional, proto-feminist work, Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* succeeds through its failure, in that the play's conclusion inherently throws gender norms into confusion. Finally, one could indeed posit that Luise Gottsched was an Amazon of the pen based on her poetology of androgyny. Like an Amazonian warrior ready to be buried with her sword at her side, Luise Gottsched famously asserts: "Geben Sie acht, man wird mich einst mit der Feder in der Hand begraben, damit sie […] auch nicht im Grabe ruhe" (Kording 184), and her Amazonian pen lives on in texts like *Panthea*.

[87] As Wagner-Egelhaaf notes: "Entscheidend ist das Verhältnis der symbolischen bzw. textuellen Ordnung und der sog. 'Realität.' Letztere ist immer nur erleb- und formulierbar mit den symbolischen Mitteln der Sprache. Das bedeutet nicht, dass das, was sich im Text und als Text vollzieht, nichts mit der sog. 'Realität' zu tun hat, doch ist diese nicht ohne jenen zu haben. Text und 'Leben' sind nicht identisch, sie sind allerdings auch nicht voneinander zu trennen. Die Antwort auf die Frage nach einem feministischen Ort der Autobiographie kann nur im flexiblen Dazwischen, dem Sowohl-als auch, liegen, bei einem kritischen Bewusstsein, das sich der spiegelnden Kraft der Zeichen bedient und dabei um die phantasmische Quälität der Realitat weiß." (*Autobiographie* 102–03).

Chapter 5: Amazons on the Political Stage: Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa's Play for Leadership in Saxony

> "So schreiben sowohl die Kirchenväter [des 17. Jahrhunderts] als auch die Teilnehmer an der *Querelle* Theater auf Grund dieser Gegenwärtigkeit die Fähigkeit zu, eine unmittelbare sinnliche Wirkung auf die Zuschauer auszuüben und starke, ja überwältigende Affekte in ihnen auszulösen. Die Atmosphäre in einem Theater wird als gefährlich contagiös begriffen und beschrieben. Die Schauspieler führen auf der Bühne leidenschaftliche Handlungen aus, die Zuschauer nehmen diese von Leidenschaft getriebenen Handlungen wahr und werden von ihnen angesteckt […]. Die Ansteckung erfolgt auf dem Wege über die Wahrnehmung vom gegenwärtigen Körper des Schauspielers auf den gegenwärtigen Körper des Zuschauers. Sie wird allein durch die Gegenwärtigkeit der Akteure und der Geschehnisse, d.h. durch die leibliche Ko-Präsenz von Schauspielern und Zuschauern ermöglicht."
>
> — Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*

The Electress of Saxony, Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa (1724-1780) was a composer, poet, singer, and artist of great merit, although she has only recently been rediscovered by scholars. Christine Fischer's *Instrumentierte Visionen weiblicher Macht* (2007) stands to date as the most thorough scholarly analysis of Maria Antonia's life and works. Fischer combines a biography of Maria Antonia and her social context with an engaging musicological investigation of the regent's three major operas. Indeed, she emphasizes the Electress's activities in almost every artistic field imaginable: as a writer of lyric and prose in both French and Italian, as a practicing musician (piano and singing), as an opera composer, and even as a painter in the

visual arts. As Fischer notes—in line with the Gottscheds' communicative praxis for the textual transmission of enlightened ideals explored in the first four chapters—Maria Antonia was particularly influential due to the wide publication and dissemination of her works: "sie machte diesen Beitrag durch Druckpublikationen von Texten und Partituren, von Stichen eigner Bilder, von Übersetzungen ihrer Texte ins Deutsche, Französische und Polnische auch in einem Maße publik und verfügbar, das aus der Perspektive ihrer Zeit und in entsprechende Relation gesetzt auch darüber hinaus als einmalig beurteilt werden muss" (*Visionen* 7). Among her many works, the opera *Talestri* stands out as being particularly significant with respect to Maria Antonia von Sachsen's political ambitions as a female ruler. Both Fischer and Anne Fleig rightly understand her third and final opera, *Talestri*, as her definitive self-stylization as an enlightened and capable ruler. This is significant because it demonstrates Maria Antonia's identification and literal embodiment of her Amazonian protagonist. Maria Antonia's work represents one of the first literary instances where a woman explicitly invokes the image of the Amazon as a means for shaping her own identity, as an autofictional self-staging that makes an explicit claim for her right to participate in a political arena dominated by men. Maria Antonia not only composed the music and wrote the opera's libretto; she also performed the main role as the queen of the Amazons in the initial performance of the opera at her court. Fischer stresses that the identification between Maria Antonia and her protagonist cements itself through her performance of the role:

> [D]ie Aufführungen der Werke Maria Antonias, in denen die Kurprinzessin selbst als Sängerin wirkte, müssen besonderes Augenmerk gewidmet werden. Durch die direkte Verbindung von der Autorschaft zur dargestellten Figur, die sich aus der Selbstinterpretation ergibt, entstehen wichtige Bedeutungsfacetten und

> Interpretationsaspekte der Werke, die bisher vernachlässigt wurden: Maria Antonia verkörperte ihre Hauptfiguren im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes. Der wahrhafte Körper der Kurprinzessin verschmilzt in diesen Aufführungen mit dem imaginären Bild, das sie durch ihre Opernfiguren von sich schuf. (*Visionen* 332)

The extent to which her operatic performance merges an imagined role as the Queen of the Amazons and Maria Antonia's physical or political body remains open to discussion. But because the author did in fact embody her protagonist on the stage, her authorial situation will be taken as a lens for decoding the text's transformative potential for this educated noblewoman writing in an elite sphere of society. Her work represents a kind of historically bound autofiction performed live at the Saxon court, and hence stands as a textual document that communicates something not only about the author's identity, but also about her political ambitions. If one understands Maria Antonia's libretto as generating both meaning and identity, as a kind of auctorial autopoiesis (Rzeszotnik 7–12; Sting 78–89), *Talestri* can be interpreted not only as potentially constituting her authorial identity,[88] but also considered as a medium for transforming the social context from which it emerged.

Talestri was first performed at the court of Dresden on 24 August 1763, just as the *Kurfürst* (Elector) of Saxony and King of Poland, August III (1696–1763), returned with his family and entourage from exile. The Prussian armies of Friedrich II had ravaged and occupied Saxony during the course of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), forcing August III to flee.[89] In contrast to his father, August II (1674–1733), who had pursued an aggressive foreign policy,

[88] For a theoretical framework regarding a historical-psychoanalytical approach to textual analysis, see Kelping, 13–19.
[89] For more on the Seven Years' War and its effects on Dresden and Saxony, see Lühr.

waging war against neighboring states in a fashion characteristic of absolutist rulers,[90] August III failed to maintain Saxony's military prowess. Instead, he cultivated the pompous self-aggrandizements that his father had also employed to further consolidate and promote his power as an absolutist ruler, using elaborate and lavish court ceremonies to reinforce his position as the center of Saxony's political universe. These included highly orchestrated masked balls, musical and theatrical performances, and the like (Rahn 74–98), and Maria Antonia's opera operates within this tradition, but also subtly subverts it. The military decline precipitated by August's III laissez-faire attitude towards managing his political and financial affairs was further complicated by his heir, Friedrich Christian (1722–1763), whose physical frailty and handicap posed a problem for the representation of Saxony's rulers as military leaders. After an infection during his early youth permanently crippled both the prince's feet, Friedrich Christian was confined to a wheelchair, which only gave the young prince more cause to cultivate his mind. The historian August Moritz Engelhardt reverently notes: "Des Prinzen äußere Gestalt war wohlgebildet und einnehmend, und bey seiner Geburt war dasjenige Gebrechen im Rücken noch nicht bemerklich, was sich erst später beim Wachsthume seines Körpers zeigte und ihm das Gehen erschwerte. [...] Was die Natur dem Prinzen in Hinsicht seines Körpers versagt hatte, hatte sie ihm in Verleihung der Gaben des Geistes um so reichlicher zu ersetzen gesucht" (2–3). Certainly, physical disabilities never warrant disapproval or prejudice. Nevertheless, even as an educated and enlightened monarch, Friedrich Christian's physical impairment posed a serious political problem for the court, since representations of the *Kurfürst* as an absolute (military) authority were part of a long monarchical and feudal tradition. And indeed, Friedrich Christian's father had unsuccessfully tried to disinherit him, despite his popularity, as heir to the throne—

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[90] For a biography of August the Strong, see Czok.

specifically because of his physical disability—in favor of his younger brother, Franz Xaver (1730–1806).

The highly gifted *femme savante*, Maria Antonia Walpurgis—originally from Bavaria—married her first cousin, the prince elector Friedrich Christian, and joined the court in Dresden in 1747, becoming princess electress Maria Antonia Walpurgis Symphorosa of Saxony.[91] In the first years of their marriage, prior to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, Maria Antonia continued to establish herself as a learned woman, particularly as a respected musical composer and librettist. In the same year as her marriage, she was welcomed into the Accademia dell'Arcadia in Rome, a learned society for artists of royal lineage to which her husband already belonged (Fischer, *Visionen* 50–64). Maria Antonia gained her pseudonym,[92] Ermelinda Talea Pastorella Arcadia (E.T.P.A.), from the Arcadian society.[93] Shortly thereafter, she composed the oratory *La conversione di Sant'Agostino* (1750), the pastoral *Il trionfo della fedeltà* (1754), and finally the dramatic opera *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni* (1763), and the latter can without question be considered as her artistic masterpiece, both in terms of its refined composition and politically prescient content. Saxony's court was stable and prosperous at the time of their marriage, but the (relatively) peaceful political climate that welcomed their marriage did not last.

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[91] For a more thorough sketch of Maria Antonia of Bavaria's youth prior to her marriage with Friedrich Christian, see Weber, 1–29.

[92] For a detailed discussion of the relationship between anonymity and female authorship, see Susanne Kord, *Sich einen Namen machen*. Kord differentiates between the situations of women authors based on class distinctions: those *femmes savantes* belonging to the nobility had less fear of reprimand or distain for their intellectual abilities. Drawing a parallel between Catherine the Great and Maria Antonia, Kord notes: "Katharina II. und Maria Antonia Walpurgis hatten sowohl die Muße zum Schreiben als auch den nötigen finanziellen Rückhalt und brauchten außerdem keine Ächtung wegen ihrer Schriftstellerei zu fürchten" (90).

[93] For a detailed description of the founding of the Accademia dell'Arcadia, its early history, and functionalization for the advancement of the sciences and fine arts, see the extensive entry in Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* (66: 162–70). Zedler's also informs us that members of this learned society were know as "Arcadische Schäfer" (171), which might give pause to reflect back on Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta* and its moral pedagogy (see Ch. 2).

Fig. 5.1 & 5.2. *To the left, a portrait of Maria Antonia Walpurgis as a* femme savante*, by Pietro Rotari (circa 1755), holding a copy of her oratoria* Il triunfo delle fedeltà *with the initials of her pseudonym, E.T.P.A. clearly visible on the page. To the right, Maria Antonia lays her right hand on the crown, signifying her claim to political power (unknown artist).*

Maria Antonia entered into a marriage that was already marred by the specter of a power vacuum. Certainly, what Friedrich Christian lacked physically he made up for intellectually; he was well known for his *Geist* and versed in both the sciences and the arts. Maria Antonia's nineteenth-century biographer Carl von Weber maintains that Friedrich Christian's enlightened attitudes were ultimately what made him the ideal husband:

> Das Glück hatte allerdings Maria Antonia einen trefflichen Gatten beschieden. Friedrich Christian, wenn auch körperlich gebrechlich und an den Füßen gelähmt, war ein Mann vom wohlwollendsten Gemüth und dem edelsten Character: von inniger Liebe zu den schönen Künsten und Wissenschaften beseelt, harmonirte er hierin ganz mit seiner Gemahlin, und wenn seine Milde und Herzensgüte vielleicht der Entwicklung größerer

> Energie bisweilen entgegentreten mochte, so war Maria Antonia gerade nach ihrer Persönlichkeit geeignet, diesen Mangel, wenn man es als solchen bezeichnen wollte, auszugleichen. Seiner Gattin war er mit der innigsten Liebe zugethan. (37–38)

Weber describes Maria Antonia as making up for what Friedrich Christian lacked, and one could imagine that she was conscious of her (physical) superiority over him and of her command over his love. Weber relates that in her letters to her mother Maria Antonia asserted: "z.B. daß er [Friedrich Christian], der selbst nicht tanzte, doch bis um 4 Uhr ihr zu Liebe auf dem Ball geblieben und 'Staub geschluckt habe'" (38–39). Weber highlights the devotion that Friedrich Christian shows to Maria Antonia, but the words of Maria Antonia's letter reveal a lack of that respect typically shown to an equal, where his "eating her dust" connotes a hierarchical division and denigration of the prince's person.

But why depict Maria Antonia's marriage to Friedrich Christian as symptomatic of a power vacuum, if he was perceived as such a progressive and popular ruler? Although physical disability should not preclude a person from a political career today, Friedrich Christian's handicap represented a weak link in the tradition of patriarchal militarism that had dominated Saxony's political sphere. Moreover, the outbreak of the Seven Years' War had forced August III to flee from Prussian troops, and he spent the war living in "exile" at his palace in Warsaw. But it was his very absence that also afforded both Friedrich Christian and Maria Antonia the opportunity to govern for him *in absentia*. The pair officially handled the court's financial affairs starting in 1759, although it was Maria Antonia who largely conducted these matters (Weber 122–23), and Friedrich Christian officially transferred responsibility for the financial affairs of the court to Maria Antonia after the death of his father in 1763 (138–39). At this point, Maria Antonia was poised to assume political authority, and, as Fleig notes, she already had established

an influential position in Saxony, which she gained not just through marriage, but through her exceeding competence as a ruler and her husband's willing partnership (45). Thus during the same year as the first performance of *Talestri*, Maria Antonia was ready to assume the reins of power in Saxony and was already actively participating in the state's internal and foreign affairs. Unlike Catherine the Great's coup d'etat, political change was brought about by the Fates in Saxony, since both August III and his incompetent finance minister, Count Heinrich von Brühl, died within months of the *Uraufführung* of *Talestri*, already in October of 1763. Friedrich Christian joined them soon after in December, dying suddenly from a small pox infection, after having ruled but a mere 10 weeks. Thus immediately after Maria Antonia had exploited the court stage for representing herself as an enlightened Amazonian queen, a path actually cleared for her to assume the position of power that her opera had postulated through its imaginative praxis. While in reality Maria Antonia's political aspirations found limitation through her co-regent, Franz Xaver, Friedrich Christian's younger brother, she did continue to maintain a long-lasting correspondence with Saxony's former enemy, Friedrich the Great, from 1763 until shortly before her death in 1780.[94] Maria Antonia began her correspondence with Frederick in the months prior to her first performance of *Talestri*. As Heinz Drewes notes, she used this opportunity to communicate with the Prussian monarch about musical affairs, and indeed also enclosed both her operas, *Il trionfo della fedeltà* and *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni* with her first letter on 24 April 1763 (16–17). But the protagonist and subject matter of *Talestri*, namely the Queen of the Amazons, deals centrally with thematic questions regarding the nature of good leaders and enlightened political attitudes, particularly the legitimacy of female rule. Naturally this leads to an understanding of their letters more as a means to communicate about political affairs, which

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[94] See "Correspondance de Frédéric avec l'electrice Marie-Antoine de Saxe. (24 Avril 1763–28 Décembre 1779)," *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand* (24: 41–366).

conveniently runs on the pretext of their shared love of music and the fine arts (Drewes 17). After the Seven Years' War, Maria Antonia would actively attempt to secure the Polish crown for her son, Friedrich August (1750–1827), thereby negotiating not only with Friedrich the Great but also with the Empress of Russia, Catherine the Great. The latter represents another political "Amazon," whose own political machinations actually contravened Maria Antonia's, resulting in the termination of their correspondence in 1772.

