

I

Staking Out the Battlefield¹

The woman warrior in German culture

Branchishing their swords, a regiment of women warriors strides across the battlefield of German culture²—on the stage, in the opera house, on the page, and in paintings and prints. These warriors are the subject of this book. In some cases they are depictions of historical figures—Joan of Arc (1412–31), Charlotte Corday (1768–93), Eleonore Prochaska (1785–1813)—but in most cases they are re-imaginings of women warriors to be found in mythology, ancient and medieval history, and the Bible. These ancient sources of western culture tell stories about the woman warrior because she is, by definition, a transgressive and therefore frightening figure. Just as these sources tell stories about other terrifying visions—the son sleeping with his mother, the father sacrificing his own child, the mother killing her children—so they tell them about the woman who leaves her proper female sphere, takes up a weapon, goes to war and, in some cases, even kills. She may be doing this from the best of motives, she may be mandated by God, the gods, or her own people, but the idea of a woman with the potential to kill causes deep unease. Such a woman has to be made safe by being tamed in some way—either by death, by defloration, or both.

The fact that so many of these fantasies are of ancient origin lends them a peculiar authority. Women must be like this, is the implication, since ‘people’ have always imagined them like this. But ‘people’ in this context

¹ Note to the reader: This chapter defines the subject of this book, and sets out the most important features of the representation of the woman warrior in German-speaking culture. It is meant as an introduction to the whole book, to be read alongside whichever of the later chapters the reader is most interested in.

² ‘German’ is often used in this book to mean ‘German-speaking’. The cultural area being discussed covers a range of different states over the long time-span under review, from the Holy Roman Empire at the beginning of the period to the states of the twentieth century.

means men. There are very few women writers or artists known to us either from the ancient world, from Old Testament times, or even from the Middle Ages, so the originators of these imaginings about women were men, just as the consumers of the imaginings were men. Men did the reading and the writing, just as they did the looking and the painting. In the specifically German context this male dominance lasts even longer than in the Italian, French, or English context, for there is a dearth of published writing by women that is not religious before the late eighteenth century, and it is not until the early twentieth century that there are musical and visual works by women in any great number. In addition, very few women writers before 1950 have made it into the canon of German literature. So the representations of women which consumers of European and German art encounter—often extremely vivid and compelling representations—are of women by men. Representations of the woman warrior are no exception. It must be concluded, therefore, that they convey male desires and male fears.

In a religious age such as the early modern period, Divine Providence could be relied on to make the woman warrior safe. She could even be God's instrument, as is the biblical figure of Judith. If God had authorized such a woman to kill, He could be relied on to ensure that she did not remain a danger to men when her mission was accomplished. Even if such a woman was not directly mandated by God, Providence would still ensure that she would be removed from the scene and order restored. Hans Jakob von Grimmelshausen's unregenerate soldier and prostitute Courasche is the exception here,³ for it is apparently impossible to annihilate her. This is precisely the point in her case, however, for she is an allegorical figure representing the temptations of the flesh and a disordered world, and is therefore not mortal at all. When secularism begins to gain ground, that is, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the woman warrior is imagined as a real woman and therefore as a much more extreme and dangerous figure with a greater potential for agency and a greater potential to cause disorder. She can still be allowed to kill if she does so on behalf of the nation, but again only if, ultimately, she is tamed—that is, killed—at the end. The late nineteenth century transmutes the woman warrior into the *femme fatale*. In contrast to the warrior, whose potential for violence is open and official, the

³ Courasche is the eponymous heroine of Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's story first published in 1670: *Trutz Simplex, Oder Lebensbeschreibung der Erzbetrügerin und Landstörzerin Courasche*. Quotations are from Grimmelshausen, *Simplicianische Schriften* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976).

femme fatale is a seductress whose malevolent potential for violence is hidden, making her a figure full of perverse and sadistic desire and, at the same time, of perverse and sadistic fascination.⁴ This basic conflict informs all portrayals of the woman warrior by men—the conflict between woman as embodiment of beauty and as object of desire, and woman as beastly, the personification of temptation, of duplicity, and of crazed violence, the object of fear and loathing. Hence the title of this book.

