

THE TAMING OF THE AMAZON: PENTESILIE IN  
ULRICH VON TÜRHEIM'S *RENNEWART*

I

According to Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, men and women differ from one another primarily in respect of their physical strength.<sup>1</sup> In book XI, Isidore states that the term 'vir' (man) is derived from 'vis' (force), because man has greater power than woman and because he deals with woman by force (XI.ii.17); 'mulier', on the other hand, is claimed to be derived from 'mollitia' (softness) (XI.ii.18). 'These two are differentiated by the respective strength and weakness of their bodies. But strength is greater in a man, lesser in a woman, so that she will submit to the power of the man' (XI.ii.19).<sup>2</sup> This defines woman in terms of her relation to man, whose strength is seen as the measure of all things. Physical superiority is in turn construed as the basis for moral superiority, as becomes obvious when 'virtus' (virtue) is declared to be derived from 'vir'. To this extent male-female relations are interpreted in the shape of a one-sex model, which posits the female sex as an inferior variant of the male rather than as a fundamentally different entity.<sup>3</sup>

While a basic dichotomy (strength versus weakness) characterizing the male-female distinction is set up as the biological standard, Isidore does allow for deviations. He includes, for example, this definition of the *virago*: 'A "heroic maiden" (*virago*) is so called because she "acts like a man" (*vir* + *agere*), that is, she engages in the activities of men and is full of male vigor ... [I]f a woman does manly deeds, then she is correctly called a heroic maiden, like an Amazon' (XI.ii.22). Rather than call into question Isidore's account of standardized femininity, this category presents strong women as an exception to the general distribution of attributes. The *virago's* behaviour is described as manly, assuming attributes like physical strength, vigour, and heroism to be inherently male.<sup>4</sup> That it is possible for a woman to display manly strength in both body and character suggests that a person's position on the scale of male and female gender attributes may vary according to his or her conduct, in other words, that male strength and female weakness are not necessarily ontological categories, but categories of gender just as much as of sex.<sup>5</sup> The ability of females such as Amazons to appropriate male characteristics moreover suggests that gender is a category that is realized in a performative way.<sup>6</sup>

What, then, are the implications of a woman's 'male' behaviour for the men in her vicinity? If a biological male is challenged by a female's strength, male

superiority as the key component of masculinity is undermined both generically and specifically. The one-sex model results in a sliding scale of attributes, which may manifest themselves to a varying degree in representatives of either biological sex. Where the difference between the sexes is gradual rather than absolute, it is possible for a woman to be 'more of a man' than her male counterpart and thereby call his masculinity into question. Such is often the case when an Amazon encounters a man. As a result of the Amazon women's strength, what may be described as their 'sustained social performances'<sup>7</sup> are clearly in breach of the notion of female subordination.

But how is the presence of such women compatible with norms that advocate the physical inferiority of women as part of a God-given order? Medieval German literary representations of Amazons in the tradition of the Alexander romance or the Troy legend resolve this dilemma by either annihilating the strong women (Troy tradition) or locating them outside society (Alexander tradition).<sup>8</sup> In this article, I will examine a different approach to the challenge that strong females pose to established masculinity, which is presented in Ulrich von TÜRHEIM'S *Rennewart*. Ulrich, I will argue, achieves a distinctive resolution by undermining the provocative status of the Amazon Pentesilie through marriage and childbirth and by reassigning to her a position in the gender hierarchy that is in accordance with conventional male-female dynamics. This leads to an inner-textual shift in the sex/gender model that characterizes the relationship between male and female protagonist from a one-sex model to a binary model that is based on fundamental differences between the sexes. By focusing on her childbearing role, Pentesilie is assigned a function that is unique to the female sex and firmly establishes her scope of activity as essentially different from that of her male counterpart.<sup>9</sup>

What makes an analysis of the figure of Pentesilie in *Rennewart* especially interesting is her divergence from the Amazon tradition on which she is obviously based. In keeping with this tradition she initially represents an exception to the rule of the submissive woman, but Ulrich undermines her exceptional strength by turning the warrior woman into a childbearing wife, thus systematically converting her into a normative figure. This is of further interest when considered against the background of *Rennewart* as a whole. In a text which promotes the crusaders' endeavour to submit Muslim and other 'heathen' people to Christian rule, the Amazon herself turns out to be instrumental in the conquest of the heathen. As we shall see, there are structural parallels between the submission of the female to the male, and its consequent assertion of a 'proper' order between the sexes, and the submission of the non-Christian to the Christian. It is the combination of these two perspectives which gives Ulrich's representation of the Amazon particular significance.

## II

Composed probably in the 1240s, *Rennewart* was written as a sequel to Wolfram von Eschenbach's unfinished epic poem *Willehalm*. Like its predecessor, it

depicts the encounter between Christian and non-Christian warriors in a number of momentous battles. Comprising more than 36,500 verses, it is one of the longest Middle High German epic poems. The text, which was disseminated in more than forty manuscripts and was eventually adapted as a prose narrative, received an extraordinarily broad reception. However, the intense reception during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is at odds with the lack of interest which modern scholarship displays towards the text.<sup>10</sup> Today *Rennewart* is often regarded in unfavourable terms, not least due to its supposed aesthetic shortcomings, and recent Ulrich scholarship tends to focus on his *Tristan* sequel.<sup>11</sup>

*Rennewart's* overall ideological slant is marked by the disparity which characterizes the depiction of the Christians' Muslim opponents. Max Wehrli points out that in its treatment of the so-called heathen, the epic displays a regression to the 'old style'.<sup>12</sup> Where Wolfram's earlier work had suggested the possibility of a more tolerant, or at least lenient approach towards non-believers, the attitude presented by Ulrich may be summed up in the advice given by one of the protagonists, Malefer, to his son as they are about to enter battle: 'wir suln noch vil gestriten / mit den vervluohten heiden. / ez wirt noch von uns beiden / ertoetet manec Sarrazin' ('We shall have great fights with the damned heathens, and both of us will kill many a Saracen'; lines 33072-5).<sup>13</sup>

Ulrich's text recounts not only the story of the eponymous hero, but also the *vita* of his brother-in-law Willehalm, that of his son Malefer, and that of his grandson Johannes. It follows Wolfram's opus seamlessly, using the last verses of the latter's unfinished work as its introduction. In addition to the inspiration provided by his German predecessor, Ulrich drew on works of the French *chanson de geste* tradition, namely *Bataille d'Aliscans*, *Bataille Loquifer*, *Moniage Rainouart*, and *Moniage Guillaume*.<sup>14</sup> Considered against the background of these texts, Ulrich's work is marked by distinct independence and originality. One of its most remarkable features is the introduction of the Amazon queen Penthesilea. When *Rennewart's* son Malefer sets out on his journey to the Orient with the intention of increasing his political power, he embarks also on a bridal quest.<sup>15</sup> The bridal quest motif takes on central importance in Malefer's journey and is closely linked to his dissemination of the Christian faith. Malefer receives a message from God's angel Cherubin [*sic*], according to which he is to seek out Queen Penthesilea in order to marry her. This marriage allows him to acquire power over Penthesilea's substantial empire in Asia, and together with their son he is able to make further progress in the conquest of the heathen. Although Malefer's story incorporates elements familiar from the genre of *Spielmannsepik*, including the bridal quest and the fight against the heathen, there are no known sources for Ulrich's peculiar creation, which incorporates the Amazon queen of classical literature into a milieu novel to traditional representations of Penthesilea.

