

## “A Matchless Spirit”: The “Othering” of Mythic Warrior Women and Vergil’s Camilla

In ancient literature, the ancient warrior woman is a frequently “Othered” figure, often portrayed as barbaric or overtly sexualized in an effort to distance her from the “ideal woman” of a typical patriarchal society. In reality, however, the separation was not nearly so dramatic. Real-life women contributed financially, socially, strategically, and physically to ancient military campaigns. Yet, meaningful representation of this involvement is largely sidelined in favor of narratives which both exaggerate the female warrior and reduce her to a “negative role model” for women. A notable exception to this pattern is found in the *Aeneid*’s Volscian leader Camilla. Vergil’s portrayal of Camilla straddles the line between Other and not, alternately highlighting her barbarism and her femininity. Her ambiguous character presents the opportunity for interpretation as a bridge between history and myth. As such, this paper aims to situate Camilla in between the deviant extreme of the Amazon warrior and the underrepresented everywoman, emphasizing that gender roles and the division of militaristic labor are far more complex than they first appear. First, the ways in which the Amazon warrior is Othered in ancient literature are detailed. Then, the average woman’s sundry contributions to warfare are discussed, with emphasis placed upon the ways that her real-world contributions are devalued and even erased by the Othering of mythic warrior women. Lastly, close readings are conducted of Camilla’s appearances in Books 7 and 11 of the *Aeneid*, highlighting the ambiguity of her portrayal and her function as a literary marker.

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