It might be objected that all western cultures re-imagine the women warriors to be found in classical mythology and the Bible, so why focus on the German-speaking world? Because, so this book contends, the figure of the woman warrior has a continuous prominence and importance there that it does not have in any other western culture. The woman with the sword, whether as Amazon, Judith, Valkyrie, or heroic maiden, plays a central role in German cultural consciousness from at least the early modern period to the first half of the twentieth century, and it would be possible, though outside the scope of this study, to show that the first two of those imaginings are just as numerous in the Middle Ages.⁵ Not only are depictions of the woman warrior extremely prevalent, many of these depictions are officially venerated canonical monuments of German culture: paintings of Judith by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1530) and Gustav Klimt (1901 and 1909), Friedrich Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* (1801),⁶ Heinrich von Kleist's *Amazon Penthesilea* (1808),⁷ Friedrich Hebbel's *Judith* (1840)⁸, Richard Wagner's operatic treatment of the *Valkyrie Brünnhilde* (1856). These well-known representations stand alongside a large number of other depictions not universally familiar today: Sixt Birck's *Judith* (1534),⁹ Daniel Casper von Lohenstein's *Epicharis* (1665) and his *Sophonisbe* (first performed in

⁴ See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1986), and Carola Hilmes, *Die Femme Fatale. Ein Weiblichkeitstypus in der nachromantischen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990).

⁵ See Christine Reinle, 'Exempla weiblicher Stärke? Zu den Ausprägungen des mittelalterlichen Amazonenbildes', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 270 (2000), 1–38, and Henrike Lähnemann, *Historia Judith. Deutsche Judithdichtungen vom 12. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Kalender auf das Jahr 1802. Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Eine romantische Tragödie* (Berlin: Unger, 1801).

⁷ Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea*, in *Dramen Zweiter Teil* (Munich: dtv, 1964), 161–258.

⁸ Friedrich Hebbel, *Judith. Eine Tragödie in fünf Akten*, *Digitale Bibliothek*, vol.1: *Deutsche Literatur* (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2005), 72820–937.

⁹ Sixtus Birck, *Judith Ain Nutzliche History / durch ain herrliche Tragædi / in spißweiß für die augen gestelt / Dienlichen / Wie man in Kriegbleufften / besonders so man von der ehr Gots wegen angefochten wirt / umb hilff zu Gott dem Herren flehend ruffen soll* (Augsburg: n.pub., 1539). Though written in 1534, the play was not published until 1539.

1669),¹⁰ Andreas Heinrich Buchholtz's Valiska (1659–60),¹¹ Christian Felix Weiße's 'Songs of an Amazon' (she is in reality a soldier's bride, 1762),¹² Johann Gottfried Bernhold's Joan of Arc (1752),¹³ Zacharias Werner's Wanda, queen of the Sarmatians (1810),¹⁴ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's Judith (1874),¹⁵ Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's Gust, supposedly a cross-dressed page of Gustav Adolf, king of Sweden (1882),¹⁶ Georg Kaiser's Judith in *Die jüdische Witwe* ('The Jewish Widow', 1904)¹⁷ and his Joan of Arc in *Gilles und Jeanne* ('Giles and Joan', 1922),¹⁸ Friedrich August Kaulbach's painting of Germania (1914)—to name only some of the representations discussed in subsequent chapters. German authors continued to draw on these tropes in the early twentieth century and do so up to the present, though with a marked falling off after World War II. Prominent examples are Fritz Lang's film *Die Nibelungen* (1924), Bertolt Brecht's *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* ('St Joan of the Stockyards', 1929–30)¹⁹ and *Mutter Courage* ('Mother Courage', 1939),²⁰ in both of which he disarms the warrior woman he finds in his source material, Stefan Schütz's play *Antiope und Theseus (Die Amazonen)* ('Antiope and Theseus (The Amazons)', 1977),²¹

¹⁰ Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, *Epicharis*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 2.1 and 2.2, ed. Lothar Mundt, Wolfgang Neuber, and Thomas Rahn (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005) and *Sophonisbe*, ed. Rolf Tarot (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996).