Although Maria Antonia is generally thought to have agreed with many of the reforms proposed by Friedrich Christian, it remains an open question whether her husband was an aid or a hindrance to her political aspirations. The expression of progressive politics and enlightened ideals in *Talestri* stands in clear relation to the plan Maria Antonia and her husband outlined for the *rétablissement* of Saxony's court in the wake of the Seven Years' War,[95] and both lent support to Maria Antonia's claim to political power.[96] Her performance as the queen of the Amazons opens up an interpretation of the text as an autofictional self-staging that relates directly to her political aspirations, especially when considering the opera as a means for Maria Antonia to stage herself as a ruler within the framework of court ceremonies. Furthermore, questions remain with regard to her willingness to go along with some of the reforms proposed by Friedrich Christian, as one of his first measures as Elector was to close the court's opera, Maria Antonia's main venue for profiling herself as a female ruler (Fischer 60). Although they generally saw eye-to-eye in their reforms—for example the state support of education and the arts—this could be regarded as an exception, and even potentially as a thorn in Maria Antonia's eye. Moreover, keeping in mind the context of the Seven Years' War, which left Saxony in

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[95] For more on Maria Antonia and Friedrich Christian's plan for the *Rétablissement* of Saxony, see Schlechte.

[96] For more on the legal legitimacy of women's political rule in the absence or death of a king during the Late Middle Ages, see Kintzinger, 377–98.

shambles, particular attention must be paid to the presence or absence of violence in Maria Antonia's libretto, and to what extent her Amazons conform, subvert, or even transcend socially propagated notions of gender.

Minerva and the Amazons as Competing Symbols of Feminine Authority

While an exploration of the exact political maneuvers that Franz Xaver employed to prevent Maria Antonia from assuming a position of absolute power at Saxony's court lies outside the boundaries of this exposition, the significance that the symbols of the Amazons *and* Minerva/Pallas Athena had for female rulers in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries must be further explored here. *Femmes fortes* like Maria de Medici and Queen Christina of Sweden positioned themselves within a tradition of militaristic representations of feudal rulers. Schlumbohm for instance notes that these visual representations served as a kind of proto-feminist propaganda against misogynist arguments that questioned women's ability to lead based on patriarchal notions about women's physical and intellectual inferiority ("Die Glorifizierung der Barockfürstin" 114–16). These models served to underscore women's ability to effectively rule and to act as regents in the case of an underage or absent male successor. The utilization of symbols like Minerva/Pallas Athena and the Amazons thus helped female rulers capitalize on female allegories of wisdom and courage so as to visually reinforce their equality with male rulers. The ambivalent, androgynous symbol of Minerva allowed them to transfer virtues typically reserved for men, such as prudence (*Weisheit*), virtue (*Tugend*), courage (*Tapferkeit*), and bravery (*Mut*) to women. Both Schlumbohm and Baumgärtel, however, reject the idea that these representations of female rulers as Amazons constitute a blurring of gender distinction, or that the utilization of the Amazon or Minerva tropes might imply a foreign Otherness. They read

these images instead as representing an idealization of femininity that combines positive traits of men and women, positing a utopian kind of androgyny—like we saw in Luise Gottsched's play—without negating femininity or assuming a monstrous character. Schlumbohm emphasizes that visual representations of women rulers as Amazons or as Minerva/Pallas Athena remain idealizations, and that they do not therefore threaten gender distinctions:

> Dieses Idealbild, das die italienische Renaissancekonzeption der *virago* aufnimmt, meint dabei keinesfalls die vermännlichte Frau, das Mannweib; eine solche *femme hommasse* gilt allgemein als abschreckend. Angesetzt wird vielmehr hier eine ideale Mischung von *douceur* und *beauté* einerseits und *force* und *fierté* andererseits, von eminent weiblichen Reizen und spezifisch männlichen Eigenschaften […] Sie ist ein idealisierendes und ideologisches Konstrukt, dem der Replikcharakter und die Intention des Gleichwertigkeitsnachweises unschwer anzumerken sind. ("Glorifizierung" 114)

This thesis unsatisfyingly refutes a liminal transvestitism, relating that an androgynous *Mannweib* would be offensive, and Baumgärtel instead posits that these allegorical representations merely project masculine traits onto the feminine body, which remains "beautiful" and "graceful," with the added characteristic of strength, here echoing Luise Gottsched's idealization of Panthea as a strong, beautiful woman. Important for the following close reading of *Talestris*, Minerva's beauty does not stand in contraction to strength (*force*) or autonomy, whereas Johann Gottsched's *Atalanta* deconstructs female autonomy by representing an antagonism between a woman's physical power and the preservation of her pulchritude. The physicality, that is, the biological body of the *femme forte*, however, plays a central role in Baumgärtel's argument. Indeed, biology seems to be damning in her reading, where she argues against a queen having two bodies—in the sense posited by Kantorowicz regarding the king's

two bodies—contending that a queen remains bound to her sex through her roles as mother and wife, and this motif becomes central in the analysis of *Talestri*. Baumgärtel affirms the use of Amazonian imagery by queens, particularly by Maria de Medici, but she also contends:

> Folglich dürfte die Interpretationen der Amazone / Minerva, die bis heute als Beispiel für *gender crossing*, d.h. für Rollenwechsel und Vermännlichung der Frau, angeführt wird, nicht haltbar sein. Vielmehr zeigt sich, wie die Figur der Amazone / Minerva zum weiblichen Pendant des Herkules, dem männlichen Herrschersymbol nicht nur des französischen Königs, wurde und zur offiziellen, politischen Metapher für weibliche Stärke und Klugheit transzendiert. Im Falle der Regentin fand demnach keine Trennung des 'politischen' Körpers vom 'natürlichen' statt, sondern immer nur eine Vermischung und Überschneidung des Weiblichen mit dem Politischen. (153)

Indeed, Minerva/Pallas Athena and the Amazons found increasing popularity among numerous women in positions of power during the 17th century, particularly as a means for solidifying their claims to political authority through the arts and as emblems of female strength and intelligence, by visually reinforcing and legitimating claims to women's capacity to rule.

Fig 5.3 & 5.4. *Queen Christina of Sweden portrayed on the left by Giuseppe Testana, shows her in calm repose upon a horse. The painting on the right (artist unknown) portrays Christina as Bradamante, wearing a helmet and holding a lance.*

Yet this trend among female rulers to identify explicitly with Minerva, who is almost always portrayed wearing armor and bearing weapons, correlated with patronage of the arts, as was the case with both Christina of Sweden and Maria de Medici. The former founded the *Accademia dell'Arcadia*, in which Maria Antonia acquired membership in 1747. Similarly, Maria de Medici commissioned Peter Paul Rubens to paint 21 large-format portraits of her, many of which allegorically represent her directly as Minerva, or in the company of this or similar goddesses like Victoria (Neyster, "Regentinnen und Amazonen" 98–103). These allegories of female authority, based on the Amazonian character traits of strength and intelligence, represented positive archetypes for women who ruled. Portraits of female rulers as Amazons and Minerva assert a positive image of femininity, which was also part of the *querelle des femmes* in

the seventeenth century. These antique eidolons were rejuvenated through living examples of *femmes fortes* and *femmes savantes.*

Maria Antonia Walpurgis was also a contemporary of the Empress Catherine the Great of Russia (1729–1796), who was famous not only as a Minerva-like protector of the arts and sciences, but also for overseeing the rapid expansion of the Russian Empire, which acquired lands in what is now Poland, Lithuania, the Crimean Peninsula, Ukraine, and even Alaska (Dixon 270–92). While the Empress also dabbled in the arts and was additionally lauded via allegorizations as Minerva (Pfeiff 106–09), her association with the Amazons takes in increasing relevance with regard to Maria Antonia's own claims to power and her self-staging as an Amazon. Catherine the Great was, indeed, a very real Amazon, thinking of the famous portrait of her by Eriksen (see fig. 5.5), where she sits atop a war horse, not riding side-saddle in a dress like Christina of Sweden, but wearing a soldier's uniform with boots and leggings. This Amazonian portrait famously relates to an episode from the *coup d'état* against her husband Peter III (1728–1762) in July of 1762. Here Catherine stole away disguised in men's attire to give a speech to the Ismailovsky regiment, asking for its protection, after her plans for a coup had been prematurely discovered. She then had herself sworn in as regent by the Russian clergy and promptly had her husband arrested. He died under mysterious circumstances while imprisoned. Peter III had already lost a great deal of favor among his generals and the aristocracy for his admiration of Frederick the Great and consequent secession of Russian lands to the Prussian leader following the Seven Years' War. Like Friedrich Christian, Peter III also reigned only for a very brief interlude, a little over six months, before Catherine deposed him (Dixon 108–25).

Fig. 5.5. *Catherine the Great wearing the uniform of the Preobrazhensky regiment, which supported her during her* coup d'état*. Portrait by Virgilius Eriksen (1762).*

Keeping in mind contemporaries like Catherine the Great and the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (see Ch. 1), Maria Antonia's choice of the Amazons as the subject matter for her third opera relates to a broader visual tradition of Amazonian and Minervan allegories utilized as self-stylizations by highly educated women of the nobility in seventeenth-century France. Indeed, the ideal of strong, intelligent, active, independent, and even bellicose female leaders gained a strong foundation through notions of the *femme forte* and the *femme savante*, which remained intimately connected to the eidolons of Minerva and the Amazons. At the same time, women like Catherine the Great and Maria Theresa were also actively taking part in political affairs and governing

independently as female rulers. Maria Antonia inscribes herself into this visual tradition through her Amazonian opera. In addition, she was also often identified as Minerva, in line with her patronage of the arts and her own artistic talents as a learned woman.

As noted in Ch. 1, Johann Christoph Gottsched functioned as the main propagator of enlightened ideals at the Saxon court,[97] and he praised Maria Antonia Walpurgis on numerous occasions not only for her love and support of the arts, but also as an artistic virtuoso in her own right. For instance, in a speech given to commemorate Maria Antonia's second visit to the University of Leipzig on 26 April 1749, Gottsched magnanimously proclaims:

> Heute kläret sich der Himmel unsers Helikons abermal aus; da wir unsre Durchlauchtigste Pallas, die gnädigste Vorsteherinn aller Wissenschaften, abermal gegenwärtig verehren können. Doch ich sage noch zu wenig. Unsre Verehrung ist indessen noch stärker geworden. Wir haben in dieser Zeit, auch ein unvergleichliches Gedicht gelesen und bewundert; welches wir der scharfsinnigsten Schwester Apollons zueignen würden, wenn es nicht durch den Geist der wahren Religion belebet wäre. (*AW* 9.2: 556–57)

Gottsched refers here to the libretto that Maria Antonia wrote for Johann Adolph Hasse's opera, *La conversione di Sant'Agostina*, which he would translate into German in 1764. He also rendered her pastoral *Il trionfo della fedeltà* into German years earlier, and finally translated her masterpiece *Talestri* into German Alexandrines. This work was published posthumously by his niece Victoria Eleonora Grohmann in 1766. While Maria Antonia is not the only woman artist to whom Johann Gottsched bestowed the title of Pallas Athena—see Ch. 1 & 3 regarding his overt deification and covert subordination of his wife, Victoria Louise Adelgunde Gottsched, née

[97] For more on Johann Gottsched's role preaching enlightened ideals, see Straßberger.

Kulmus, via Minerva allegories—it is very curious that scholars have largely negated the value of Johann Gottsched's translation of Maria Antonia's work, and even gone so far as to question the authenticity of this last labor of love (Reichel 244–49; Mitchell *AW* 11: 83). Certainly, the fact that Johann Gottsched chose to translate two of Maria Antonia's operas stands as remarkable in itself, particularly considering his earlier condemnation of opera as genre in his *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*. In the second installment of the *Dichtkunst* (1742) he harshly decries: "Die Oper sey das ungereimteste Werk, das der menschliche Verstand jemals erfunden hat" (*AW* 6.2: 366). This begs the question why he swooned over *Talestri*, to the point of placing Maria Antonia in line with great poets like Virgil and Tasso in his review of the opera in *Das neueste aus der anmuthigen Gelehrsamkeit*.[98] One supposition could be that Maria Antonia represented a union of his idealized wife Luise Gottsched as a learned woman, with the Electress, who was *also* a highly educated and talented woman, and also a *femme forte*. His admiration clearly evinces itself in his *Handlexicon oder kurzgefaßtes Wörterbuch der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* (1760), which includes a relatively long entry (three pages) for her nom-de-plume, "Ermelinda Thalea." In that same work, even contemporary giants like Voltaire, and Molière, or Gottsched's antiquarian hero Aristotle all received only single-page entries. In his entry for Maria Antonia, he exudes:

[98] Gottsched attests: "Die poetische und musikalische Welt erinnert sich noch mit doppeltem Vergnügen, des unvergleichlichen *Trionfo della Fedeltà*, oder des *Triumphes der Treue*, als eines musikalischen Schäferspiels: womit eine Durchlauchtigste Muse vor etlichen Jahren sie beschenket und vergnüget hat. Die Kunstrichter haben es bemerket, daß Virgil, der größte Dichter des alten Roms, sich von der niedrigen Schäferpoesie zu der vom Feldbaue, und von dieser zum Heldengedichte in der *Aeneis* emporgeschwungen: eben so, wie auch Tasso nochmals sich von seinem Schäferspiele *Aminta*, zum *befreyten Jerusalem* erhoben hat. Eben diesen Schwung hat auch unsre Durchlauchtigste Ermelinde genommen: indem sie sich von der so reizenden Schäferflur ihrer triumphirenden Treue, zu einer tragischen Bühne, in einer gekrönten Talestris emporgeschwungen hat" (12: 885–86).