The Amazon queen Penthesilea first makes an appearance in classical Greek literature, typically as antagonist to the Greek hero Achilles in the context of the Trojan War. *Aithiopsis* or *Amazonia*, a lost epic from the eighth century BC that

was written by Arctinos of Miletus, is the first known source to depict the battle between Achilles and Penthesilea. It was summarized in the third century BC by Proclus, before similar ground was covered in Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica*, composed in the second half of the third century AD. Quintus describes Penthesilea as a demigoddess, fathered, both literally and metaphorically, by the god of war, Ares.<sup>16</sup> In Rome, Virgil's *Aeneid* portrays Penthesilea as a luminous warrior fighting in the Trojan War:

ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis  
Penthesilea furens mediisque in milibus ardet,  
aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae  
bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo. (book I, lines 490–3)  
(Furious Penthesilea leads the crescent-shielded troops of  
The Amazons and blazes amid her thousands,  
Her bare breast thrusting out over the golden girdle,  
A warrior queen, a girl who braves heroes in combat.)<sup>17</sup>

This description of the Amazon notably contains components of Isidore's later definition of the *virago*: Penthesilea is described as a maiden ('virgo') who dares to fight ('concurrere') men ('viris'). While this daring is related in terms of praise by Virgil, the transgressive aspect of the Amazon's conduct which sees her intrude on a male preserve is nevertheless clear and may be regarded as an essential characteristic of the warrior woman from antiquity to the Middle Ages.

In Ulrich, the Asian queen's name Pentesilie places her firmly in the Amazon tradition, and indeed she explicitly refers to herself as having been an 'Amazanes' (line 31972). Let us begin, then, by assessing how the description of Pentesilie's country and its population relates to this tradition. Pentesilie is said to inhabit a country called 'Melitropia' (line 31528), which is situated somewhere in Asia ('Asya'; line 31521). She is further referred to as 'kūngin von Ephesus' (line 31687), and this location ties in with one of the Amazons' historical dwelling places. According to Otto of Freising's *Historia de duabus civitatibus* (written 1143–6), which drew, among other sources, on the fourth-century Christian historiographer Orosius, Ephesus was founded by the Amazons in antiquity (I.23):

... Amazonum genus ... Quae in tantum, mirabile dictu, invaluere mulieres, ut pene toti Asiae ac Europae imperarent. Haec dicuntur illo in tempore Ephesum condidisse ... Porro ex eo, quod dextras, ne ictum sagittarum impedirent, adurebant mamillas, Amazones quasi sine mamillis sunt dictae.

(The race of the Amazons, strange to say, became so powerful that they ruled almost all Asia and Europe. It is said that they founded Ephesus at that time ... Furthermore, from the fact that they burned off their right breasts that they might not interfere with the aim of their arrows, they were called Amazons, as being without breasts.)<sup>18</sup>

This historiographical source, which Otto prefaces with the phrase *mirabile dictu*, thus expressing the 'abnormality' of these women, firmly links Ephesus and the

Amazons. It presents *in nuce* the features of those who differ from the feminine norm in both conduct and physical appearance and posits as their defining characteristics powerful rulership on the one hand and lack of the right breast on the other.

Both features listed in Otto's account (and others like it) are present in Pentesilie and her countrywomen. The women have only one breast (lines 31981–3), and Pentesilie is depicted as commanding powerful armies, although this is implied only indirectly. Prior to reaching the Amazons' country, Malefer's troops go into battle using the name 'Pentesilie' [*sic*] as their war cry (lines 31231f.) in order to disturb the Saracen opponents. When the heathen king Befamereit hears this, he assumes that an army ('ein her'; line 31529) has come from Melitropia. This suggests that the eponymous heroine is a warrior queen of sorts, who may head her own armed forces. Befamereit imagines he can defeat them, thus increasing his 'pris' (renown; line 31531) and teaching them 'ein laster' (shame; line 31532). The assumption that his reputation would be augmented by this victory points to the established military valour of the Amazon's troops, although it remains unclear whether Pentesilie's army is made up of, or includes, women.

Up to this point the depiction of Pentesilie and her retinue complies with traditional representations of the Amazon race as a fearsome force to be reckoned with. Subsequently, conventional expectations evoked by this largely generic introduction to the Amazons' realm are thwarted during Malefer's first face-to-face encounter with his wife-to-be. The initial impression of Pentesilie and her ladies is presented as follows:<sup>19</sup>

nu saz ob einem brunnen  
 ein wider glast der sunnen:  
 fünf hundert vrawen oder me.  
 da stunden blumen und cle,  
 dar zu harte shõnes gras;  
 da der vrawen rûwe was,  
 da was ein anger grûne. (lines 31633–9)

(There, above a spring, sat like a reflection of the sunshine five hundred ladies or more. Flowers and clover grew there, and the most luscious grass; where the ladies' resting place was, there was a green meadow.)

Flowers, clover, beautiful grass, and a green meadow evoke the *locus amoenus* of courtly tradition. Pentesilie's appearance in this staple of courtly tropes suggests that she represents a civilized society organized according to conventional gender roles, rather than a savage tribe challenging the norms of the latter.

When male and female protagonist meet for the first time this is presented along the conventions of a *minne* encounter, with 'Vrau Minne' being urged 'mache uz den beiden ein ein!' ('join these two together as one'; line 31642). Observing both partners join hands and walk side by side, onlookers state 'sie gesæhen nie so shõnes niht / von manne noch von wibe' ('They had never seen such beauty in a man or in a woman'; lines 31700f.). Hence Pentesilie's outward appearance represents feminine beauty in its most perfect form. At the same

time, her feminine appearance complements that of her masculine counterpart, as is expressed also in the phrase 'diu shōne mit dem shōnen gieng' ('the beautiful woman walked alongside the beautiful man'; line 31694). This suggests that to be able to enter into a successful union, man and woman are required to exhibit complementary rather than competing attributes.