¹¹ Andreas Heinrich Buchholtz, *Des Christlichen Teutschen Groß-Fürsten Herkules und der Böhmischn Königlich Fräulein Valiska Wunder-Geschichte In acht Bücher und zween Teile abgefasst und allen Gott- und Tugendliebenden Seelen zur Christ- und ehrlichen Ergezligkeit ans Licht gestellet* (Braunschweig: Zilliger, 1659/60).

¹² Felix Weiße, *Amazonen-Lieder* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1762).

¹³ Johann Gottfried Bernhold, *La Pucelle d'Orleans oder Johanna die Heldin von Orleans* (Nuremberg: Stein & Raspe, 1752).

¹⁴ Zacharias Werner, *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten. Eine romantische Tragödie mit Gesang in fünf Akten, in Dramen von Zacharias Werner*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971).

¹⁵ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Judith von Bialopol. 1675 (1874)*, in Marion Kobelt-Groch (ed.), *'Ich bin Judith': Zur Rezeption eines mythischen Stoffes* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003), 107–20.

¹⁶ Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Gustav Adolfs Page*, in *Sämtliche Werke in zwei Bänden. Vollständiger Text nach den Ausgaben letzter Hand. Mit einem Nachwort von Erwin Laaths* (Munich: Winkler, 1968).

¹⁷ Georg Kaiser, *Die jüdische Witwe. Bühnenspiel in fünf Akten*, in *Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Walther Huder (Frankfurt–Berlin–Vienna: Propyläen Verlag, 1971).

¹⁸ Georg Kaiser, *Gilles und Jeanne*, in *Werke*, vol. 5, ed. Walther Huder (Frankfurt–Berlin–Vienna: Propyläen Verlag, 1971).

¹⁹ Bertolt Brecht, *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe. Bühnenfassung, Fragmente, Varianten*, ed. Gisela E. Bahr (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971).

²⁰ Bertolt Brecht, *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder. Eine Chronik aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1960).

²¹ Stefan Schütz, *Antiope und Theseus (Die Amazonen)*, in *Eloisa und Abaelard* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1979), 7–56.

and Rolf Hochhuth's play *Judith*,²² premiered in English in Glasgow in 1984 and in German in Kiel in 1985.

Though representations of the woman warrior are so prevalent in German culture, records of actual woman warriors are sparser than in other European countries. At one time I set out to find records of real women soldiers in early modern Europe.²³ It proved very easy to find information about historical women who participated in war in English, French, Dutch, and Spanish-speaking territories from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries. The women in question were in some cases ordinary soldiers who masqueraded as men and took part in actual combat and in other cases they were members of what one might call the 'officer class'—women who 'held the fort' in their husbands' absence, who commanded troops, or directed sieges.²⁴ There were also powerful women rulers who commanded armies, the most famous of them being Elizabeth I, queen of England (1533–1603). I was also able to find testimonies by women themselves in these languages about their involvement in war. Finding records of German-speaking women before the Napoleonic Wars proved another matter altogether. It seemed that, whether women fought or not, their deeds were not recorded,²⁵ and testimonies by women about their participation in war could only really be found from the early nineteenth century on.²⁶ So the

²² Rolf Hochhuth, *Judith*, in *Alle Dramen*, vol. 2 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 2128–329.

²³ This research was published in Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, '“Damals wünschte ich ein Mann zu sein, umb dem Krieg meine Tage nachzuhängen”'. Frauen als Kriegerinnen im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit', in Klaus Garber et al. (eds.), *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden. Religion—Geschlechter—Natur und Kultur* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002).

²⁴ e.g. Pedro Rubio Merino, *La Monja Alférez. Doña Catalina de Erauso. Dos manuscritos autobiográficos inéditos* (Seville: Cabildo metropolitano de la Catedral de Sevilla, 1995); Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most Notorious Pyrates, . . . with the remarkable actions and adventures of the two female pyrates, Mary Read and Anne Bonney* (London: Charles Rivington, 1724); and Mrs Christian Davies, *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies, commonly call'd Mother Ross; who, in several campaigns . . . in the quality of a foot-soldier and dragoon, gave many signal proofs of an unparalleled courage and personal bravery. Taken from her own mouth when a pensioner of Chelsea Hospital* (London: R. Montagu, 1740). Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. von de Pol, in their monograph *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989), give details of a large number of women soldiers and sailors from the Netherlands.