> Diese durchlauchtigste Muse ist eine erhabene Zierde unserer Zeiten, sowohl für Deutschland überhaupt, als für Bayern und Sachsen insonderheit. Ihren Stamm, der zu den höchsten der Erden gehöret, und wahren Namen zu melden, verbiethet uns die Ehrfurcht; und die Betrachtung: daß ohne dieß ganz Europa Sie schon an diesem Namen zu erkennen und zu verehren weis. (635)

Here Johann Gottsched significantly assumes a subservient position, only to covertly act as a controlling judge of her work. Her political authority forces him into a position of subordination as a (male) subject, to which he all too gladly accedes. Indeed, his idealization of Maria Antonia echoes his praise of Luise Gottsched/Kulmus via *Minnesang* rhetoric, which serves to objectify the enlightened virtues of women.

Johann Gottsched's admiration for Maria Antonia Walpurgis surely extends beyond just her talents as a composer and writer, and his praises often point towards recognizing her as a competent, enlightened female ruler. In the dedicatory text addressed to the reader of the 1765 partitura of *Talestri*, he specifically emphasizes Maria Antonia Walpurgis as a great artist and competent ruler:

> Mein Leser. / Siehst du hier Geschmack und Kunst vereint, / So schön als dieses Paar sonst irgendwo erscheint: / So wünsch: ANTONIA, DAS GÖTTERKIND, soll leben! / Die an Verstand und Witz Europas Wunder bleibt. / Wird nur des Himmels Hand Ihr Glück so hoch erheben, / Als Sie des Geistes Gaben treibt; / Darinn Gelehrsamkeit und ächte Staatskunst glänzen; / Wie glücklich seyd ihr dann, ihr edlen Meissner-Gränzen! (n.pag.)

Akin to his praises of Luise Gottsched as a learned woman, Johann remains fixated on Maria Antonia's intelligence (*Verstand*, *Witz*), noting, however, how she merges learnedness with

political prowess. Thus this paratext highlights two social and biographical categories, that of feminine education (*Gelehrsamkeit*) during the 18th century, which relates to the symbol of Minerva mobilized by *femmes savantes*, and women's facility as political and military leaders (*Staatskunst*). His praise of her ability to rule relates to Maria Antonia's situation in Saxony during the 1760's, since she had already begun to demonstrate her talent for statecraft overseeing the finances of the court during the Seven Years' War. *Talestri* can thus be understood in the context of this tradition of visual representations of female rulers as Minerva and Amazons. Yet Maria Antonia's self-identification with the queen of the Amazons and her glorification as Saxony's Minerva are not identical, and it would be wise not to conflate the symbols. Minerva holds significance in relation to *femmes savantes*, whereas Maria Antonia's political agency as a *femme forte* is connected directly to the symbol of the Amazon. At the same time, her unique combination of political power with an immense education and artistic talents demands further reflection on her choice of the Amazon mythos as distinct from the symbol of Minerva. A possible blurring of these eidolons, as we observed in *Panthea* and *Atalanta*, thus remains significant for a consideration of her libretto.

The Court Stage as Heterotopic Space for a Transformative Politics of (Gender) Identity

When her opera is understood as an autofictional self-staging, the Amazonian figures of *Talestri* cannot simply be understood as projections of femininity onto masculinity, or vice versa, as we saw in Luise Gottsched's *Panthea*. As Fleig and Fischer have pointed out, the connection between Maria Antonia's poetic appropriation of the Amazon and her status as woman occupying a position of power in Saxony's court echoes her identity as a *femme savante* and her association with Minerva. However, the idealization of a female leader as an Amazon does not

de-potentiate the gender ambiguity bound up with the Amazons or the figure of Minerva, counter to what Baumgärtel and Schlumbohm would have us believe. Following Kerényi and Theweleit, a certain ambivalence remains inherent to both archetypes; Amazons and Minerva exhibit femininity and beauty, but they also cross-dress, wearing armor and helmets, and bear (often phallically connoted) weapons, which remain inherently threatening as instruments of war. But Amazonian androgyny also operated within a tradition of playful performance and inversion of standard gender roles on the operatic and comedic stage, and in this sense Maria Antonia inscribes *Talestri* into a long tradition of court performances and aesthetics (Rahn 74–98). These often included carnivalesque revelries that mockingly inverted social norms and hierarchies through the trope of Amazonian cross-dressing. Watanabe-O'Kelly relates several reports of court festivities in German-speaking lands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that usually involved men cross-dressing as cross-dressed Amazons. For instance, Johann Georg II—of Saxony—once dressed as Penthesilea in 1654 and set up a tournament for the women of the court ("Amazonen" 132–36). Recalling the Amazonian portraits of Christina of Sweden, as part of her coronation ceremonies in 1650 she held an Amazonian parade titled *Nachtricht durch was Gelegenheit die Berühmte Königinnenn der Amazonen Antiope, Penthesilea und Thalestris [...] den Vorzug der Weiber für den Männern zuerweisen Tugend und Ruhm der Königin verteidigten*, in which knights appeared dressed as Amazons (Fleig 51). Indeed, cross-dressing and the Amazon thematic were endemic to the operatic stage as well—as a more specific locus of late-baroque court culture—and well over 20 operas featuring Amazons had already been written by 1700 (Fleig 53–54; Freeman 431–60). While the tradition of the *Hosenrolle* also has a long tradition on the stage,[99] the plasticity of genders in opera is especially prominent, not only due to

[99] For more regarding the history of cross-dressing on the European stage, see de Ponte.

the popularity of the Amazon mythos as a narrative subject, but also given the use of castrati to sing female parts. In these latter instances, a literal transgression against the body underwrote the imaginative representation occurring on the stage. In Maria Antonia Walpurgis's opera there are no castrati; however the male lead was sung by a woman, and thus a double cross-dressing also took place during the performance of *Talestri*. In this regard Maria Antonia's opera, although also a celebratory performance for August III's birthday, might be taken as a critique of social circumstances based on its suspension and inversion of norms. One thinks of Bakhtin's notion of carnivalesque laughter, which gives the opera meaning when viewed as a communicative praxis in a space of play.

Michel Foucault's heterotopia concept provides an excellent tool for understanding Maria Antonia Walpurgis's construction of a new identity in the virtual space of the operatic stage. Although Foucault presented his essay, "Des espaces autres," to the Architectural Studies Circle in 1967, a little more than two hundred years after the first performance of *Talestri*, his theory of heterotopias is profoundly relevant for a discussion of the alternate social spaces created on stage and in theaters. His essay, translated as "Different Spaces," has already gained recognition from sociologists as an appropriate paradigm for understanding the implications of communicative platforms for the formation of identities and as heterogeneous, dynamic social spaces where values are negotiated and thrown into question. This model applies well to an understanding of Maria Antonia's Amazonian alterity as a political statement transmitted through a court performance. Foucault defines these heterogeneous spaces as realms in which our emplacement, our embeddedness in any given social context or tradition, becomes suspended or reversed by means of a plurality of identities. He designates trains, other modes of transit, streets, theaters, railway stations, and cafés as typical heterotopic spaces. These are not unreal utopias, but locales

that actually exist within a society. In heterotopias "all the other real emplacements that can be found within the culture are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed, sorts of places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable" (178). Relevant for our analysis of Maria Antonia's virtual, autofictional performance as Talestris on the court stage, Foucault defines the mirror as a heterotopia where the construction of identity takes place:

> In the mirror I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up virtually behind the surface; I am over there where I am not, a kind of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to look at myself there where I am absent – a mirror utopia. But it is also a heterotopia in that the mirror really exists, in that it has a sort of return effect on the place that I occupy. Due to the mirror, I discover myself absent at the place where I am, since I see myself over there. From that gaze which settles on me, as it were, I come back to myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the sense that it makes this place I occupy at the moment I look at myself in the glass both utterly real, connected with the entire space surrounding, and utterly unreal – since, to be perceived, it is obliged to go by way of that virtual point which is over there. (179)

Maria Antonia's identification with Talestri hinges upon her embodiment of the character in the social context of the court stage. This stage, when understood as a heterotopia, functions as a mirror of society, a virtual space in which the actress becomes absent to herself and, while immersed in a new social sphere and dynamic created in the diegesis of the opera, forms a new identity "behind the surface" of the performance that is then projected back onto her identity in the real world. Indeed, one could also think of Lacan's notion of the mirror stage, where he posits that the formation of self-identity depends on self-alienation (*Four Fundamental Concepts*

203–15). Thus via her performance as the queen of the Amazons, through a playful inverted world, Maria Antonia was able to author a new identity for herself as a female ruler, which then serves as a means for reflecting on her position inside above the court hierarchy in Dresden.

Maria Antonia Walpurgis clearly inserts herself into a long visual tradition in which female rulers stylized themselves as Amazons and Minervas. This tradition was fed by the renewed popularity of classical literature based on the revival of learning during the Renaissance, but also specifically by the ideal of the learned woman during this time, to notions of women as the stronger sex, as *femmes fortes*. Intelligent and politically astute women in positions of privilege and power recuperated notions of wisdom and heroism from men, and these women were often imagined as powerful, even as potentially militant Amazons. With this broader social context in mind, the performance of *Talestri* becomes particularly relevant, because Maria Antonia literally embodied the Queen of the Amazons directly before the eyes of August III, the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. She not only dons the helmet, armor, and weapons of the Amazons, but the title of their queen as well! Indeed, the systematic transcendence and subversion of traditional gender boundaries on the operatic stage relate to complex shifts, subversions, and constructions of gender identities in Maria Antonia's autofictional self-staging as a ruler, particularly in the context of positing a progressive idea about female leadership at the Saxon court. Her utilization of the ambiguous Amazon imago moves beyond mere castrati singing the roles written for women, i.e. soprano parts. The Amazons in *Talestris* were performed by cross-dressing women wearing "masculine" warrior costumes, which does not necessarily negate their femininity, but emphasizes gender as a *performance* via meta-costumes. For instance, engravings from the partitura of *Talestri*, published by Breitkopf in 1765, show actresses playing Amazons clearly marked as Amazons through their helmets, breastplates,

shields, and spears. At the same time, underneath their Amazonian armor, the actresses also clearly wear the “costume” of the day: large trellised dresses that were then fashionable among ladies (see fig. 5.6). In another engraving from the 1765 partitura (see fig. 5.7), the Scythian and Amazon leads—Oronte, Talestri, Antiope, and Learco shown from left to right—are hardly discernable in terms of being male or female by their costumes. The male prisoners wear slightly smaller dresses, and the fact that Oronte was played by the Countess Mnischek further adds to the ambiguity, as her “Sycthian” breastplate is actually that of an Amazon (see fig. 5.7, figure on far left). Finally, in the engraving portraying the final confrontation between the Amazons and the Scythians (see fig. 5.8), the typical hetero-normative fashions of the day reveal themselves, with the trellised dresses of the Amazons almost out-presencing their armor and weapons. While the costumes of the Amazons and the Scythians still largely reproduced normative fashions for men and women, the additional layer of costume placed on top of these costumes throws a hetero-normative dichotomy of gender into flux. The fact that traditional fashions of the day made their way onto Maria Antonia’s stage connects performance to its social context. This does not imply a failure of drag or cross-dressing, but rather emphasizes the fact that her opera, while an imaginative performance, was still bound to the social sphere that it reflects, here thinking of Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia described above, and that it successfully threw gender distinctions into question.

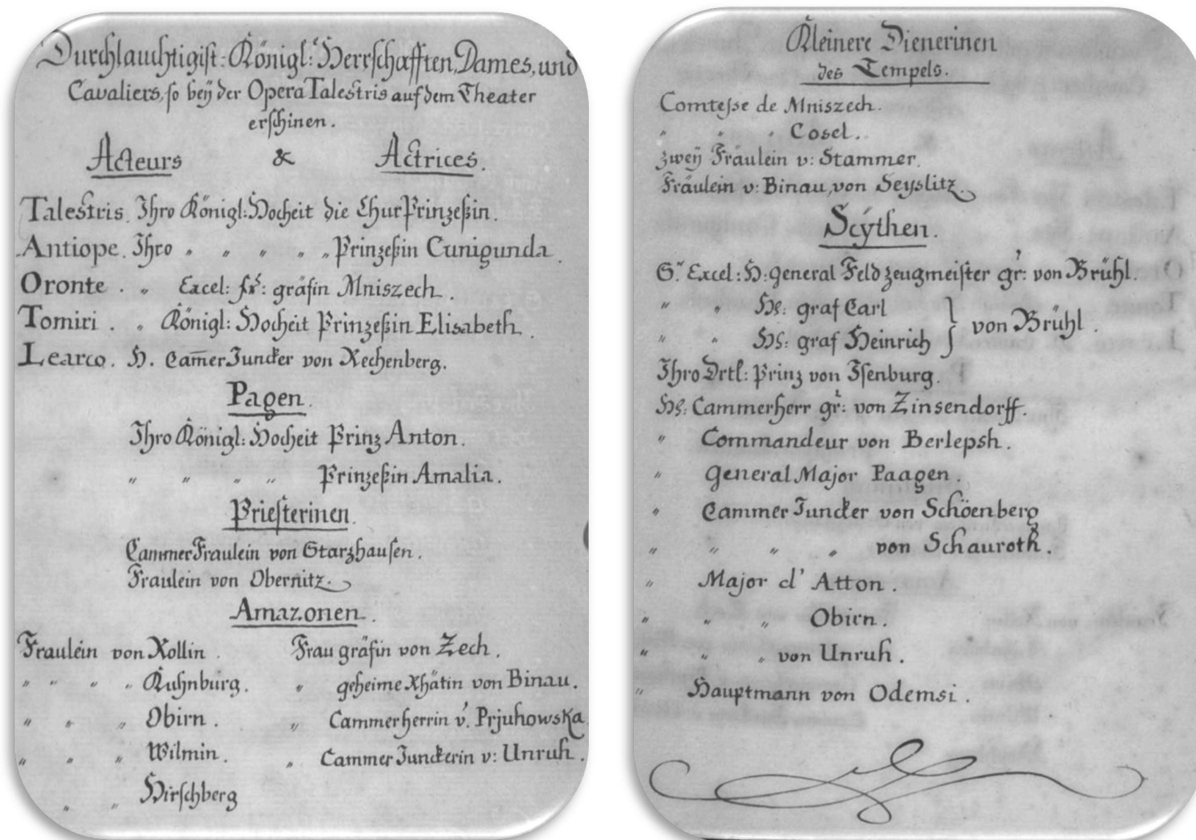
Fig. 5.6. *Engraving from 1765 partitura of Talestri, published by Breitkopf, showing Talestri on her throne.*

Fig. 5.7. *Engraving from 1765 partitura of* Talestri*, published by Breitkopf, showing Oronte, Talestri, Antiope, and Learco from left to right.*

Fig. 5.8. *Engraving from 1765 partitura of* Talestri*, showing the final confrontation between the Amazons and the Scythians at the opera's conclusion.*

As Fischer points out, "Regarding gender, the world that Maria Antonia put on the stage was in many ways the exact reverse of that in the audience, arranged around the male monarch" ("Self-Stylisation" 212), since she placed herself at the center of the opera, singing the most pieces and wearing the most expensive costume (209). The Reithalle at the Dresden court's riding stable had been renovated into an opera house that could seat 532 audience members (Fischer, *Visionen* 386), and the audience was seated in a way that mirrored the typical hierarchy of the court's social order. The auditorium was centered on the monarch, August III, and an audience member's importance was defined by how close or far they sat from the king, which was a typical practice at absolutist courts (Fischer 389). As Fischer notes: "Im kleinen Theater des Reithauses wurden dabei wie üblich hierarchische Systeme kreiert und einander gegenübergestellt: eines im Zuschauerraum und eines auf der Bühne. […] Zum andern stellte

Maria Antonia damit auf der Bühne Hierarchien zur Schau, die nicht mit den im Zuschauerraum repräsentierten korrespondieren" (Fischer 393). Thus Maria Antonia juxtaposed her own dramatic role as the monarch of the Amazons against August III's real position of power at the court and in the seating hierarchy of the audience. Indeed, the entire operatic scenario can be understood as representing an inverted world, with women at the center of the action rather than the periphery. It is even more interesting that the leading male part in the opera, that of Oronte, was sung/performed by the Countess Mnischek, which can be gleaned from a beautifully hand-written note found at the end of the 1763 bilingual edition of *Talestris* (see fig. 5.8, 5.9). While the singing role of Learch was performed by the Kammerjunker von Rechenburg, all other Scythian extras were played by members of high-ranking, powerful noble houses. Indeed, like their social costumes that reveal themselves beneath their Scythian and Amazonian costumes (see especially fig. 5.8), the silent presence of male members of the court on the stage correlates with a breach of the sociopolitical reality, revealing that the boundaries of the performance were fluid, as a heterotopic imagined world connected to the social spaces from which it was engendered and—arguably—emancipated.