At the beginning of the Amazon episode, however, Pentesilie's combative behaviour and physical strength, her self-sufficiency and political power, mean that she is in fact far removed from the ideal woman she is to become at the end of the episode (cf. lines 33014–18). Although Pentesilie is never shown to fight in battle, no doubt is left as to her extraordinary physical strength, which may surpass that of men, as well as her readiness to use it. Her superior strength manifests itself at the beginning of the courtship of the two protagonists. When Malefer is reluctant to bow to the queen's demand that he leave his troops behind and follow her into her country, Pentesilie asserts her position vehemently. She is not prepared to tolerate his dithering: 'des ensol iuch nit gezemen / daz ir mich iht notzoget' ('you shall not be allowed to violate me in any way'; lines 31776f.). While she does not use the verb 'notzogen' in the literal sense to imply Malefer's treatment of her 'with force', it nevertheless expresses her resistance to having to submit to his will. Thus she rejects the conventional distribution of power between the sexes according to which the man's physical superiority allows him forcibly to subject the woman to his will. So incensed is she by what she perceives as her suitor's insult to her honour that she threatens to turn his good reputation to shame. To prove her ability to do so, the queen assaults Malefer:

sine hende nam sie in ir hant  
 und dructe in also harte  
 daz er sich anders varte  
 und wolte sterben nach.  
 sie sprach: 'iwer kraft ist swach,  
 und wirt iwer m lebne mat.'  
 kũnc Malfer die vrawen bat  
 daz sie in leben lieze.  
 er tæte swaz sie in hieze  
 mit gantzen triwen stæte. (lines 31790–9)

(She took his hands into her hand and squeezed them so hard that he felt quite differently and believed that he was about to die. She said: 'Your power is weak, and your life is about to expire.' King Malefer asked the lady to let him live. He would do whatever she ordered him to do with complete and utter loyalty.)

She effortlessly 'manhandles' him so that he feels he has been mortally wounded and is forced to promise obedience. Thus Pentesilie's sheer physical strength prompts Malefer to obey her will out of naked fear for his life. Notably, she is not using any weapons in the intimidation of her suitor.<sup>20</sup> The lack of weaponry may indicate how intrinsic to her being her physical superiority is. Assuming physical strength as the decisive criterion for gender identity, Pentesilie appears suddenly as more of a man than Malefer. By demonstrating the *vir's* inferiority, the *vir(a)go* displays masculine characteristics herself.

Malefer reacts as follows:

... 'vil reiniu maget  
 ez ist dicke daz gesaget  
 daz ein hartes krankes wip  
 eines starken mannes lip  
 mit gewalte hat betwungen.  
 alsam ist iu gelungen  
 an mir; ich bin überkomen;  
 al min pris ist mir benomen,  
 und wil ich des cleine warn;  
 swar ir welt dar mûz ich varn.' (lines 31807-16)

(‘Purest maiden, it has often been told how a very weak woman has overcome a strong man through physical force. You have managed to do this with me; I have been overcome; all my renown has been taken from me, and if I want to preserve any of it I will have to go wherever you want me to go.’)

The defeated male makes reference to the standard of the weak woman versus the strong man at the very moment of its inversion. By overcoming the strong man the ‘weak’ woman demonstrates precisely the deficient state of his masculinity. His renown (‘pris’) has been taken from him and he is reduced to worrying about his sheer physical existence. Notably, Malefer’s existence can only be preserved at the cost of unconditionally submitting to the physically superior woman, and this undermines the social aspect of his identity, his reputation. But Malefer has no choice except to concede defeat. He does so, however, in a fashion that does not acknowledge actual physical inferiority: ‘du hast an mir den sige. / swie grozer sterke ich pffige, / so wil ich mich doch din nit wern’ (‘You have victory over me. However great strength I may command, I will nevertheless not attempt to defy you’; lines 32007-9). Thus he appears to phrase his defeat in terms of a *minne* relationship. His submission is presented as the result of courtesy and devotion, rather than physical inadequacy with its potentially devastating effect for his identity as a male.

This manifestation of female superiority on the physical level creates a sense of imbalance between husband- and wife-to-be, not least because the physical imbalance has severe social repercussions. A way of redressing the balance opens up when Pentesilie explains that her strength is conditional on her retaining her virginity:

al die wile ich bin ein maget  
 so han ich sterke harte vil,  
 als ich mit dir erziugen wil:  
 du weist wol daz ich mit einr hant  
 ane wêr dich vaste bant.  
 als ich aber wurde ein wip,  
 so hat die craft nit min lip;  
 daz ist mins geslæhtes art. (lines 31986-93)

(For as long as I am a virgin I am in possession of exceedingly great strength, as I am prepared to demonstrate on you: you know very well that with one hand I bound

you tight without any resistance on your part. But once I have become a woman my body will not possess this strength any more. Such is the nature of my kind.)

On becoming a 'woman', i.e. with the first experience of sexual intercourse, the queen will lose her physical strength. This echoes classical descriptions of Amazon tribes, whose members guard their virginity as the key to their power. It is also reminiscent of depictions of individual Amazonian women such as Camilla in Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneide* or Brünhild in the *Nibelungenlied*, which are concerned with a woman's loss of strength once she has had to succumb to sexual intercourse.

As soon as Malefer learns how his experience of inferiority may be revoked, he is anxious to reverse the previous situation:

... ich laze dich gesehen  
 daz mich din sterke niht betwang.  
 ich tûn dir einen bette swang  
 daz an dem rugge du gelist  
 und ane wer dich mir ergist. (lines 32000–4)

(I will show you that your strength did not subdue me. I will throw you onto the bed so vehemently that you will lie on your back and surrender yourself to me without resistance.)