²⁵ An exception is Gesche Meiburg, who helped to defend her home town of Braunschweig when it was besieged by Duke Friedrich Ulrich of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in 1615 and whose deed was publicized in four contemporary illustrated broadsheets. See Ch. 6, 204–6.

²⁶ Regula Engel, *Lebensbeschreibung der Wittve des Obrist Florian Engel von Langwies in Bündten, geborner Egli von Fluntern bey Zürich: von ihr selbst beschrieben und von einem ihrer älteren Verwandten rev. und mit Anm. Begleitet*, ed. S. D. Steinberg (Zürich: Rascher, 1914). Her life-story was published in

number of artistic depictions of women warriors stands in inverse proportion to the participation of actual women in war. But then, it also stands in inverse proportion to the participation of women in the public sphere in Germany in general. It also turned out that some of the most compelling depictions of women warriors in Germany—Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* ('The Maid of Orleans', 1801), Kleist's *Penthesilea* (1808), and Hebbel's *Judith* (1840)—were produced in direct response to stirrings of emancipation on the part of women and that they go hand in hand with these authors' clearly expressed views about women's inferiority.

This study begins with the Renaissance, because this period sees the beginning of print culture, that is, of the mass dissemination of images and text, in both of which Germans led Europe. It is also the period which laid the foundations for many German political, confessional, and cultural notions that are still influential today. By covering such a long period we can better understand the historical processes that, on the one hand, maintained the potency of the image of the woman warrior over half-a-millennium, but, on the other hand, varied it significantly at key moments in German cultural history. Reformation writers and artists concentrate on Judith, God's instrument in the war against the infidel or against unreformed Christianity; the period after the Thirty Years War either depicts larger-than-life transgressive monsters or heroic viragos; writers at the time of the French Revolution and the Wars of Liberation imagine, on the one hand, heroic maidens who die to save the nation, and, on the other, bloodthirsty Amazons—whether classical or Bohemian ones—as embodiments of unreason. The nineteenth century calls for ever more whole-hearted female exemplars of self-immolation, while evincing terror at the thought of a woman with such potentially lethal physical power. During this century too, the frequent re-imaginings of the Nibelung myth mean that the warrior Brünhild²⁷ in the wide range of manifestations discussed in Chapter 3 is constantly visible to the theatregoing public as a counterpart to the male hero Siegfried. The same century sees a number of works about Charlotte Corday, the woman who killed Jean Marat in his bath in 1793, about Judith, about heroic

two parts in 1821 and 1828 respectively, and mostly describes her travels as a soldier's wife, rather than as a soldier, though she does fight herself at one point.

²⁷ As will become apparent in Ch. 3, Brünhild's name has many different forms from author to author and from source to source: Brunhild, Brünhild, Brynhildis, Brünnhilde. The standard form Brünhild will be used to refer to the figure in general, the specific spelling when referring to the usage in a particular work.

maidens who fought in the Napoleonic Wars, about Sophonisbe, the Carthaginian warrior queen, and many others. The question subsequent chapters will try to answer is what cultural work these depictions are doing.

At the same time as nineteenth-century theatres were staging the woman warrior in a seemingly inexhaustible stream of dramatic works, the great capital cities of the German-speaking territories were doing the same in their public spaces. In 1838, for instance, August Kiss's striking statue of the *Fighting Amazon* was erected in the centre of Berlin outside the Altes Museum (Fig. 1). Kiss's Amazon is on horseback, half-naked, exuding physical energy, with her spear poised to kill a lion which has launched itself at her horse. A hundred metres away is Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Palace Bridge, built between 1819 and 1823. The eight marble sculptures Schinkel (1781–1841) had planned for it were only executed after his death between 1847 and 1854, for lack of money. Four of them depict Nike, goddess of victory, teaching the young hero, crowning the victor, helping the wounded hero, and carrying his corpse up to Olympus. The other four represent Pallas Athene, goddess of war, instructing the young hero in the use of weapons, arming him, leading him into combat, and protecting him (Fig. 2). The Berlin skyline is dominated by the golden Winged Victory on the Siegestsäule (triumphal column) inaugurated in 1873. The figure is wearing a helmet and holding not only a laurel wreath but also a staff with the Iron Cross prominent on its tip. This development goes hand in hand with the increasing militarization of Prussia, discussed below in Chapter 5 on heroic maidens.