Durchlauchtigist: Königl: Herrschafften, Dames, und Cavaliers, so bey der Opera Talestris auf dem Theater erschinen.

Acteurs & Actrices.

Talestris. Ihro Königl: Hocheit die ChurPrinzeßin.
Antiope. Ihro " " " " Prinzeßin Cunigunda.
Oronte. " Excel: Fr: gräfin Mniszech.
Tomiri. " Königl: Hocheit Prinzeßin Elisabeth.
Learco. H. CamerJuncker von Rechenberg.

Pagen.

Ihro Königl: Hocheit Prinz Anton.
" " " Prinzeßin Amalia.

Priesterinen.

CammerFraulein von Starzhausen.
Fraulein von Obernitz.

Amazonen.

Fraulein von Kollin. — Frau gräfin von Zech.
" " " Rußnburg. — " geheime Räthin von Binau.
" " " Obirn. — " Cammerherrin v. Prjuhowska
" " " Wilmin. — " Cammer Junckerin v: Unruh.
" " Hirschberg

Kleinere Dienerinen des Tempels.

Comtesse de Mniszech.
" " Cosel.
zwey Fraulein v: Stammer.
Fraulein v: Binau, von Seyslitz.

Scythen.

Sr. Excel: H: general Feldzeugmeister gr: von Brühl.
" " Hr: graf Carl } von Brühl.
" " Hr: graf Heinrich }
Ihro Drtl: Prinz von Isenburg.
Hr: Cammerherr gr: von Zinsendorff.
" Commandeur von Berlepsh.
" general Major Paagen.
" Cammer Juncker von Schoenberg
" " " " von Schauroth.
" Major d'Atton.
" " " Obirn.
" " " von Unruh.
" Hauptmann von Odemsi.

Fig. 5.9 & 5.10. *Handwritten list of the cast members of* Talestris *from the 1763 performance. Addendum to the print manuscript, which notably shows that all the roles of Scythians and Amazons were played by aristocratic members of the court.*

While one might criticize Maria Antonia's *Talestris* as an elitist project beholden to court performances and aesthetics—indeed only three performances took place, all before the royal family and members of the aristocracy in the court theater (Fischer, *Visionen* 383)—such a musical staging performed almost exclusively by members of the nobility was unprecedented. Public performances by adult nobles, even in elite circles, were generally frowned upon as being outside of the court's behavioral code. But when understood in the broader context of court ceremonies as carnivalesque extensions of the sociopolitical sphere, as heterotopic spaces of imaginative praxis, *Talestris* gains a great deal of weight as a potential political statement or critique of the status quo. Although on the surface her opera might appear insignificant, a fleeting footnote in the history of Saxony, the fact that the Electress commissioned not one but

several publications of the opera stands as a testament to the fact that the text of the libretto[100] extends this imagined space of the performance to an even broader audience, then and even now, as the text remains open to interpretation even today. While the fluidity of gender and the androgyny made palpable by the performance can only be documented by engravings and descriptions by audience members, the representation of gender differences, or the lack thereof, forms a central crux for reading Maria Antonia's text. Although the performance certainly magnifies the significance of certain passages involving gender ambiguity, the libretto also refers to cross-dressing performances on the stage. Additionally, Maria Antonia's opera situates her as Amazon not only with regard to the broader context of an enlightened discourse about learned women (via Minerva analogies as well), but also in relation to a tradition of female rulers who programmatically represented themselves as Amazons and Minervas. By literally embodying the queen of the Amazons on stage, Maria Antonia was making a claim to real political authority. This makes itself evident through the fluidity of boundaries between the performance and its surrounding social context. The following close reading will focus on representations of gender and women's political authority in the written text, in order to further discern the extent to which Maria Antonia intellectually claimed her right to power through the composition of this opera. The aim is to demonstrate how *Talestris*, beyond the performance of the opera, reinforces a woman's right to rule, and how the opera transcends and subverts traditional notions of gender.

[100] For a persuasive argument regarding the value of libretti as important documents in the cultural archive of Europe, see Groos 2–11.

Chapter 6: Affirmations of Sisterhood and Visions of Transcending Gender in *Talestri. Regina delle amazonni / Talestris. Königin der Amazonen* (1763)

> "Charismatic domination means a rejection of all ties to any external order in favor of the exclusive glorification of the genuine mentality of the prophet[ess] and hero[ine]. Hence, its attitude is revolutionary and transvalues everything; it makes a sovereign break with all traditional or rational norms."
>
> — Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*

The social context and performance of *Talestri* at the court of Saxony naturally condition an interpretation of the Electress's text, and scholarship cannot avoid the author's literal embodiment of her protagonist on stage. An awareness of the social context surrounding the performance, and the physical conditions of the performance itself, potentiate a close reading of the opera. Building upon the scholarship of Fischer and Fleig, this chapter explicates her work as a heterotopic, inverted mirror that Maria Antonia held up to the court hierarchy of August III, thereby revealing her own claims to political power. Her opera is significant both as text *and* as performance, even though the opera was only performed three times during Maria Antonia's lifetime. In the immediate context of its reception as a political statement, from the princess addressed directly to the king, the performance signals their co-presence in the same communicative space, but the text remains a cultural artifact still open for new readings and assessments. The first publication of the libretto was in Italian and appeared in 1760 as Maria Antonia and Friedrich Christian took refuge in Munich during the Seven Years' War. The second publication, a dual-language libretto, *Talestri, Regina della Amazonni / Talestris. Königin der Amazonen*, appeared in 1763, followed immediately by the first recorded performance at the Dresden court. This dual-language edition expanded the reading audience of her work, and its

reception was further promoted when a *partitura* by Breitkopf was published in 1765, and then eventually through Johann Christoph Gottsched's adaptation of the opera into heroic alexandrines, published posthumously in 1766.[101] Through the communicative medium of print, Maria Antonia staged herself as an Amazon not just within the social sphere of the aristocratic court, but for literati across Europe.

The publication of her opera is closely tied to the Gottscheds' didactic project, that is, to the transmission of emerging ideals via the communicative praxis of published texts. This feature unites *Talestri* with *Atalanta* and *Panthea*. Maria Antonia's libretto can also be aligned with Luise Gottsched's proto-feminist poetics, in that she was not only also a learned woman, but one in a position of political power, thus doubly embodying the figures of Minerva and the Amazons. An analysis of the figures and events represented in this imagined space of social reflection centers on the liminal symbol of the Amazons—and also indirectly around Minerva. As with the Gottscheds' texts, competing symbolic orders require detailed analysis, particularly with respect to enlightened assertions regarding gender equality and recalcitrant reiterations of a repressive gender hierarchy that continually resurface in "enlightened" texts. This is especially true considering the negotiations and contestations of fixed gender roles in Johann's *Atalanta* and Luise Gottsched's *Panthea*. Concrete assertions in *Talestri* about women's ability to *rationally* rule can be related to burgeoning efforts towards women's intellectual (and political)

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[101] The Gottscheds' hugely important role as mediators of enlightened ideals springs from their shared vocation as translators, which enabled them to transmit scientific, philosophical, and cultural works from throughout Europe to a German-speaking readership. Maria Antonia's opera would have found a much greater audience beyond the wall of the courts in Dresden and Leipzig through multifarious translations and publications. *Talestri* was printed at least another ten times during Maria Antonia's lifetime, including a translaion into French by Claude de Marolles in 1765. For a detailed bibliography, see Fischer, *Visionen* 436–38. This close reading follows the 1763 bilingual edition of the libretto, which remains much closer to Maria Antonia's original Italian verse than Johann Gottsched's baroque alexandrines.

emancipation. While the opera's aristocratic valance perhaps runs counter to the sisterhood of women that would protest and fight for their rights amidst the massive social upheavals of the French Revolution some thirty years later, Maria Antonia's privileged position of political power does not negate the sociosemiotic significance of Amazons in her text. Her *opera drammatica* will therefore be considered as a political statement regarding women's ability to rule, in line with certain model contemporaries, like the Amazonian Empresses Catharina the Great of Russia and the Minerva-like Maria Theresa of Austria (see Ch. 1 & 5). At the same time, one should not discount the possibility that the libretto presents a vision of broader gender equality. Maria Antonia's Amazons invoke women rulers like Catherine the Great, who literally seized power in Amazonian fashion only a year before the opera's performance. They also reiterate that *femmes savantes* and *femmes fortes* had long since mobilized mythological archetypes of strong women as a means for visually orchestrating their claims to social power.

Amazons were already recognizable figures in the cultural archive, and their militant presence was reaching a crescendo just as Maria Antonia's opera was published and performed. Felix Christian Weisse's patriotic *Amazonen-Lieder* appeared just as the Seven Years' War was drawing to its end in 1762. Similarly, pointing to detailed court records in the Dresden state archives, Fischer notes that the Electress's library contained a copy of Claude Marie Guyon's *Histoire des amazones anciennes et modernes* (1740), which was also translated into German by Johann Gr. Krünitz and published the same year as Maria Antonia's opera performances in 1763 (*Visionen* 76). Guyon's work becomes particularly significant, because he emphasizes the historical reality of Amazons and denies that they represent mere fantasies of Greek poets, and Maria Antonia's *Talestris* certainly reflects the living truth of Guyon's sentiments. Conversely, in Weisse's *Amazonen-Lieder*, women are not active Amazons out on the battlefield, but only

vicariously dream of combat, as with the female narrator/protagonist in Weisse's text. This echoes Panthea's desire to join Abradates on the battlefield in Luise Gottsched's drama, but aligns more with Johann Gottsched's similar instantiation of women's dreams in *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*. It is precisely this "female" model for creating role dichotomies that Guyon breaks away from, instead comparing the ancient Amazons to powerful, ruling women in the Early Modern period (*Histoire* vi–viii). He moves from classical figures in ancient Greek literature, like Penthesilea and Hippolyte, to more modern Amazonian heroines like Christine of Sweden or Jeanne d'Arc. The overarching point of Guyon's work is to quash the notion that the Amazons are merely a myth.[102]

The penultimate Amazon described by Guyon, before he moves on to the modern and foreign Amazons, is Talestris[103] (*Histoire* 188–90). Talestris famously visited Alexander the Great in his war camp (circa 300 BCE), arriving with three hundred mounted Amazonian warriors under her command, after hearing tales about the Macedonian leader's feats of conquest. While Plutarch remains ambivalent about the story's status as truth or myth (*The Age of Alexander* bk. 7, par. 46), Guyon cites multiple classical sources—including Diodorus, Justinius, and Curtius Rufus—and relates how Talestris bluntly communicates the purpose of her visit: she wants to bear Alexander's child. Hearing of his heroic military accomplishments, she hoped to create a super-soldier Amazon, infused with Alexander's strength and intelligence. Accordingly, she spent thirteen nights with him before returning to her people. A male-child would stay with the father, a female child with the mother, but Talestris died in battle before she could give birth.

[102] Recent archeological finds near the Black Sea, including modern day Ukraine, have revealed women warriors buried with their battle accouterments (Börner 98–175; Mayor 63–83).
[103] Maria Antonia's libretto spells Talestris without a theta. While this orthography seems the exception rather than rule in both German and English, the spelling from the 1763 bilingual libretto has been retained here for more continuity with the ensuing analysis.

Fig. 6.1. *Engraving of Talestris by Ch. Mathey from Claude Marie Guyon's* Histoire des Amazones anciennes et modernes *(1740)*.

The figure of Talestris enjoys a long textual tradition—similar to Penthesilea and Atalanta—through the popularity of Alexander epics during the Late Middle Ages. Prominent examples are Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* (1180) or Lamprecht's *Alexanderlied* (1150), or particularly Gautier de Costes de la Calprenède's hugely successful French novel *Cassandra* (1642–1650). Calprenède invents the characters of Orontes[104] and Talestris and sets their love story into conjunction with the encounter between the Amazonian queen and Alexander the Great. It does not come as a surprise that Maria Antonia was fascinated by this figure, since Talestris embodied a strong Amazonian woman with whom she could identify herself. As Fischer notes, Maria Antonia's library also included Calprenède's novel (*Visionen* 271), and

[104] This character is actually named Oroondates in Calprenède's text; the orthography from Maria Antonia's has been retained here for the sake of consistency.