Pentesilie's public display of physical strength prompts Malefer's wish to subdue her in the only way that he is capable of, i.e. sexually. The question of domination is shifted to the sexual level,<sup>21</sup> where the female is effectively disarmed by the male. Malefer's defloration of Pentesilie means that gender relations are taken into a new context, i.e. that of a binary model. Up to this point, the protagonists' relationship could be described in terms of a one-sex model to the extent that male versus female characteristics were distributed on a sliding scale of 'more' or 'less' strength, thereby making it possible for the female to threaten the male. The female's defloration through the male clearly establishes the male's power and focuses on the fundamental difference between the sexes. Unlike the display of physical strength, which is suddenly considered irrelevant, this action is tied to the use of sex-specific genitals and is not exchangeable between the sexes.<sup>22</sup> Pentesilie's inferiority as a 'typical' woman is established henceforth. There is also a moral reasoning behind this change of status, which is that engaging in the sexual act annuls any female aspirations to the male preserve of moral and physical strength since it sees the woman submit to her carnal nature.<sup>23</sup>

While the events of the wedding night are marked by equality, with both husband and wife being novices to the act of physical love equally in need of the guidance of *Minne*, the outcome of this night is unambiguous. Although Malefer is not shown to physically overpower his wife, Pentesilie, by giving her virginity up to him, passes her power on to him as anticipated. This adjustment of power takes place in the privacy of the bedroom, but it is followed by a public display. The next morning, Pentesilie explicitly passes her political power over to Malefer when she introduces him as the new sovereign to the kings under her rule (lines 32428–35). Her abstaining from political power is accompanied by the



loss of physical power: the remainder of the text contains no further mention of Pentesilie's bodily strength and presents her repeatedly in terms of ordinary female physicality. This is subsequently reinforced through pregnancy and childbirth, cementing her status as a frail being who is in thrall to her body.<sup>24</sup>

Prior to the wedding, Pentesilie's conversion to conventional femininity had already been prepared for by a significant change affecting her Amazonian physique. Once a one-breasted Amazon, she reports that a second breast has grown on her body in anticipation of her union with Malefer:

... [ich] hatte nit wan eine brust,  
als dise vrawen. die verlust  
verlos ich, do des got gezam  
daz ich die botshaft vernam,  
ich sôlte dich zu manne nemen.  
sin gûte kunde ie sa gezemen  
daz mir diu eine brust verswant  
und zwa an mime libe vant. (lines 31973–80)

(I had but one breast, just like these women. This loss I lost when God decreed that I should heed the tidings to take you as my husband. Then, his goodness immediately deemed it appropriate that my single breast should disappear and a pair should appear on my body.)

One of the defining features of the Amazons, the absence of one breast, is described here as a negative characteristic ('verlust'). Pentesilie overcomes this loss ('die verlust / verlos ich') when she receives the divine order to marry Malefer. The single breast disappears and in its place she finds two; thus, through the will of God, her body is returned to a state of feminine completeness by the time she joins her husband in matrimony.

Following the wedding, Pentesilie's body becomes further removed from the Amazonian status that was marked by the manifestation of exceptional strength when she falls pregnant. Her status as a 'normal' woman is consolidated as pregnancy reinforces the attributes of conventional femininity, to which she has reverted since losing her virginity:

Nu was sie komen in einen wan,  
als noch gnûge vrawen tûnt:  
ein gelust ir lip bstûnt  
der e nie in ir hetze kam,  
daz etteswenne sie gezam  
der vil suren hûltzinge  
und anders maniger dinge.  
dicke bestûnt sie der gelust  
daz sie vil suren kumbust  
az fûr die perdisse.  
sie gluste gar der spise  
die gerne eszent tragendiu wip. (lines 32528–39)

(By then she had entered into a state in which many women find themselves to this day: a craving attacked her body, the likes of which had never hounded her

previously, so that from time to time she craved sour crab apples and many other things beside. She was often attacked by this craving and preferred eating very sour sauerkraut to partridges.<sup>25</sup> She utterly craved the food that pregnant women like to eat.)

Pregnancy confirms Pentesilie to be like any other woman ('noch gnûge vrawen'), whose body functions in an entirely mundane and predictable way. Her body, once so strong, is now assailed by cravings. That she succumbs to these attacks establishes her as ordinary, and the military term 'bestân' (attack) moreover serves as an almost ironic reminder of how far removed she has become from her previous existence. The vulnerability displayed here, which is exploited to comic effect, further reinforces her return to the attributes of the weak woman confined by her physicality. This indicates not only the distance from her Amazonian role, but also her difference from her male counterpart.

When the day of the birth has arrived, Pentesilie's mode of action is once more that of an ordinary woman: 'sie tet, als die vrawen tûnt: / "we mir, we und we!"' ('She did as women do: "woe is me, woe and woe!"'; lines 32587f.). She behaves in a generic way and is reduced to uttering monosyllabic cries of pain. The contrast to the self-assured queen in possession of almost supernatural strength who was able to use her body to inflict pain on others could not be any greater. Pentesilie is now at the mercy of her own body, which is moved by a pain she cannot control. The description of her giving birth focuses on her powerlessness, which is described as common to women in that situation:

ir lip der was in cleiner maht  
 von den nôten die sie leit.  
 awe! was ist diu wipheit!  
 was uns leides ist beshert,  
 so ein liep uns widervert:  
 daz gelten wir mit leiden vil. (lines 32592–7)

(Her body possessed little power as a result of the distress which she suffered. Oh – what it means to be a woman! What suffering do we have to endure when we experience joy: we pay for the latter with great suffering.)

Thus the former warrior has become a victim, for whom 'cleine maht' ('little power') replaces and directly contrasts with her former 'sterke harte vil' ('exceedingly great strength'; line 31987). Pentesilie's suffering is described as one of the quintessential experiences of womanhood, which sees the joy of love followed by physical pain, thereby reducing the woman's role to inevitable passivity. Her potency, i.e. the ability to give birth, is interpreted as trauma, or punishment. This evokes biblical associations. In Genesis iii.16, God tells Eve, after the Fall: 'In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' In the Middle Ages, woman's inferiority is commonly deduced from Eve's transgression. Also, woman is generally associated with the corporeal – sex, concupiscence, and childbirth – which is perceived as a barrier to her attaining a higher moral status that would put her on a level with men. Pentesilie's pregnancy illustrates her descent into the corporeal, reinforcing

her difference from her male counterpart who is in possession of mastery over his body.

At her lowest, Pentesilie comes close to dying and pleads with the angel Cherubin to procure divine help (lines 32606–9). Eventually, she gives birth to a healthy child, a boy bigger in size than a 4-year-old (line 32624). From this point in the narrative onward, Pentesilie appears to define herself exclusively through the bodies of her son and husband rather than through her own. She states that her suffering in childbirth has been dispelled on seeing that ‘*unser zweier arte / nach dinem vater Rennewarte / an dem libe ist geslagen*’ (‘our joint nature [i.e. the newborn] resembles your father Rennewart’; lines 32651–3). The arrival of a male offspring, whose affiliation with the paternal lineage is asserted by his appearance which is said to take after the paternal grandfather, means a break with the matrilineal tradition of the Amazons.<sup>26</sup> Traditionally, Amazons were believed to dispose of their male children. Contrary to this tradition, Pentesilie draws validation for her own existence from that of her son when, upon witnessing Johannes’s strength, she exclaims, ‘*wol mich daz ich dich ie gebar!*’ (‘happy am I that I gave birth to you’; line 32821). Of equal importance to her identity is that of her husband, for when Malefer dies a hero’s death, Pentesilie’s grief causes her to follow suit (‘*ez wart so leidig ir der lip / daz sie lag vor jamer tot*’; ‘life for her came to be so full of pain that sorrow caused her to die’; lines 33122f.). This implies that her physical existence is ultimately dependent on that of her spouse. She has ceased to exist as an entity in her own right, having become instead a complement to her husband. As a result, she ceases to exist completely once he dies.

