

Same Sex, Different Day: the Amazon Communities of *Wonder Woman* (2017)
and *Xena: Warrior Princess*

Despite radically re-interpreting Greek myth, both *Wonder Woman* (2017) and *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995-2001) present a conservative version of the Amazons. The Amazons of both projects show the limits of these re-interpretations, and so the limits of imagined female same-sex communities. Despite their characterization as a race of warrior women who either ruled or rejected men, the predominant Greek myths concerning Amazons detailed their relationships with men (e.g. Hippolyta, Penthesileia), and their defeat in battle (Blok 1995: 384-394). The "female masculinity" that Greek authors ascribed to Amazons did not correlate with homoerotic behavior, beyond passing references to scorning men (Penrose 2016: 61-62). Both *Wonder Woman* and *Xena* have been considered both feminist icons, especially in their ability to re-write myth and history (Futrell 2003; Lepore 2015) and the symbolic descendants of the Amazons (Staley 2009: 218-221). But neither project significantly challenges these aspects of Greek tradition.

A current *Wonder Woman* cartoonist, Greg Rucka, has said that Diana and the society of Themyscira, the Amazon homeland, are "queer" (Docktermann 2016). But the recent film contains only a few allusive references to same-sex relationships, while Diana's own is with a man. After training for war for centuries, the Amazons are quickly defeated in battle as soon as human men arrive. *Xena* was lauded for the queer subtext between Xena and Gabrielle, the Greek villager who becomes an Amazon queen; the relationship was ultimately openly acknowledged by the show's cast and creators (Helford 2000: 139-142). But the larger Amazon community in *Xena* does not present any same-sex relationships; instead, Ephiny, another Amazon ruler, pursues a relationship with a centaur. The numerous Amazon tribes in the series

represent a nation in decline. Both works suggest that although individual women may successfully pursue military victory or a same-sex relationship, showing a whole community of women doing so remains unacceptable.

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