Fischer connects this text to contemporaneous *femmes fortes* living in aristocratic circles in France who had stylized themselves as Amazons ("Selbststilisierung" 211–12). Amazons were already taking over opera stages in German-speaking lands, with the performance of *Hercules unter denen Amazonen* at the court opera in Braunschweig in 1694, (Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Amazonen" 140–41) or Joachim Höe's *Die großmüthige Thomyris*, which was performed in 1717 in Hamburg (Fischer, *Visionen* 273). The side story between Orontes and Talestris in Calprenède's *Cassandra* had also already served as the inspiration for several operas,[105] the first of which was *Die Groß-Müthige Thalestris, oder Letzte Königin der Amazonen*, written by Christian Heinrich Postel in 1690, and *Die Lybische Thalestris* by Heinrich Anselm von Zigler, which appeared in 1709 and was performed in Leipzig. Fischer notes that Postel's libretto also plays heavily on the motif of *verstellen*, thinking of Orontes' dual-identity as Orizia, and that it also features a happy ending where Orontes and Talestris marry, but without the queen having to give up her authority over the Amazons. Fischer also connects Maria Antonia's choice of the Talestris suzjet to the *querelle des femmes* that was bound up with the archetype of the Amazon,

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[105] The love story of Talestris and Orontes is an invention of Calprenède. In Calprenède's text, it is Talestris's mother who brings Orontes, disguised as Orizia, into the kingdom of the Amazons, because he had saved her life in battle (another recurring motif in stories featuring Amazons and warrior women). Similar to Maria Antonia's opera, Orontes becomes best friends with Talestris, but she discovers his true identity and banishes him from the Amazons' realm. The Amazonian army, including Talestris, is captured in battle shortly thereafter, and Orontes comes to their rescue. The pair then resolve their differences. Orontes stays with the Amazons, but still disguised as Orizia! When Orizia/Orontes leaves for battle, leaving behind Talestris because she was ill, Talestris is forced to meet Alexander the Great in order to "save" the Amazons. When Orizia/Orontes hears rumors of Talestris's infidelity, he breaks with her. They eventually meet again, and Orontes/Orizia comes to realize that Talestris never slept with Alexander. He attempts to kill himself in shame, but Talestris commands him to live and suffer. Years later, she serendipitously discovers him as a hermit dwelling in a cave—one thinks here of Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein* and the protagonist's madness in nature after breaking his promise to his beloved, Laudine. Similarly, Talestris recognizes Orontes and brings him back into the fold of society. They reconcile (again) and live happily ever after. Maria Antonia's text compacts Calprenède's story for the stage, and Orontes' exclusion in nature and the Alexander mythos are both excised entirely from her opera.

noting that Postel's introductory paratext, "Zuschrifft an das Hamburgische Frauen-Zimmer," explicitly praises women for their strengths (272–73). While Fischer's extensive research in the Dresden state archives did not turn up any evidence that Maria Antonia was in possession of these libretti, she notes that similarities between plot elements leaves little doubt that she knew them, particularly with respect to the final peace between the Amazons and Scythians and the fact that the marriage to Orontes does not negate Talestris's political authority (273–74). We have already seen a negation of Amazonian independence in Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Atalanta* (Ch. 2), and the potential domestication of Amazons—which occurs already in these texts of the Early Enlightenment—serves as an important trend that calls for critical examination. The ultimate peace between the Amazonian and Scythian armies at the conclusion of Maria Antonia's opera requires closer analysis and more circumspection. With this critical mindset, we can now set off to explore the (de)construction of gender in Maria Antonia's text and the extent to which it represents a vision of enlightened female leadership at court.

Visions of Enlightened Amazonian Leadership: *Verdienst* versus Tradition

In the context of legitimating women's political authority via communicative praxis, Maria Antonia's *Talestris* sets up enlightened notions of absolutist rule. The theme of royal succession is immediately thematized in the opera's introductory *Argomento*, which gives the general background of the story and indicates that we find Talestris about to assume the throne as the queen of the Amazons in the wake of her mother's death. The Amazonian state immediately serves as a heterotopic mirror of court society, as an inversion and reflection of the patrilineal succession of political power. Talestris asserts that she does not merely want to inherit her mother's throne, but instead seeks to earn the right to rule over her Amazonian sisters by proving

herself in battle. To be sure, the head priestess of the Amazons, Tomiris, commences Maria Anontia's *opera drammatica* with a speech addressed to Talestris that emphasizes her right to rule through a tradition of matrilineal ascension to the throne: "Komm und besteig den Thron, / Dein mütterliches Gut und deiner Tugend Lohn. / Komm, komm, die Zeit ist bald verflossen, / Und um der Mutter Tod und Thränen gnug vergossen" (2r, I.i). Tomiris maintains that Talestris has earned the crown with her virtue (*Tugend*), in addition to being the rightful matrilineal heiress. But Talestris rebels against the notion that she has a natural right to the throne, or that she has somehow proven herself virtuous:

> Die unbesiegten Amazonen / Kann ich mit nichts als Dank belohnen. / Wenn ich bey ihren Siegen / Theil an der Ehre nahm, so fiel mir niemals ein, / Vor so viel würdigern, einst Königin zu seyn. / Mich dünckt es sollten Cronen / Mehr das Verdienst, als das Geschlecht, belohnen. / Wie sollt' ich, unerfahren, / Und in der Blüthe von den Jahren, / Ein grosses Reich mit Ruhm regieren können? / Viel lieber tragen sie die Würde einer an, / Die glücklicher, als ich, den Scepter führen kann. / Ich werde meinen Stolz blos in Gehorchen zeigen. / Nur das Verdienst soll unsern Thron besteigen. (*Thalestris* 2r, I.i)

Geschlecht has multiple valencies here, i.e. that of a family lineage or dynasty, or that of sex or gender, which creates a semantic prism for reading this double-meaning in the context of Amazonian society. Should service to the people be more important than being of noble Amazonian blood? Or even more important than being a man or a woman? Talestris's central message—that she would rather obey (*gehorchen*) than rule and that civil service (*Verdienst*) should be held as the paramount value in Amazonian society—demonstrates her commitment to her Amazonian sisters, and this mirrors the values of enlightened despotism promoted by Maria Antonia and her husband Friedrich Christian. One recalls the famous statement by Friedrich the

Great: "Ich will der erste Diener meines Staates sein," as absolutist courts sought to emphasize civic engagement and support of the sciences and the arts (Martus 23–81). Because Talestris has not yet participated in any of the Amazons' great battles, she cannot lay claim to their collective honor, here in the sense of *Tugend* earned through military victories. Certainly, we can note the parallel to claims made by Cyrus, Abradates, and even by Panthea in Luise Gottsched's drama. This simultaneously highlights the militarism bound to absolutist rule, which is particularly relevant in the context of the Seven Years' War that had just ravaged Saxony's population and economy. In the social context portrayed in the opera's diegesis, gender (*Geschlecht*) does not have any relation to Talestris's ability to rule, as she operates inside the norms of an Amazonian gynocracy. She considers her youth and inexperience to be the determining factors against her. The humble attitude that she is merely a servant and no better than any of the other Amazons, regardless of her birth, becomes a central theme. This represents a strikingly egalitarian assertion, one that closely mirrors the events that would later shake the foundations of Europe in the form of the French Revolution, looking ahead to the sisterhood of Amazons that would militantly agitate for their rights.

Maria Antonia's libretto pushes against notions of divine right claimed by absolute monarchs and moves towards an enlightened notion of service (*Verdienst*). In this sense, her obedience relates to compliance with Amazonian laws and customs. Only service to society (i.e. her sisters) should be praised, not an empty tradition of matrilineal succession to the throne, which she perceives as being devoid of moral validity. Inherited political power, without proof of one's own worth, implies a form of obedience that entails submission to social norms. Without action, without proving one's virtue—*Tugend* in the sense of *taugen*—the crown has no value. Considering August III's complete disinterest and failure in military affairs, Talestris's

sentiments, spoken on stage by Maria Antonia, could be seen as addressed to him. In the context of Saxony's court, power was naturally handed down via patriarchal primogeniture, and the opera critiques this sociopolitical law of governance in its opening scene. While Talestris throws succession into question, certain elements of absolutism survive in this opening scene without critique, particularly an emphasis on military prowess. When Tomiris pleas for Talestris to claim her inherited throne, she sings: "Komm zum Thron, laß zum Regieren / Dich dein grosses Herze führen, / Es ist tausend Reiche werth. / Du weist unser Glück zu gründen / Und den Feind zu überwinden, / Durch die Klugheit, durch das Schwerdt" (*Talestri* 3r, I.i). Shifting away from Talestris's assertion that she is unqualified to lead, Tomiris privileges her intellect (*Klugheit*). This echoes Luise Gottsched's reordering of enlightened feminine virtues, functioning here in terms of a *femme savante* with intellectual prowess. Maria Antonia additionally inscribes a woman's intelligence into her political capabilities, where the *commune bene*, "unser[es] Glück," can only exist through her wisdom. Intelligence is privileged and paralleled to military might, where internal politics require political savvy. *Außenpolitik*, of course, still knows only the way of the sword, and this enforces a strict distinction between notions of Amazonian selfhood and identity versus the Otherness of the Scythians. Here a parallelism exists between the social cohesion of the Amazons and the intelligence required for domestic politics, on the one hand, and foreign policy (aggression) on the other. As we shall see, this strict distinction between Self and Other begins to dissolve as Maria Antonia's text progresses.

The Barbaric Otherness of Men: Overcoming Amazonian Prejudices

A central component of Talestris's coronation as the new queen of the Amazons is a ritual oath to despise all men. Indeed, the Amazonian sisterhood/state depends on this exclusion

of men as monstrous Others. Talestris's sister Antiope is hence completely shocked when Talestris reveals a positive stance towards their sworn archenemies. She harshly interrogates Talestris, wanting to learn who taught her such anti-Amazonian sentiments: "Wie? hältst du das Gesetz den nicht [für] gut, / Auf welchem unser Glück und Freyheit ruht? / Und sollen wir, mit neuen Plagen, / Das alte Joch der Ungeheuer tragen?" (4r, I.ii). Antiope points to an earlier time of female submission, and she considers men as monstrous oppressors. The oath to hate men is marked explicitly as the crux of the Amazonian state, that is, for securing women's independence from tyrannical men. Talestris moves away from this traditional Amazonian sentiment about men's behavior and holds that not all men want to subjugate and dominate women, but that many only seek love and loyalty: "Du irrest, wenn du alle denckst / Als Ungeheuer zu verfluchen; / Da tausend nichts bey uns, als Lieb und Treue, suchen. / Ehrfurcht und Zärtlichkeit sind ihre Waffen, / Mit denen die sich nichts, als unser Herz, verschaffen" (4r, I.ii). The masculine values she describes are not warlike or overladen with machismo, but rather metaphors of warfare serve only to emphasize men's tenderness (*Zärtlichkeit*) and respect for women (*Ehrfurcht*). Talestris's positive assessment contradicts the ideological stance that would traditionally be harbored by an Amazon positioned in radical opposition to philandry. She refuses to be indiscriminate about men, just as she did about herself as a "born" ruler! This discarded Amazonian subject position reasserts itself through the figure of Antiope, who asks: "Wer aber stösset dir so neue Lehren ein?" (5r, I.ii). The severity of Antiope's criticism reveals itself in her language. Talestris's tolerance of men results from having been penetrated (*einstoßen*) by foreign, new "teachings," thereby disrupting the closed society of Amazonian sisters.

It should be emphasized that a hybrid, androgynous subject has influenced Talestris's new tolerance for men. Talestris reveals to her sister Antiope that their once-beloved friend

Orizia was actually the cross-dressed Scythian prince Orontes, who had disguised himself as an Amazon in order to meet Talestris, having heard tales of her beauty. Orontes' feminine persona retains an epistemological value for determining identity via Otherness. A programmatic interchangeability of genders evinces itself through the either-*or* inherent in the names *Or*ontes and *Or*izia, and the opera continually plays with homosocial bonds and same-sex desires. This contrasts with traditional gender roles discarded by the Amazons, as further made manifest through depictions of the Scythians as barbarous, foreign Others. The question thus arises as to whether or not the text's poetology points towards or away from gender as having any ontological significance for virtue and human dignity, and we could already ask whether Amazonian sisterhood has the potential to become universal, if gender is not determined biologically, but instead through performance, or, to use Talestris's term, through *Verdienst*. Of course, from the perspective of maintaining their numbers, and according to Herodotus's original account, a gynocentric Amazonian society intermittently had recourse to relations with men in order to fill their ranks with new warriors. The archetype of the Amazon, like that of the *femme fatale* or the phallic woman, represents an ambiguity regarding notions of traditional behavior for men and women: while violent and dangerous, Amazons exude sensual allure. We recall the fabled encounter between Talestris and Alexander the Great, which also centers on procreation. Talestris confesses that it was Orizia who taught her that not all men are monsters, to which Antiope wonders: "Die, so dein Herz mir entzog? Wer muste sie den seyn?" (4r, I.ii). She conveys the centrality of homosocial bonds in the Amazonian kingdom in opposition to private desires, which are strictly repressed or allowed only under special circumstances or occasions. Antiope expresses her lament that Orizia usurps a piece of Talestris's heart, which threatens her monopoly on a homosocial, sisterly love. In asking who Orizia was, Antiope inquires not only

into the identity of the woman who had stolen her sister's favor, but also posits a question regarding the significance that identity holds with regard to Talestris's new knowledge. How does the being/essence of Orizia—as essentially masculine or feminine—determine Talestris's new sentiments and cohere with Talestris's identity as an Amazon? Orontes' cross-dressing as Orizia becomes significant, since the representation of Amazonian sisterhood underwrites representations of the Amazonian state. This community has been infiltrated by a Scythian male, who successfully enters into a relationship with an Amazon.

If self-identity is shaped by knowledge gained through encounters/conflicts with (selfsame) Others, Orizia's identity becomes a central factor for the construction of Talestris's Amazonian selfhood. Her relationship with Orizia/Orontes thus forms a centerpiece for the analysis of Maria Antonia's text, whereby instances of Otherness and conflicts with a selfsame Other provide the mirror for reflecting on differences from the Other. Encounters with Scythians usually engender contours/borders for the stabilization of a self-identity, but Orontes' Amazonian identity as Orizia threatens to destabilize clear-cut distinctions through selfsameness. The differentiation between Amazons and Scythians proposed by Antiope—the generalization that all Scythian men are debased savages, wanting only to oppress and possess Amazonian women—thus immediately crumbles when Talestris contends that these men are also capable of tenderness and respect, and that they desire only women's love and loyalty. Talestris's assertion can be understood as the projection of traditionally feminine character traits onto men, in the sense that traditional notions of femininity, a hetero-normative gender role constructed by a male-dominated society, is projected onto the masculine Other, as *Zärtlichkeit* and *Ehrfurcht*. "Traditional" femininity encounters itself in the Other, a situation that is inverted and repealed when men cross-dress as Amazons. Because textual conflicts with Others always represent

interactions with narrative self-identities, these externalized projections often convey character attributes that have been (socially) repressed and transferred to the Other. The fact that the "masculine" perspective Talestris internalizes was taught to her by a Scythian prince, who was cross-dressed as a cross-dressing woman—in the sense that Amazons assume traditional all-male vocations in their society of sisters, for instance donning armor for battle—complicates a clear differentiation of Amazon and non-Amazon. Orontes' masquerade thus bears a revolutionary potential; nevertheless, the question remains as to whether the opera continues to portray gender differences as masks, which gendered identities are disclosed as social constructs and as performances, or if the stage remains a space of play, where social critique can be freely iterated but without real political or social consequence.