Such dependence on her husband is the result of a drastic change in the relationship between male and female protagonists. When the dissolution of her strength and the annihilation of an identity separate from that of her husband and son are complete, Pentesilie has evolved into the epitome of perfect womanhood. Having initially praised only Pentesilie’s beauty as ideal, the narrator exclaims towards the end of her life, ‘*ez enwart nie wiplicher wip / danne was Pentesilie*’ (‘there was never a more womanly woman than Pentesilie’; lines 33014f.). Thus she is said to have reached womanly perfection, having become the most womanly of women not simply in appearance but also in essence. In order for the former Amazon to reach this status, she has had to complete a process of realignment on the physical level. This consists first in the reversal of her bodily mutilation, i.e. the restitution of her second breast, which is followed by surrendering her virginity, and concludes with giving birth to a son. With each of these steps, Pentesilie departs from the Amazon tradition, imparting her physical strength to her husband and son and thereby renouncing her autonomous Amazonian existence for good. Having surrendered also her moral self-sufficiency, she ends up being the perfect complement to Malefer. Female perfection depends on her willingness to submit to and complement rather than challenge her husband. She is elevated in a courtly context as *Minnedame*. In this respect, her influence is purely a nominal one and does not correlate to any real physical or political power of the kind she had before. Because her attributes

are no longer described in male terms, as when her strength was encroaching on Malefer's masculinity, she now inhabits an exclusively female territory within which she excels without threatening to detract from the achievements of the opposite sex. Pentesilie has been assigned her own point of reference and in this sense a binary model of gender relations has taken over.

### III

As we have seen, Malefer's domination of Pentesilie is a crucial element in the representation of the Amazon. Overcoming the one-sex model in favour of a more binary one may be seen as the establishment of 'proper' order. I want to argue that the two protagonists' encounter is also part of a larger context, namely, the dissemination of Christianity and its domination of the non-Christian. Malefer's marriage to Pentesilie occupies an important place in his quest for world domination and with it his fight against the heathen. The 'new order' in male-female relations which is established in the course of the Amazon episode and the new order that the Christian domination of the heathen Orient is hoping to achieve are closely related.

In order to appreciate the role of Pentesilie in the conquest of the heathen, we need to look at the textual background from which she emerges. Prior to courting the Amazon queen, Malefer had intended to wed Bearosine, daughter of the King of Morocco, who is not yet a convert to Christianity. But this is prevented by an appearance of the angel Cherubin. Explaining that Bearosine's father Faufaserat will never consent to being baptized and is indeed cursed by God (lines 28457-9), Cherubin advises Malefer to break off the engagement and follow the divine command to marry another woman: 'sie heizt Penteseli / und ist vrawe da zu Asya' ('she is called Pentesilie and rules in Asia'; lines 28468f). Unlike the Moroccan princess, Pentesilie is already a Christian. Traditionally, however, the Amazon tribe was associated with a non-Christian cult. Otto of Freising's *Historia de duabus civitatibus* reports the following on the Amazons' religious practices at Ephesus:

Haec dicuntur ... Ephesum condidisse ac Dianae tamquam deae belli templum multis dehinc seculis famosum fabricasse.

(It is said that they founded Ephesus ... and erected to Diana as to a goddess of war a temple renowned for many centuries to come.)<sup>27</sup>

This assigns Diana, or her Greek equivalent Artemis, to the Amazons as their primary goddess. Artemis was the virginal goddess of the hunt, and thus by inference the goddess of war. As such she would appear to be a natural choice of deity for the warfaring women, and one which roots them firmly in the pre-Christian era of polytheistic Roman religion.<sup>28</sup>

But *Rennewart* is set in the Christian era, at a time when Roman polytheism is decidedly a thing of the past. Indeed Ulrich leaves the reader in no doubt as to the Amazons' rootedness in Christianity. Notably, the depiction of the Amazons' city in Asia Minor makes no reference to a Diana temple. Instead,

religious practice centres around a Christian cathedral ('tûm'; line 32115), and not just any cathedral at that: John the Evangelist had in previous times been its bishop ('Ist daz niht ein vræude groz, / daz Johannes Ewangelista / gerûthe wesen byshof da, / der uns vil genaden gab?'; 'Is it not a great joy that it pleased John the Evangelist to be a bishop here and bestow on us many blessings?'; lines 31829–32). According to Christian writers of the second and third centuries, the apostle and evangelist John lived in Asia Minor during the last decades of the first century and from Ephesus guided the churches of that province. It was John, together with Peter, who after Christ's ascension took one of the most prominent parts in the founding and guidance of the Christian Church. In the sixth century Emperor Justinian had the Basilica of St John erected over the supposed burial site of the apostle. The destruction of the temple of Artemis, which for centuries had been at the centre of the clash between Christianity and Roman polytheistic religion, is a standard (albeit anachronistic) element in the Latin lives of the Evangelist.<sup>29</sup> The cathedral's association with St John is therefore of great significance, with John symbolizing both the dissemination of Christianity and the eradication of a pre-Christian cult.