As later revealed through one of the many plot twists in the opera, Orontes is the son of the high priestess of the Amazons, Tomiris, who was kidnapped as a child by the Scythians, eventually impregnated, and then unjustly spurned by the Scythian king. While his father's crime against the Amazons bolstered their hatred of men, Orontes' status as a hybrid-figure (*Grenzgänger*)—literally as a genetic mixture of both peoples—could bear an emancipatory potential, just as his cross-dressing blurs gender distinctions and calls Amazonian and Scythian differences into question. Orontes' revaluation of the Amazons' Manichean moral code tests the limits of Amazonian sisterhood. But does this androgynous, transgressing figure portend the re-enslavement of Amazons by men, as Antiope fears?

As highlighted by the background story accompanying the 1763 edition of *Talestris*, Orontes' motivation for cross-dressing, for living "unter verstelltem Geschlechte" (n. pag.), rests upon tales of Talestris's beauty: "Ihr Ruhm machte dem ungeduldigen scythischen Prinzen so viel Lust sie zu sehen, daß er einstmals, in der Hitze eines Scharmützels, den Seinigen entwichte

[*sic*], und sich, in Amazonen-Kleidern, unter dem Namen Orizia, in Themiscira einschlich. Die Talestris zu sehen und zu lieben, war ein Augenblick" (n. pag.). Threre is a curious semantics here that stresses vision, in terms not only of Orontes'/Orizia's visual deception via Amazonian costume, but also with respect to Talestris's beauty, which becomes the object of masculine desire, and physical attractiveness comes to the fore as socially valuable. We recall that both Panthea and Atalanta were prisoners to their beauty in the Gottscheds' texts. Talestris, like all Amazons, is a *femme fatale*, an armed woman who could potentially castrate/kill Orontes. Yet this danger does not negate her sexual appeal for Orontes, who, by cross-dressing as an Amazon, *becomes* the object that he desires, successfully passing as an Amazon and performing a new gender identity. Orontes' cross-dressing as Orizia can be interpreted as explicitly marking a break from Scythian society and as an entrance into Amazonian sisterhood. The abduction and abandonment of Orontes' mother by his father epitomizes a tyrannical patriarchy, with little or no regard for women except as sexual objects. In light of the familial history, Antiope's sentiments regarding the universal monstrosity of men seem vindicated. Nevertheless, Orontes'/Orizia's actions undercut such an absolute categorization. He/she is such a stellar Amazon that "die verstellte Orizia wurde bald die Verwunderung des ganzen Reichs, und das Vergnügen der jungen Prinzessinn" (n. pag.). Orontes/Orizia gains the intimate relationship with Talestris that he/she desired, albeit now in the guise of one of her sisters and comrades in war. Early in the opera, Talestris describes how Orontes infiltrated the Amazonian ranks and came to live among the Amazons:

> Da ihn der Vater selbst zum Feldherrn ausersehn, / Bestürmmt' er einstens unser Lager, / Er weicht im Streit von seinem Volck zurück, / Tauscht Kleid und Waffen mit Geschick, / Steht, als verstellte Amazone, / Uns bey, und schlägt die Scythen in die Flucht. / Er

> bleibt bey uns, / Sein jugendlich sein artig Angesichte / Macht allen Schatten von Verdacht zu nichte. (5r, I.ii)

Consistent with primogeniture in patriarchal societies, Orontes was chosen by his father to take over the family business: making war. Maria Antonia's libretto emphasizes that Orontes fled from his father's military camp by exchanging his Scythian weapons and clothes for Amazonian equivalents. Orontes is able to join the Amazonian army and avoid any suspicions, primarily because he has a youthful (i.e., beardless), gentle (*artig*) face. But he also arguably retains a typical "male" agency in opposition to Amazonian military might, since *he* is responsible for driving off his Scythian compatriots. At the same time, the Argomento, the explanatory preface, emphasizes a newly aligned camaraderie in arms: Orontes stands with the Amazons and becomes part of the Amazonian "uns." A shared *Verdienst* in battle can be understood not as re-inscribing Orontes/Orizia back into a typically "masculine" role, rather it allows Orontes/Orizia to become an Amazon through individual actions—beyond gender distinctions—which, as a positive action in and of itself, supports the Amazons collectively. Maria Antonia presents Orontes' transformation into Orizia as a process of utmost ease, and the libretto cultivates a highly plastic conception of gender. There does, however, seem to be some distinction between Orontes/Orizia and Talestris on a sensual register. Talestris possesses a beauty that engenders a lust to possess her in the male subject, i.e. Orontes, whereas Orontes' visage is not "schön," but "artig." There is no emphasis on sexual allure, but rather Orontes'/Orizia's youthful and well-proportioned face enables him/her to avoid the suspicions (*Verdacht*) of the Amazons. While not overtly beautiful, Orontes/Orizia is essentially cut from the same Amazonian cloth. Now sharing the same dress, Orontes and Talestris also come to mirror each other in terms of moral virtue.

Multiple moments emerge in which Orontes' Scythian Otherness conflates with Amazonian selfsameness, where Talestris and Antiope are no longer able to distinguish his identity as a Scythian from her Amazonian alter ego Orizia. After living among the Amazons for half a year, Orizia reveals herself to Talestris as Orontes. Talestris does not respond by killing him, but banishes him instead: "Mein Wort war sein Befehl. In einem neuen Streit / Verließ Orizia der Amazonen Glieder, / Und gab den Prinz den Scythen wieder" (6r, I.ii). Because of her positive encounter with Orontes while living amidst the Amazons as Orizia, Talestris has come to doubt the indiscriminate Amazonian oath to hate all men as evil oppressors. Her sister Antiope pragmatically advises her to fake it, in order to motivate her to assume her leadership role: "Steig auf den Thron, komm zum Altar; / Beschwöre da den Untergang der Männer; / Und soll auch dir beym Schwur kein Haß im Herzen seyn ; So stell dich so; So thu es nur zum Schein" (7r, I.ii). A conflict arises between Talestris's personal feelings and her state duties as the queen of the Amazons. Nine months after he left the Amazonian stronghold, Orontes decides it is worth dying in order to see Talestris again, and thus he submits himself as a willing captive, knowing that as the newly appointed queen, Talestris will be forced to condemn him (10r–12r, I.iv). Although Talestris recognizes Orontes as Orizia when he appears as a prisoner before her, she must sentence him to death for the crime of being a man, particularly a Scythian man. However, reflecting her torn fidelities, the gender of Orontes/Orizia remains confused: "Verlangst du, daß ich grausam sey, / O so verändre Wort und Blicke; / Führst du zur Freundschaft mich zurücke, / Vergeß ich der Verrätherey. / Ich weiß, du bist ein Bösewicht, / Die Freundin hat mich nie verlassen. / (Wie gerne wollte ich ihn doch hassen! / Und dennoch kann ich es noch nicht.)" (16r, I.vi). As Fischer notes:

> Die starke geschlechtliche Konnotation der Werte-Gegenwelten wird durch einen Grenzgänger zwischen den Geschlechtern, Oronte, deutlich gemacht. Das in Amazonensujets üblicherweise auftretende Cross-Dressing, Orontes Leben als Orizia im Amazonenstaat in der Vorgeschichte zur Opernhandlung, macht Talestri die Funktionsprinzipien des Amazonenstaates bewusst. Indem sie erkennt, dass sie als Amazone denselben Menschen, den sie in Frauenkleidern lieben darf, als Mann hassen muß (und die Tatsache, dass alle fünf Hauptrollen in *Talestri* Soprane sind, unterstreicht die Vagheit der 'biologischen' Geschlechtergrenzen) wird ihr der Zwiespalt zwischen ihren Empfindungen und ihren Staatspflichten bewusst. ("Selbststilisierung" 207)

Before revealing himself/herself to Talestris, Orontes/Orizia successfully assumes an Amazonian identity and becomes, if only temporarily, part of the Amazonian sisterhood. Conversely, Antiope's rhetoric assumes a xenophobic character. She labels Orontes as their greatest enemy and a traitor, and initially remains astounded that a Scythian, a male Other, could live undetected among them for so long. Talestris, in the meantime, is not sure that she will be able to carry out her duties as queen in the face of her confused feelings for Orontes/Orizia.

It is actually another man, not a cross-dressed Scythian but a Massagetean prince, Learch, who convinces Antiope that not all men are evil when he offers to sacrifice himself for Orontes. He also voluntarily surrenders to Antiope, who is characterized by Tomiris as "unüberwindlich," thinking that Antiope single-handedly defeated Learch in battle: "Nur du hast ganz allein / Den wütenden Learch bezwungen. / Dort kommt er schon. Sieh den verwirrten Blick. / Er ist ganz dein, mach aus ihm was du willst. / Hält ihm sein tolles Unternehmen vor / Und sieh ihn zittern" (17r, I.vii). Antiope also suffers a change of heart in the course of their battle against the Sycthians and Massagetae, for she proclaims: "Talestris hat mich nicht betrogen: / Nicht alle

Männer sind doch Ungeheuer" (18r, I.viii). As Fleig notes: "Mit Learch und seiner Liebe zu Orontes wird das Motiv der Freundestreue eingeführt. Talestris und Antiope hegen nun um so mehr Zweifel an der Rechtmäßigkeit ihrer Gesetze. Angesichts des hohen Werts von Frauenfreundschaft in ihrer Gemeinschaft erscheint ihnen der Hass auf diese Männer erst recht fragwürdig" (48). When Antiope sees that Learch loves his friend Orontes so much that he is willing to take his place on the gallows, she is deeply moved, since their friendship parallels the bonds of Amazonian sisterhood. But her Amazonian prowess on the battlefield is questioned when Learch admits he succumbed to Antiope for strategic purposes: "Nur um ihn [Orontes] wiederum zu sehn, / Gab ich mich dir gefangen, / Und legte meinen Stahl zu deinen Füssen hin. / Ich schloß aus deiner Schönheit Gaben, / Du müßtest auch ein Herz voll Mitleid haben" (19r, I.ix). Antiope replies that he has erred, and reminds him that they are standing on "kriegerischen Gründen" (19r). It is interesting to note that this is yet another example of *verstellen,* of game-playing for a strategic purpose, just like Orontes' cross-dressing as Orizia. It might seem like Antiope's beauty becomes a somatic object for Learch's sensual desires, when he attempts to praise her attractiveness, asking: "Darf ich den Purpur-Mund, dies golden Haar, nicht loben?" Antiope responds in turn saying, "Es wird hier nicht Reiz und Schönheit erhoben," adding further "Hörst du! Ich mag dein Lob nicht haben" (20r, I.ix). However, while certainly playing on the sensual allure of Antiope, Learch is not fixated on sexual gratification, like the lascivious shepherds in *Atalanta* or Araspes in *Panthea*, but he actually has a pragmatic end for submitting to her. Antiope's beauty—following the physiognomic discourse from medieval theology that equivocates attractiveness with goodness—signifies to Learch that she possesses a good heart filled with compassion (*Mitleid*), which he intends to utilize in order to reunite himself with his imprisoned friend, Orontes.

As Fischer points out, the arrival of Learch and Orontes as the Amazons' prisoners of war highlights a conflict of values: those of the Amazons, intended to protect them from exploitative male conquerors, "Pflicht, Rache, Grausamkeit, Härte, und Stolz," are opposed by "Glaube, Liebe, Mitleid, und Verziehen," represented by Learch and Orontes ("Selbststilisierung" 205). Above all else, the exemplary *Treue* between Orontes and Learch—again recalling the androgynous mobilization of *Treue* in Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* (Ch. 4)—convinces Antiope and Talestris that not all men are violent and evil. Against indiscriminate generalizations about men, the individual example of Orontes' and Learch's strong bond of friendship causes Antiope and Talestris to make a rational discrimination based on their individuality, not on a sweeping phylogenic categorization. The men's homosocial bond is emphasized through their mutual fidelity, through a heroic willingness to die in order to save a friend. This echoes Oronte's/Orizia's willingness to die in order to see Talestris again. Love and friendship become the core values, and Talestris and Antiope learn that homosocial Amazonian values of sisterhood can cross gender lines! Learch solemnly swears to Orontes: "Ich leb und sterbe mit dir" as they await their violent ends at the hand of the Amazons (23r, I.x). The "wahre Treu[e]" between true friends is emphasized through Learch's monologue at the beginning of Act Two (25r, I.xi), where he stresses solidarity when confronted with death. Indeed, both Orontes and Learch alternately offer their lives to Talestris in exchange for the other's freedom, which baffles and astounds the newly appointed queen. She admiringly exclaims: "O Freundschaft sonder gleichen" (28r, II,ii), to which Antiope responds: "O Treue, die nicht ihres gleichen hat!" (29r, II.ii). The men demonstrate a sisterly affection for one another that the Amazons did not believe possible among men, having previously only conceived of them as monstrous, barbaric Others on the battlefield. Men prove themselves worthy of escaping the indiscriminate Amazonian law of

universal condemnation by demonstrating their own affinity with Amazonian values. They no longer need to disguise themselves (*verstellen*), because they fundamentally replicate Amazonian traits. The veracity of their homosocial bond sparks a recognition in the Amazons that marks a decided shift from prejudice to knowledge gained through individual experiences, a core Enlightenment value that emphasizes rational judgment based on individual cases above any preconceived notions about any particular group of people. Along this line of thought, Orontes reminds Talestris of his past role as Orizia when he pleads for her to be merciful with his friend: "Kannst du die treue Freundin so vergessen?" (31r, II.iii). He thereby implicitly communicates that Amazons also know the concept of fidelity (*Treue*) between friends and their comrades on the battlefield, which he/she experienced when living with the Amazons. Talestris then exasperatedly asks Antiope: "Und wollen wir so edle Seelen / Den so verderben sehn?" (32, II.iv), indicating that she recognizes the parallels between the noble virtues of the men and the value system of the Amazons themselves.