The reference to St John as a figure of the past indicates that Pentesilie lives among a people that have been Christianized previously. This is in keeping with the overall time-frame of the narrative. Historically speaking, the encounter between Willehalm and the Muslim armies, which forms the core of the epic, must be located somewhere in the ninth century, i.e. at a time when Roman polytheism would have been eradicated long ago in favour of Christianity. On the other hand, Pentesilie's residence in Asia and the fact that Malefer has to negotiate several non-Christian peoples on the way to her means that the Amazon's Christian faith is by no means a given. We must bear in mind here the Muslim successes of the centuries preceding the composition of Ulrich's text. In 1071 the Seljuk Turks defeated the Christian Byzantines at Manzikert in Asia Minor and reconquered most of the eastern Byzantine provinces.<sup>30</sup> In the centuries that followed, the Middle Eastern territories and Jerusalem saw numerous crusades being won by either side, until Jerusalem was finally lost by the West in 1244, around the very time at which Ulrich was writing his epic. The presence of non-Christian religion in Ephesus in particular and Asia Minor in general was therefore a very real possibility during Ulrich's lifetime. In view of the threat posed by this, it is of particular importance that Pentesilie and her Amazons are shown to be firmly rooted in Christianity. By placing Pentesilie in a consistently Christian environment, Ulrich dissociates her not only from the traditional pre-Christian faith of the Amazons, but also from the 'heathen' religion of the crusaders' Muslim opponents.<sup>31</sup>

Pentesilie's role in the Christian endeavour to stamp out the heathen first takes shape when her union with Malefer is described as the result of divine agency. The aspect of divine ordination is all the more important since it is traditionally unheard of for an Amazon to marry. In literary and historiographical tradition, Amazons leave their country once a year to congregate with men of neighbouring tribes in order that their state's population may be

maintained. This temporary union is generally described in purely functional terms. Against this background, it is significant that Pentesilie submits to a more conventional form of relationship with the opposite sex through the agency of the Christian God.<sup>32</sup> Divine authority is asserted at every significant step in the shared life of the couple. Their divinely ordained union is sealed when the bishop marries them in the church at Ephesus. When, in the process of giving birth, Pentesilie comes to fear for her life, she begs the angel Cherubin to procure divine help. As a result she gives birth to a healthy child (line 32624). Subsequently, Cherubin inscribes the name of St John the Evangelist on the infant's back (see lines 32690–4) and instructs Malefer to have the child baptized accordingly, which is promptly carried out by the bishop. The name Johannes establishes without a doubt the newborn's kinship with the Christian family, both in the specific sense of his paternal lineage and in the larger sense of a community bound together by religious ties.

As mentioned before, the very fact that Pentesilie gives birth to and raises a son marks another substantial deviation from the Amazon tradition, and so it is all the more significant that this son grows up to be a prime fighter for Christianity. Even as a boy, Johannes's strength already far surpasses that of his father. At this point, 'drie ... künige ... von den wilden mern' ('three kings from the wild seas'; line 32738) decide to invade Melitropia. In spite of his tender age, Johannes declares himself to be more than ready to fight. In response, he receives from Malefer the ancestral coat of arms and weapons that have been handed down through the generations (lines 32781–95), which further demonstrates his adherence to the patrilineal tradition. Johannes goes into battle guided by his faith, which finds the following expression: 'ich wil in gotes name bestan / die gar verflüchten heiden ... an swelhen heiden ich mag komen, / für war der müz des todes wesen. / wir sül'n keinen lan genesen' ('In the name of God I will attack the utterly damned heathens. ... Whatever heathen I may encounter he will certainly have to die. We shall not let any one of them live'; lines 32894–900). In fact he intends to surpass his grandfather Rennewart's activities, whose endeavour to defeat his Muslim opponents resulted in a bloodbath of hitherto unheard-of proportions: 'diu erde wirt so gerötet / daz Alytshantz nie rôter wart, da ... Rennewart / tote vil manigen heiden' ('the soil will become so red that Alischanz was never redder when ... Rennewart killed a great number of heathens there'; lines 32912–15). Thus Pentesilie's son is a significant force in the fight against the heathens, whose desire to eradicate the opponents of Christianity goes far beyond the initial fight in defence of his country.

This shows that the relationship between Christianity and the Amazons is a complex one. While the conversion to Christianity of the Amazon tribe as a whole is presented as an event of the distant past, Pentesilie undergoes a second, individual conversion through Christianity. This occurs when the Christian God employs his messenger in order to persuade the queen to renounce her virgin status as well as physical and political power. Such renunciation turns her from an Amazon who, while Christian, through her extraordinary strength still

presents a threat to her male counterpart specifically and to the Christian order generally, into a wife naturally subordinate to her husband. When, following this conversion, Pentesilie bears a son who grows up to be a crusader, she serves as an instrument in the male protagonists' attempt to disseminate the Christian rule on an ever-increasing scale. The protagonists' Christian marriage embodies ideal gender relations as divinely ordained, and this in turn facilitates the dissemination of Christianity.

When Ulrich has his male protagonists fight the heathen through the body of a former Amazon, he engages a tradition according to which the Amazons were located on the threshold between the civilized world of Christianity and the uncivilized unknown that often coincided with the realm of the Antichrist. In Thomas of Cantimpré's *Liber de natura rerum* (completed 1237-40), the Amazons are described as forming a bulwark between the Christian world and its enemies:

ille feminarum populus fortissimos sit et Christiano nomini dictatus. Contra Sarracenos acrimè pugnat. Et quidem non est diu, quod ipsarum Amazonarum regina veniens a partibus orientis servitio se mancipavit temple et sepulchri dominici.

(This most brave race of women are called by the name of Christians. Against the Saracens they fight fiercely. And indeed it was not long ago that the Queen of the Amazons, coming in service from the regions of the east, gave herself title to the temple and sepulchre of the Lord.)<sup>33</sup>

In subsequent centuries, the Amazons' position came to oscillate between the Christian and the non-Christian, and they could appear as defenders of the Christian world just as easily as belonging to its opponents.<sup>34</sup> By domesticating Pentesilie, Ulrich takes the vital step to ensure that the Amazons' moral position is unambiguous.

#### IV

In his investigation of origin myths Patrick Geary makes the point that the Amazons' 'defeat or destruction marks the beginning or reconstitution of the proper order of the world'.<sup>35</sup> Geary states that the literary representation of Amazons may imply two kinds of criticism: women in arms could be intended as evidence of male failure to rule properly, but they could also, in the Christian tradition, be read as a symptom of paganism. Both forms of criticism appear to be relevant for a reading of Ulrich's epic. Submission of the female and submission of the heathen converge in the figure of Pentesilie, and through her, Ulrich's text demonstrates how the Amazon may represent in one person both the female in need of domination from the male, and the heathen who must be conquered through Christianity.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Isidore's definitions of the sexes were to be influential for centuries to come. Written in the seventh century, Isidore's compilation of learning was a popular compendium and the textbook most in use in educational institutions throughout the greater part of the Middle Ages. In Germany, the *primus praeceptor* Hrabanus Maurus (c.780–856) clericalized the *Etymologies* in *De rerum naturis* as well as in other works, and the work had a direct influence also on the traditions of lexicons and encyclopedias that were standard reference works of the later Middle Ages.