The central tenet of the Amazonian state, the crux of their autonomy, revolves around the oath to despise all men and swear their deaths, specifically so as to assure the existence of their sisterhood. Orontes' and Learch's mutual fidelity throws the Amazon's categorical imperative to the wind. This occurs precisely because notions of Otherness begin to blur, not only due to the men's display of friendship and *Treue*, but through Oronte's Amazonian virtues as Orizia. Tomiris, acting in her role as head priestess of the Amazons' Diana cult, informs Talestris that Orontes must die according to Amazonian laws. Tomiris represents indiscriminate judgment on the side of the Amazon, adhering to the rule of Amazonian justice without question. Talestris, on the other hand, refuses, maintaining Orontes' innocence. She reflects on him as an individual and considers his past actions as Orizia, and thus cannot just blindly adhere to law as an enlightened,

discerning leader. Talertris's refusal incenses Tomiris, who replies: "Was Unschuld? Wenn er nicht noch mehr Verbrechen hätte. / Er ist ein Mann, er ist ein Scythe" (34r, II.v). Tomiris reminds Talestris about their founding myth, their sworn revenge against Orontes' father for stealing an Amazonian princess, impregnating her, keeping the son, and then casting her out (34r–35r, II.v). Her spite seems justified when she reveals that she was this princess. Thus she raises her personal motivation, based on her individual experience, into a universal law. Tomiris has propagated her personal hatred of men among the Amazons, inciting them to elevate violence and xenophobia to the level of state ideology: "Und kann ich nicht sein treuloß Herz durchstechen, / So will ich mich an allen Männer rächen" (36r, II.vi). Tomiris, who had harbored a suspicion regarding Orontes' familiar face all along, then reveal to the Amazons present at Talestris's court that the Scythian prisoner standing before them was in fact their former sister, Orizia (39r, II.vii). She uses this revelation in order to impugn Talestris's authority, claiming that she already knew that Orontes was in fact Orizia and that she withheld this information from the other women.

Tomiris's plan to castigate Orontes for his deception backfires horribly, and the boundaries between the Amazons and the Scythians begin to dissolve, thanks to this androgynous figure, Orontes/Orizia—just as the difference between genders dissolves in Luise Gottsched's *Panthea* via her heroically androgynous protagonist. As a *GrenzgängerIn*, Orontes/Orizia dissolves boundaries between notions of Self and Other, as doubly hybrid figure representing not only both genders, but both the Scythians and the Amazons as well. While Talestris seems initially to condemn Orontes/Orizia as a "falsche Amazone" (40r, II.vii), she admits that they shared a mutual love, despite the effects of deception: "Die falsche Amazone / Ward bald in mich verliebt. Sie fand an mir / Gefallen, und ich auch an ihr. / […] / Zu der Zeit /

War ich, so, wie ihr insgesamt, betrogen" (40r). Orizia shows love for Talestris, whereas Talestris emphasizes a mutual amity, an affinity underscored by Orontes' deception of all the Amazons. Orontes' ability to achieve universal "deception," however, is based on an inherent affinity with the Amazons that relates to shared virtues. At the same time, Talestris recognizes that he has returned to offer her his life as recompense for his deception: "und weiß ich zwar, dass ich, als Amazone, / Ihn hassen soll: Allein ich find in ihm / Der Freundin Bild beständig wieder" (41r, II.vii). This is a pivotal moment in Maria Antonia's libretto, since the difference between Scythians and Amazons erodes through Orontes' assumption of Amazonian identity. This figure reveals that gender is only a performance, and the fluidity of genders fosters recognition, love, and respect among former archenemies. Nevertheless, when Talestris asks the chorus of Amazons for their judgment, they reply: "Der kühne Buhler müsse fallen! / Man bringe den Verräther um! / Die Liebe straft man hier an allen, / Hier ist der Strenge Heiligthum" (41r, II,vii). The Amazons' *Strenge* has affinities with Atalanta's *Sprödigkeit*, since both are indiscriminate and refuse to register individual deviations from a presumed norm. Indeed, the chorus of Amazons takes on the function of carrying a broader collective voice, which becomes problematic at the opera's conclusion.

Talestris complicates the ambivalence of Orontes'/Orizia's identity when she proclaims: "So tödte man ihn den. Doch, es wird diese Hand / Nie Amazonen Blut vergießen" (41r, II.vii). She thus reveals that he is the son of Mirinia's daughter (41r–42r, II.vii), the Amazonian girl who was kidnapped by Orontes' father—who incidentally remains an unnamed patriarch throughout the entire opera. Shocked by this news, Tomiris admits she was that very girl, and that Orontes is her son. Traumatized by inhumane cruelty, her desire for revenge motivates her zeal for the Amazons' hatred of men: "Von der Zeit reizt ich euren Zorn und Waffen, / Um das

undankbare Geschlecht, / Und jenen Scythen, zu bestrafen" (43r, II. Vii). Only at this juncture does Tomiris realize that her zealotry as an Amazonian hardliner has forced her into a position where she has condemned her own son to death. While Tomiris at first accedes, "So will es das Gesetz! So heischt es meine Pflicht!" (44r, II. Vii), her motherly instincts eventually win out. Charmed by Orontes' virtuous conduct, she secretly lets him go (although the reader and the other Amazons first learn of this after the fact). In the meantime, Talestris and Antiope have admitted to each that they love Orontes and Learch, respectively. When they go to free them, Tomiris encounters them in front of Orontes' cell and disingenuously informs them that she has gone through with the execution. Talestris laments, and in a fit of passion releases Learch, commanding him to rally the entire Scythian army against the Amazons to avenge their fallen prince.

At this juncture Orontes appears and pleads for peace between the two warring parties as they draw up for battle. Orontes once more levels gender differences and appeases conflicting cultures in his role as a mediator. He first offers his body to shield the Amazons, throwing himself before the Scythian regiments and commanding them: "Bezähmet euer Wuth! / Ich will das Schild der Helden-Weiber seyn" (69r, III.x). In contrast to the "grausame Weiber-Hand" that Learch metonymically invokes to prepare the Scythians for their attack against "monstrous" women (68r, III.x), Orontes describes the Amazons as heroines (*Helden-Weiber*), reflecting positively on their martial traits. Orontes' actions hold sway in this text. His ambiguous gender and cultural hybridity alters Talestris's perceptions about men and eventually saves the day, stopping a final battle between the Scythian and Amazonian armies.

But does Talestris merely react passively to Orontes' actions after essentially letting the enemy in through the gates? In other words, does Maria Antonia's text actually reinforce hetero-

normative notions about masculine aggressiveness and feminine passivity, despite its utopian transcendence of gender?[106] For instance Orontes' address to the Amazons and the Scythians betrays a recourse to traditionally "feminine" traits that the Amazons reject in favor of their autonomy: "Stellt, endlich, schöne Kriegerinnen, / Die alte Feindschaft ein: / Mit Schönheit kann der Zorn nicht wohl verbunden seyn. / Die Freundschaft sey durch Haß und Waffen nie zerrüttet. / Es ist Orizia, (zur Talestris) Orontes (zur Tomiris) der Geliebte, (zur Talestris) der Sohn (zur Tomiris) der darum bittet" (70r, ln.8–12). While Orontes/Orizia plays on her androgynous identity, he/she also resorts to conservative definitions of gender that view beauty and violent militancy as incompatible in women. Yet the equality between the sexes proposed by Talestris at the opera's conclusion carries more weight: "Folgt, ihr Getreuen, folgt doch meinem Beyspiel nach / Jetzt ist die rechte Zeit. Wenn, von untreuen Männern, / Der Haß entstund, so sey, von treuen Ehegatten, / Die Freundschaft wieder hergestellt. / Wir wollen künftighinn, nicht Unterthanen, nein, / Freundinnen unsrer Nachbar seyn" (71r, ln.8–13). While scholars have argued that Talestris preserves her political authority, refusing to allow the Amazons to become subservient to men again, it might also be argued that the very concept of the Amazons is undermined when the society of sisters is reintegrated with men. Yet Talestris emphasizes that the Amazons should be the "Freundinnen" of their neighbors, and *Freundschaft* is also emphasized by Orontes. The feminine plural form might also apply to the Scythian men, given the amazing flexibility of gender roles throughout the opera. That is, *Talestris* might propose a feminist rewriting of the words from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: "Alle Menschen werden *Schwestern*." Just as they once accepted Orontes/Orizia into their midst, they now embrace the

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[106] One thinks here of the daming notions of gender difference wrought by the success of Jean-Jacque Rousseau's *Emile*, which was published the same year as Maria Antonia's opera.

possibility of including men in general as part of their community, thereby collapsing the gender divide and ending hierarchies and judgmental condemnations of the male Other.

The word "Amazon" is often etymologically derived from the Greek root, *mazos*, meaning breast, and the privation conveyed by the prefix *a* then confers the notion of being without a breast, or of missing a breast, at least according to Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschafften und Künste* (1731–1754). Zedler follows the report of the ancient Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, noting: "[D]er Name dieser Weiber soll von dem *a privativo* und *mazos*, die Brust, herkommen, indem sie denen jungen Mägden in ihrer ersten Kindheit die rechte Brust ausgebrannt, um sie zu dem Fechten fertiger zu machen" (Zedler 1:1667). While Zedler offers several other etymologies for Amazon, which include "living apart from men" and "living without bread" (1667), the first definition emphasizes the missing right breast emphasizes a proto-feminist rejection of traditional norms of female behavior. Yet scholars have also offered even more affirmative etymologies. For instance, Josine Blok suggests that the word refers to a positive sense of community, interpreting it to mean *amazo-nes*, "priestess of Artemis," *ama-zoosai*, "living together," or *ama-zoonais*, "with girdles" (23–25). Blok's derivations emphasize inclusion, as opposed to privation or loss, and her etymologies all call to mind Amazonian sisterhood, a distinct togetherness of women—apart from men. This perspective consolidates their identities as free women who act independently in the spheres of politics, warfare, and sexuality. We might add that Maria Antonia's libretto extends this sisterhood, making it into a universal human value.

Gender Parity and Enlightened Judgments: Limiting Amazonian Violence in the Name of Progressive Politics

While an affirmation of this utopian vision at the opera's conclusion remains exceedingly tempting, the final chorus requires further examination. The chorus is composed of the two war parties, the Scythians and Amazons, and seems to betray a return from the inverted world of the Amazons, from a masquerade-like heterotopic playfulness to a conservative division of genders. The Scythians sing: "Rauhe Herzen, düstre Blicke / Bringen euch nicht Ruhm, noch Glücke: / Euer Ruhm soll ganz allein / Mitleid, Liebe, Treue seyn" (72r, III.x). The aggression and violence bound to the Amazon's identity as independent, strong women warriors, their animosity towards men appears to be completely negated in favor of traditionally "feminine" virtues of compassion, love, and fidelity! The Amazons in turn reply: "Stolz hat nicht viel zu bedeuten: / Artigkeit und Schönheit sey / Unser Ruhm und Zauberey," essentially agreeing to this constitutional change in their previous way of life.[107] But to what extent does the chorus function as a reluctant meta-commentary, reflecting the broader perspective of society at the conclusion of the opera, gesturing at re-inscribing it into perceived difference between the genders, back into the prison-house of language, as it were. Yet both parties triumphantly sing: "Friede knüpf uns stets zusammen, / Strenge sey von uns verbannt; / Und allein der Liebe Flammen / Setzen unser Herz in Brand!" (72r, III.x). While the Amazons' militant edge has been dulled, so has that of the Scythians. Recalling the context of the opera's performance, one might argue that the real message is anti-war, that both the Amazons *and* the Scythians need to give up their aggressive politics and ideologies and embrace the liberation, the androgynous politics of Orontes/Orizia.

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[107] Fischer notes: "Mit dem Friedenschluss der Geschlechter bei Maria Antonia ist ein Lob auf die Humanität verbunden. Männer und Frauen begegnen sich in der neuen Welt, in der Liebe und Treue Platz unter den Tugenden haben, mit Respekt. Gleichheit und Freiheit beziehen sich bei ihr in einer aufgeklärten Gesellschaft auf das Geschlecht. Paradoxerweise muss Maria Antonias Geschlechterdefinition – ähnlich wie ihr Selbststilisierungskonzept zur *femme forte* – jedoch als rückwärtsgewandt klassifiziert werden. Ein bipolares Prinzip mit deutlichen und nur in Ausnahmefällen überwindbaren Geschlechtergrenzen hatte sich […] bereits Bahn gebrochen" (*Visionen* 307).

The enlightened sign of Minerva triumphs over the overly transgressive Amazonian eidolon, as peace and protection of the realm have been achieved "diplomatically" through a love based on mutual recognition, an *amor spiritualis*.

Because Maria Antonia's libretto disrupts socially determined codes of male/female behavior through the androgynous figure of Orontes/Orizia and progressively pleads for the sublimation of aggressive instincts and an end to a perpetual state of war, an argument regarding the extension of Amazonian sisterhood to the Scythian men remains paramount. Yet several changes to the symbol of the Amazons reflect Maria Antonia's social context and her ideals as an enlightened female ruler, which specifically revolve around the curtailing of violence and achieving peace. One central break from systemic violence occurs when Tomiris faces a conflict between her duties as the head priestess of the Amazons' Diana cult and her maternal feelings for Orontes. Irritated that Tomiris questioned her authority, Talestris returns Tomiris's admonishment—that she needs to put her civic duty above her private feelings—although she assumes that Tomiris will not be able to go through with killing her own child. Because Amazonian laws dictate that male prisoners of war be executed without trial, the conflict between private and public fidelities—returning to the enlightened trope of *Treue* that we saw in *Panthea*—destabilizes the laws of the Amazonian state, where swift "justice" becomes equivalent with a mother murdering her child. This, however, is not a critique of Amazonian autonomy or an indictment of their norms as inherently barbaric, rather the text highlights that an indiscriminate adherence to laws contravenes enlightened rational judgment of cases (and peoples) based on individual circumstances and actions. Tomiris is challenged by the traditional female "virtue" of care and nourishment for offspring, and these maternal values come into conflict with her militant Amazonianism. When Talestris thinks that Tomiris has gone through

with killing Orontes/Orizia—and here the concept of *verstellen* has extremely negative consequences—she lambasts her as "Unmenschliche" (46r, II.viii), and further wonders: "Warum muß doch der Mutter Grausamkeit / Der Liebe Mitleid kraftloß machen!" (47r, II.viii). Here the stereotypically "feminine" values compassion (*Mitleid*) contrasts with maternal cruelty. Talestris does not question Amazonian *Sprödigkeit*, but rather critiques a universal law that is entirely indiscriminate, with absolutely no exceptions based on individual circumstances. Tomiris feigns killing her child (56r, III.iv), but the audience does not know that she actually shows mercy and maternal compassion, sparing and setting Orontes/Orizia free. Thinking the deed done, Talestris loses control of her passions, since she sees the death of Orontes/Orizia as her own fault, having coldly reiterated the Amazonian duty to execute all prisoners. With fire in her blood, Talestris chides Tomiris in lament: "Unholdinn! Grausame! du hast ihn umgebracht? / Du hast den eignen Sohn getödtet? / Abscheuliche Medee!" (57r, III.iv). Thinking that Tomiris has blindly fulfilled her duty and killed Orontes/Orizia, she compares her to Medea, a figure of reprehensible Otherness. Medea is actually aligned with the archetype of the Amazons, in that she is violent and asserts her will against a cruel man. In the myth of the Golden Fleece, when Jason betrays Medea for another woman, she kills their children in a fit of vengeful rage. While feminist scholars have sought to rehabilitate the figure of Medea in recent years,[108] Talestris's comparison of Tomiris to Medea does not negate all Amazons as monstrous, but emphasizes that unthinking adherence to customs and mores without critical reflection deserves opprobrium. When Talestris exclaims: "Die Grausame, bin ich" (58r, III.iv), she indirectly calls the

[108] For an excellent analysis of the ambivalence surrounding the figure of Medea in contemporary culture, see Stephan, *Medea*. Robert Graves also rehabilitates Medea in his decidedly feminist reworking of the myth of Jason and the Argonauts, *The Golden Fleece*.

legitimacy of the state-sanctioned violence into question.She indicts not herself, but the Amazons' indiscriminate prejudice against men, which entirely disregards individual virtues.