<sup>2</sup> Quotations taken from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. S. Barney et al. (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> The one-sex model was posited most famously by the historian Thomas Laqueur, in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990; repr. 1992). While the suitability of Laqueur's model, which is based primarily on medical texts, for a reading of literary texts has been the subject of critical controversy (see e.g. *Manlichiu wîp, wîplich man. Zur Konstruktion der Kategorien 'Körper' und 'Geschlecht' in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz and Helmut Tervooren (Berlin, 1999)), my aim is not to contribute to this discussion but rather to employ the one-sex model as a tool in the analysis of a male–female relationship in a literary text.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Cadden points out that while the attribute 'manly' stood for a set of qualities derived from the notion of an ideal natural (that is, biological) man, medieval scientific texts considered also 'women' (biologically speaking) to have some potential for partaking of 'masculine' properties. Gender constructs such as this, she argues, were 'grounded in the broad notion of sexual differentiation, but they [were] predicated of the other sex as well as of ostensibly sex-neutral entities' (Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 205).

<sup>5</sup> Compare Joan W. Scott's definition of gender 'as the social organization of sexual difference. But this does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and natural physical differences between women and men; rather gender is the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences' (Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1999 (=rev. edn of 1989 edn)), p. 2).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1989; repr. 1999), see e.g. p. 180.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> For work on 'conventional' representations of the Amazon myth in medieval German literature, see the following: Helmut Brackert, 'Androgyne Idealität. Zum Amazonenbild in Rudolfs von Ems *Alexander*', in *Philologie als Kulturwissenschaft. Festschrift für Karl Stackmann*, ed. Ludger Grenzmann et al. (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 164–78; Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde, 'Ez ist ein rehtez wîphere. Amazonen in mittelalterlicher Dichtung', *PBB*, 119 (1997), 399–424; Ruth Finckh, 'Die Bändigung der wilden Mädchen. Der Amazonenstoff in Ulrichs von Etzenbach *Alexander* und die böhmische Hofkultur', in *Deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters in Böhmen und über Böhmen: Vorträge der internationalen Tagung 1999*, ed. Dominique Fliegler and Václav Bok (Vienna, 2001), pp. 81–104; Eva Schäufele,



*Normabweichendes Rollenverhalten. Die kämpfende Frau in der deutschen Literatur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, GAG 272 (Göppingen, 1979); Ursula Schulze, 'Sie ne tet niht alse ein wib. Intertextuelle Variationen der amazonenhaften Camilla', in *Deutsche Literatur und Sprache von 1050–1200. Festschrift für Ursula Hennig*, ed. Annegret Fiebig and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Berlin, 1995), pp. 235–60; Christa Tuczay, 'Zum Amazonenmythos im Lichte der mittelhochdeutschen Literatur', in *Ir sult sprechen willekommen: Grenzenlose Mediävistik. Festschrift für Helmut Birkhan*, ed. Christa Tuczay (Vienna, 1998), pp. 307–29; Sarah Westphal, 'Camilla: the Amazon body in medieval German literature', *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1996), 231–58.

<sup>9</sup> This is in keeping with the *Etymologies*, which specify that women's ability to give birth is what distinguishes them from men, as only women are equipped with a womb (xi.i.134). Isidore further states that there are other attributes and abilities that allow us to tell men and women apart: 'some body parts are there to allow us to tell the difference between the sexes' (xi.i.46). These include genitals, grown beard, wide chest in men, and smooth cheeks, narrow chest, wide loins and sides in women.

<sup>10</sup> To date, only one monograph has appeared on *Rennewart*: Christa Westphal-Schmidt, *Studien zum 'Rennewart' Ulrichs von Türheim* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> The prevailing assessment of *Rennewart* appears not to have changed significantly since Jakob Grimm in 1809 described the epic as '[ein] unbeschreiblich langweilige[s] Gedicht' ('an incredibly boring poem') (Jakob Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin, 1882; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), VI, 24). Grimm further declares *Rennewart* to be 'ein trockenenes, geschwätziges Gedicht ... das keinen Abdruck verdient' ('a dry, garrulous poem, which does not deserve to appear in print'; *ibid.*).

<sup>12</sup> Max Wehrli, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im Mittelalter*, 3rd edn (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 476f.

<sup>13</sup> All quotations are taken from *Ulrich von Türheim. Rennewart*, ed. Alfred Hübner, *Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters* 39 (Berlin, 1938; repr. 1964).

<sup>14</sup> *Le Moniage Guillaume*, ed. Nelly Andrieux-Reix, *Classiques français du Moyen Âge* 145 (Paris, 2003); *La Bataille Loquifer*, ed. Monica Barnett, *Medium Ævum Monographs* VI (Oxford, 1975); *Le Moniage Rainour I*, ed. Gerald A. Bertin (Paris, 1973); *Le Moniage Rainour II et III*, ed. Gerald A. Bertin, I (Paris, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Westphal-Schmidt points out that the religious motivation that commonly marks the desire to embark on an *Orientfahrt* is not as pronounced as Malefer's eagerness to increase his political power (see Westphal-Schmidt, *Studien*, pp. 206f.). However, in view of the significance which the domination of Pentesilie holds for the conquest of the non-Christian world, it does not seem appropriate to attribute religious indifference to Ulrich, as Westphal-Schmidt does (p. 212).

<sup>16</sup> *Quintus de Smyrne: La Suite d'Homère*, I, ed. Francis Vian (Paris, 1963), pp. 14f.

<sup>17</sup> *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos: Liber primus*, ed. R. G. Austin (Oxford, 1971), p. 16. Translation based on *Virgil: The Aeneid*, trans. C. Day Lewis (Oxford, 1952; repr. 1998), p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Otto von Freising: Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, trans. Adolf Schmidt, *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 16 (Darmstadt, 1974), p. 88. English translation from *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.*, by Otto, *Bishop of Freising*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, ed. Karl F. Morrison (New York, 2002 (=rev. edn of 1928 translation)), p. 142.

<sup>19</sup> An early intimation of the crucial way in which Pentesilie's estate differs from traditional representations of the queen by the same name may be gleaned from the name of her country. It is called 'Melitropia', which may alert the audience to the fact that what is about to follow is a tamer version of the traditional Amazon scenario. The

etymology of this place name, which has no place in the tradition of Amazon depictions and appears to be Ulrich's own invention, may point to the ultimately subservient nature of the Amazons. The most striking component of this compound noun appears to be derived from the Greek word μέλι 'honey', followed by a word reminiscent of τροπή 'turn'. This literally suggests a place which is 'turned towards honey'; metaphorically, it could be read as a place dominated by an atmosphere of overall pleasantness. Thus 'Melitropia' suggests a land of milk and honey, an idyllic or even utopian place where sweetness reigns, and this is clearly at odds with the typically fierce and fearsome character of the warfaring Amazon tribe. There is a parallel here with the paradisiacal place described in Cosmas of Prague's twelfth-century *Bohemia Chronicle*, which recounts the story of the Amazon-like Libussa. Cosmas describes Libussa's country as a place flowing with milk and honey, where men and women live in a state of gender equality.