A parity between the genders develops in Maria Antonia's libretto, beyond the liminal figure of Orontes/Orizia, which requires further critical thought. Several scenes display recognition of individual virtues that transcend gender differences, strikingly in the midst of combat, at that. For instance, Antiope and Learch, who serve as a mirror pair to Talestris and Orontes/Orizia, recognize each other as equals in the midst of combat. Antiope relates her interaction with Learch in the thick of the *mêlée*:

> O hättest du gesehn, wie mir sein Streich / Den Helm vom Kopfe riß, / und wie er gleich, / So bald er mich erblickt, ganz unbeweglich stand, / Und wie er mir das Schwerdt mit dieser Hand, / Die Brust mit jener, bot! / Von diesem Augenblick war ich schon nicht mehr mein; / Ich blieb Gefangene von dem, den ich gebunden, / Und mein Besieger war der, den ich überwunden. (32r, II,iv)

Antiope's sentiments relate an interesting inversion and doubling of the victor/conqueror dichotomy that reveals a radical parity between men and women. Both warriors are overcome with feelings of love and respect for the other, based on their individual excellence, not on preconceived notions about the "evil" Otherness of Scythians or Amazons. In this sense they become determined, or bound, if you will, to the exemplary nature of the other, disregarding their previously held prejudices. The loss of selfhood described here by Antiope really reveals the achievement of individual autonomy against predetermined social norms. When Learch exclaims: "Ihr Götter, also ist die Grausamkeit / Die größte Tugend dieser Kriegerinnen? / Die Liebe kleidet selbst in dies Gesicht sich ein, / Und soll das Herz ein Feind der Liebe seyn?" (21r, I.x), a conflict arises between the individual character of Antiope, here physically manifest by

her beauty, and generalized notions about the Amazons' supposedly universal savagery. When Learch describes his version of the encounter with Antiope on the battlefield, he naturally lays emphasis on the power of her beauty, but in an enlightened sense of awakening his rational faculties, causing him to discriminate and surrender to her, not giving in to the Amazons, but to Antiope as an individual:

> Die bunten Schilde / Und Waffen stossen an einander, / Der Streit wird noch einmal so wilde. / Ich fechte, wo es nützt, / Als schnell ein Strahl auf meine Stirne blitzt, / Bald muß, von meinen Gegenstreichen / Der Helm der, die mich angreift, weichen. / Da er zur Erde stürzt, entdeckt ich das Gesicht / Der Feindin, o, wie schön ließ ihr die Wuth da nicht! / Der Streich verdoppelt ihren Grimm / […] / Ich war besiegt, ich fiel zu ihren Füssen. (22r–23r, I.x)

While Antiope's aggressive response to losing her helmet only heightens Learch's desire for her—which is also a typical gesture of lovers in *Minnesang*—it is not Antiope as a generalized Amazonian archetype/stereotype who is being praised here by Learch, but her beauty as a person. In this sense, both are conquered by each other, in that they come to recognize each other as individuals amidst the nameless hordes of Amazons and Scythians indiscriminately slaughtering each other. In this sense, Maria Antonia's opera echoes the need to rational discernment through the figures of Antiope and Learch, who also come to represent role models for gender parity.

Yet Talestri does not remain rationally in control of herself when she thinks that Orontes has been killed by Tomiris. Similar to the conflict between her private feeling and her duties as the queen, she allows her emotions to get the better of her. Fischer rightly diagnoses Talestri's *Wutausbruch* as concomitant with high treason against the Amazons:

> Ihr wahres Vergehen ist der Verrat am eigenen Volk: Denn vom grenzlosen Schmerz und Zorn über die gegen ihren Willen von Tomiri angeblich ausgeführte Hinrichtung Orontes überwältigt befreit sie Learco, damit er Rache für Oronte üben kann. Er soll in ihrem Auftrag das Amazonenreich zerstören. Zurechtgewiesen von Antiope erkennt die Königin jedoch, dass sie zu weit ging, dass sie sie Liebe über die Pflicht gestellt hat und nicht mehr Herrin ihrer Sinne war. (*Visionen* 288)

In response to what she believes was an act of monstrous barbarism by Tomiris, Talestris shows Learch a secret escape route and commands him: "Geh hin, komm bald zurück, / Und übe deines Freundes Rache. / Such umzubringen, zu verheeren, / Setz die Stadt in Brand, / Du magst das ganze Land, / Und diesen Sitz der Bosheit zerstören. / Ich mag nicht Königin so wilder Seelen seyn. / Ein so barbarisch Reich flößt mir Abscheu ein" (61r–62r, III.vi). Talestri sides against the Amazons, disassociating herself from their "barbaric" indiscriminate violence, while at the same time indiscriminately encouraging Learch to perpetrate genocide against the Amazons in revenge for his lost friend. Talestris abandons her duties as queen of the Amazons, essentially damning them based on her reevaluation of Amazonian norms, but she regresses back to an un-reflected, sweeping judgment. Not surprisingly, Antiope responds: "Ey! was hast du gethan? / Der Schmerz hat dich zu weit geführet" (62r, III.vii), indicating that Talestris has lost rational control due to excessive emotions and damned the Amazons blindly as a group. Indeed, Talestris quickly comes to her senses, responding: "Die Liebe hat mich blind gemacht. / Durch die betrügerische Führerin / Gehn oft Vernunft und Schuldigkeit verlohren. Verliebte sind ja Thoren, / Und Thorheit ist die Liebe" (63r, III.viii). Antiope, who has also fallen in love with Learch, contests Talestris's condemnation of love: "Wir, zu Krieg und Zorn gebohren, / Sind auch zu der

Pein erkohren, / Und nicht leicht von Thorheit frey" (63r), and she mitigates Talestris's excessive generalization and condemnation of love through a counter-example, bringing her back to reason.

Talestris quickly recognizes the error of her passions and makes moves to atone for her betrayal of the Amazons. This represents a successful rehabilitation of her figure, in that she demonstrates that she is capable of learning and of acting as a leader who can rationally discern rather than making indiscriminate judgments based on unquestioned prejudices. When she recognizes that she has committed treason against the Amazons, she acknowledges her failed leadership: "Die Unterthanen sind verrathen" (64r, III.viii). When Tomiris leaves to defend their stronghold from the rapidly approaching enemy, Talestris laments: "Ich bleibe so zurück? Und ich erwarte, / Durch der rachgierigen Weiber Hände, / Vielleicht ein schimpflich Ende?/ […] / Ich will, mit Waffen in den Händen, / Mit tapferm Arm, mein Leben enden" (66r–67r, III.ix). Rather than stay behind and allow herself to be punished by the Amazons, who are condemned as "rachgierig" in their brutal, unthinking adherence to laws and social norms, she decides to go face the Scythians, who are now besieging the city. Fischer reads this rehabilitation of Talestris's authority as successful, because she recognizes that she has failed to maintain her rational autonomy and betrayed her duty to the Amazons. She comes to embody two negative principles that stand in opposition to enlightened values: that of the tyrant, and that of individuals unable to control their desires. But Talestris proves herself to be discriminating, and her opposition to normative "blind" justice marks her virtue as a ruler. As Fischer maintains, Talestris's decision to fight the Scythians rather than await punishment from her peers reveals her solidarity with the Amazons: "Sie hat zur Verbundenheit mit ihrem Volk, zum 'commune bene' [...] als höchstem Regierungsgut und zu ihrem Kämpfergeist zurückgefunden, und stellt damit ihre Eigeninteressen hinter die ihres Volkes zurück" (*Visionen* 288). Fischer forgives Talestris's betrayal of the

Amazons, understanding instead, from the perspective of Maria Antonia's poetology, that "In *Talestri* wird demnach nicht, wie sonst in Amazonenlibretti üblich, die Demontage einer Herrscherin beschrieben, sondern gerade durch ihr Werdegang, mit dem sie sich als für den Thron würdig erweist" (*Visionen* 289). She has become an enlightened leader, ready to defend her sisters, but not through indiscriminate violence and prejudices, rather by making rational decisions based on individuality and not based on preconceptions.

Enlightened Authority and Talestris as Peace-Bringer: *Talestris* as Communicative Praxis at the Court

Maria Antonia's opera posits a radical transcendence of gender differences represented by the androgynous figure of Orontes/Orizia, and gender parity also quintessentially relates to the anti-war sentiment that pervades her text, presenting a utopian vision of a universal human sisterhood and peace. In the context of the court performance, the final truce between the Amazons becomes politically relevant considering that the Seven Years' War had just concluded, and that the performance of *Talestris* was intended to celebrate the return of August III to his Electoral court in Dresden. As scholars like Matthew Head have argued, "the plot intimates that reform and progress arise from Talestri's exemplary character" (45), the peace between the Amazons and the Scythians can be positively evaluated under the sign of Minerva. Maria Antonia was inserting herself into the visual tradition of *femmes savantes* and *femmes fortes* who stylized themselves as Minervas and as Amazons, identifying herself as both intellectually gifted and as a gifted female ruler. Thus the trope of the Amazon is not mobilized in a teratological sense, but to positively affirm women's ability to rule by making discriminating judgments. There is a powerful subtext at work in Maria Antonia's libretto that universalizes the ideal traits

for leadership and governance, regardless of gender and specifically transcending gender. The point of the opera seems to be that governance demands a keen sense of discrimination, and this is tied to notions of knowledge and reason, which connects back to her self-stylization as a *femme savante*. For instance, in the opera's opening scene, Taletris demands discrimination when it comes to rulers, and hence she initially questions her own qualifications to be the queen of the Amazons. She then shows further discrimination when judging Orontes—always in the positive sense of making a careful evaluation based on specific circumstances—where in turn she condemns Tomiris for blindly applying the Amazonian law dictating that all male prisoners be executed. Indeed, careful rational judgment, against generalizing prejudices or blind adherence to what others determine as "normal" behavior, forms the core enlightened value of the play. It does not celebrate equality in the sense that everyone is the same and can fall into one category, but stresses and acknowledges what is individual and exceptional. Indeed, the androgyny of Orontes/Orizia ties centrally to notions of individuality, in that this hybrid figure crosses otherwise stable thresholds, including gender norms, revealing them as nothing more than prejudices. This underscored by the fluidity of genders by cross-dressing performers on the stage.

Because Maria Antonia literally played the role of Talestris on stage, she was able to insert herself into contemporary discussions regarding women's ability to act as rulers. Scholars like Fischer and Fleig have rightly emphasized that Talestris remains queen of the Amazons after the peace with the Scythians, and she never explicitly renounces her authority. Fischer makes an intriguing argument when she reads both Orontes/Orizia *and* Talestris as liminal *Grenzgänger*. Orontes'/Orizia's assumption of "feminine" Amazonian virtues has already been demonstrated as revealing a fluidity of genders. In addition to this androgynous breaching of circumscribed

behaviors, Fischer posits that Talestris also becomes a liminal figure when she assumes the values previously held only by men, “indem sie Tugenden annimmt, die man langläufig nur Männern zuschrieb: die Befähigung zur Leitung von Staatsgeschäften” (“Selbststilisierung” 216). She thereby emphasizes Talestris’s *Werdegang* beyond a dismantling of her authority (217). Fischer reminds us that the very first scene thematizes the succession of aristocratic power, and the notion of *Verdienst* bound to enlightened absolutism has been satisfied because Talestris’s re-education results in peace between the Amazons and Scythians, to the benefit of both peoples. Fischer astutely connects the *Frieden* at the opera’s conclusion to the turbulent social context surrounding the opera’s performance: “Dem Friedenschluss zwischen den Geschlechtern in der Opernhandlung steht damit der kurz zuvor im selben Jahr 1763 erfolgte wirkliche Friedenschluss, nämlich die Beendigung des Siebenjährigen Krieges, gegenüber. Talestris’ Rolle als Friedensbringerin für ihr Volk korrespondiert zudem mit einem der Zuständigkeitsbereiche der Friedensgöttin Minerva” (“Selbststilisierung” 22–23). Maria Antonia’s work can be interpreted as portraying her as an enlightened ruler, not as a bellicose Amazon, but a Minerva-like bringer of peace, who supported and participated in the arts and who had already demonstrated her ability to rule in the absence of the king. The text and the performace work together to promote Maria Antonia as a qualified ruler, precisely because she learns how to discriminate, make good decisions, and pass discerning judgments. Reason transcends gender on the court stage, where the performance of her opera, marked by the king’s physical presence in the audience, clearly communicates that we are all representatives of *homo sapiens*.

Much could be made about the subsequent marginalization of Maria Antonia as a woman attempting to claim political power in the absence of a male heir of rightful age. Fleig notes that Maria Antonia made diplomatic efforts to keep Poland’s crown for the electors of Saxony after

August III's death, but she was confounded by another Amazon, Katharina II of Russia. Her continued correspondence with Friedrich II of Prussia and Empress Maria Theresa of Austria gives evidence of her active engagement in political affairs, but Maria Antonia lost her claim to power as the ruler of Saxony with the death of her husband. Her brother-in-law, Prince Xavier, took control and even became the guardian of her children. Fleig notes: "Maria Antonia brachte sieben Kinder zur Welt, von denen eines im Kindesalter starb. Wie die rechtliche Stellung der Fürstin am Dresdener Hof aussah und warum Maria Antonia nicht selbst die Vormundschaft übernehmen konnte, ließ sich nicht zuverlässig ermitteln" (45). Perhaps it was in fact her gender that precluded her from attaining the political position of the king, where her role as mother, like the maternal instincts that are valorized in *Talestris*, ended up determining her political exclusion, despite the plea for transcending gender norms expressed in the text and performance of her opera. While the performance of *Talestri* failed to effect the political change that she sought, Maria Antonia's libretto remains successful, not just as a vehicle for preserving the memory of Maria Antonia as talented *femme savante* attempting to inscribe herself into political authority via Minerva-like Amazons. Her text remains relevant even today in terms of continuing questions of gender equality and transgender identities, offering a utopian vision of gender parity and an enlightened ethos based on discernment and inclusion.

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Vita

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