<sup>20</sup> The use of bare hands in order to subdue one's opponent is reminiscent of the way in which giants often fight in the courtly epic, i.e. with brute force rather than with sophisticated instruments of civilization. While this could indicate that Pentesilie is somewhat outside the realm of courtly norms her appearance suggests that she is not in the same category as a 'wild', uncivilized woman, although her display of physical strength certainly does not conform to the courtly standard.

<sup>21</sup> The conjunction of physical and sexual domination evokes once more Brünhild's nocturnal defeat at the hands of Siegfried followed by Gunther taking her virginity. The attitude expressed by Malefer is present also in male reactions to Camilla in Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneide*. There, the warrior woman's strength and valour are undermined by a character named Tarcun who, taken aback by her martial skills, resorts to lascivious remarks that attempt to assign to her the role of mere sexual object. By suggesting that the only place for a woman to engage in a fight is the bedroom (see lines 8978–85, in *Heinrich von Veldeke. Eneasroman*, ed. Dieter Kartschoke (Stuttgart, 1986)), Tarcun endeavours to reassert the male superiority eluding him on the battlefield. In Camilla's case, unlike in Brünhild's, the sexual scenario is never realized, not least because she kills her opponent first.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Sigmund Freud, 'Das Tabu der Virginität', in Sigmund Freud, *Sammlung kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre*, 5 vols (Leipzig, 1918), IV, 229–51.

<sup>23</sup> Compare classical and medieval accounts of virgins who manage to overcome their inferiority in relation to men by abstaining from sexual intercourse. For these women, renouncing their virginity would mean a regression to the inferior state (see Christina Reinle, 'Exempla weiblicher Stärke? Zu den Ausprägungen des mittelalterlichen Amazonenbildes', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 270 (2000), 1–38).

<sup>24</sup> Sexual initiation clearly produces different results for a representative of the male as opposed to the female sex here. For Malefer it leads to the gaining of power and as such the fulfilment of his masculinity, while Pentesilie experiences as part of her transformation into a 'proper' woman the loss of her congenital strength.

<sup>25</sup> Classical depictions of Amazons occasionally describe them as gaining their strength in part from their carnivorous habits (see Josine Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden, 1995), p. 23). Pentesilie's newly developed vegetarianism may illustrate her recent meekness on the culinary level.

<sup>26</sup> The description of the child's conception is in keeping with medieval state of the art: '[got] hat unser nit vergezzen, / sit din lip hat besezzen / unser zweir reinen samen, / den wir von ein ander namen' ('God has not forsaken us. For your body has received the pure semen of both of us, which we took from one another'; lines 32565–8). This describes the woman's body as the receptacle for the spouses' semen. The female's production of semen does not imply an active role in conception but rather reinforces the notion of the

woman's inferior 'mirroring' of the male. By assuming the role prescribed by conventional biology, Pentesilie's body acts exactly as is expected of a female. The presence of male and female semen, and the spouses' mutual taking of it from one another, echoes a view common during the Middle Ages. It draws on the Hippocratic-Galenic theory, present also in Isidore, according to which both men and women produce semen, the interaction of which is vital to facilitate conception. According to Galen, the female parent's seed was less powerful, less informing than that of the male parent because of the nature of the female, who was inferior by definition. Thomas Laqueur uses this piece of medical history in his argument for the one-sex model and claims that 'the one-sex model can be read ... as an exercise in preserving the Father, he who stands not only for order but for the very existence of civilization itself' (*Making Sex*, p. 58). There can be no doubt that *Rennewart* is a story about fathers rather than mothers, when we consider the fate of the protagonists' wives: Willehalm's wife Gyburc, whose own mother, contrary to her father, is not mentioned, never becomes a mother; Alise, Rennewart's wife, dies in childbirth; Pentesilie, in becoming a mother, seals her submission to her husband's estate. Thus the mothers fade into oblivion, while the fathers' lineage is crucial for the preservation of Christian civilization.

<sup>27</sup> Otto von Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, p. 88; English translation from *The Two Cities*, p. 142.

<sup>28</sup> Artemis of Ephesus was in fact a different deity from the goddess Artemis revered in mainland Greece. Thought to have been derived from archaic Asian goddesses such as Cybele or the *magna mater*, she was associated with fertility and was often depicted with multiple breasts. The confusion between the two manifestations of Artemis/Diana appears to have been an oversight on Otto's part, albeit an entirely understandable one, considering that the one-breasted Amazons were believed to have suppressed their maternal nature in favour of warriorship.

<sup>29</sup> See the apostle's life e.g. in the *Legenda aurea*, where John's refusal to venerate Diana leads to the conversion of her priest Aristodemos.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. e.g. Jasper Streater, 'The battle of Manzikert 1071', *History Today*, 17 (1967), 257-63.

<sup>31</sup> Another conversion of an Amazon takes place in Wirnt von Gravenberc's *Wigalois*, where the Amazon Marine converts to Christianity for the sake of the eponymous hero.

<sup>32</sup> When Malefer hesitates to follow her to Melitropia (line 31769), Pentesilie is ready to turn on her heel. Consequently her husband-to-be refers to her welcoming kiss as having been a 'Judas kus' ('Judas's kiss'; line 31772) should she refuse him. Through indirectly linking Pentesilie to one of the most reviled traitors in Christendom, this reference hints that the Amazon's religious status may be somewhat precarious. However, since Pentesilie's subsequent actions put to rest any doubts as to her commitment to the Christian faith, the reference to Judas may be a mere cliché rather than being intended to point up her tribe's relatively recent, and therefore potentially unreliable, conversion.

<sup>33</sup> *Thomas Cantimpratensis: Liber de natura rerum*, ed. H. Boese (Berlin, 1973), I, 31 (line 26). English translation from Vincent DiMarco, 'The Amazons and the end of the world', in *Discovering New Worlds*, ed. Scott D. Westrem (New York, 1991), p. 74.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. e.g. DiMarco, 'The Amazons and the end of the world', pp. 69-89. Another medieval text to engage this theme is Heinrich von Neustadt's *Von Gottes Zukunft*, which depicts the Amazons, together with the Red Jews and the tribes of Gog and Magog, under the rule of the Antichrist.

<sup>35</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *Women at the Beginning: Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), p. 34.