But Berlin is not the only city to erect such prominent public representations of war in female form. At this same period a huge statue of Pallas Athene, goddess of war as well as of wisdom, was installed in front of the parliament building in Vienna, as Marina Warner shows.²⁸ The statue, by Carl Kundmann (1838–1919), dates to 1874–83, and depicts Pallas Athene holding a long spear in her left hand and a small figure of Nike, the goddess of victory, in her right. (Möller's Athene on the Palace Bridge in Berlin also holds a figure of Nike, but in her left hand.) As Silke Wenk explains, female sculptures were used to depict those virtues that the bourgeois order held dear.²⁹ Unlike two-dimensional representations, they are, literally,

²⁸ Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Vintage, 1996; 1st edn. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).

²⁹ Silke Wenk, *Versteinerte Weiblichkeit. Allegorien in der Skulptur der Moderne* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 1996). This monograph is very illuminating about the sculptural representation of female allegories in general.



Figure 1. August Kiss (1802–65), *Kämpfende Amazone* (1840), bronze statue, in front of the Altes Museum, Berlin.

embodiments of what they represent and have a physical presence and permanence in the same space as the viewer.

It might be possible to regard these classical images as so standard in European cities at this period that they say very little about German culture specifically. The evolution of the figure of Germania, the personification of



Figure 2. Karl Heinrich Möller (1802–82), *Athene Arms the Young Warrior* (1851), marble statue, Palace Bridge (Schlossbrücke), Berlin.

the German nation, is another matter altogether. Bettina Brandt traces the iconographic development of the figure from the captive Germania represented as an Amazon on Roman coins. She shows how it evolved from a representation of the German combative spirit or ‘virtus bellatrix’, up to the point when the emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519), an arch-publicist and mythmaker, invented Germania ‘as the mother of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation’.³⁰ Brandt shows how Germania was sometimes

³⁰ Bettina Brandt, ‘Germania in Armor: The Female Representation of an Endangered German Nation’, in Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (eds.), *Women and Death 2: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination Since 1500* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 86–126, at 88.

understood as a bride, sometimes as a mother, in the Napoleonic Wars, and cites Heinrich von Kleist's ode 'Germania an ihre Kinder' ('Germania to her Children', written in 1809 but not published until 1813), in which Mother Germania rallies her sons to fight the French enemy and die for their country. For the democrats of 1848 Germania represented liberty, rather as the figure of Marianne did in France, but after the revolution was crushed Germania put on armour and turned more and more into a symbol of the nation defending itself against the French aggressor on the other side of the Rhine. Her sword—originally an emblem of justice and of temporal authority—became not just a defensive but an aggressive weapon. In Christian Köhler's painting *Germania erwacht* ('Germania Awakes', 1849), Germania is shown just reaching warily for her sword, while Lorenz Clasen's painting *Germania auf der Wacht am Rhein* ('Germania on Guard at the Rhine', 1860) depicts her in a watchful stance, high above the river on a rock, holding an enormous sword and shield, preparing to repel the French invaders. Hermann Wislicenus's painting of the same scene in 1873 shows a more masculine Germania, now clothed in full armour, but it is Friedrich August Kaulbach's painting *Deutschland August 1914* ('Germany, August 1914') that depicts Germania as a Fury.³¹ She wears full armour, the pointed metal cones on her breastplate aggressively emphasizing her female body. She holds a sword and shield, her gaze exudes a wild ferocity, like Schiller's Maid of Orleans in the second act of *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, and she stands on the battlefield before a world in flames. The link to the battlefields of World War I is made even more explicitly in a postcard entitled: 'Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!' ('Fast and true stands the guard at the Rhine', Fig. 3). This again shows Germania as a Fury. She wears the imperial crown, her skirt is adorned with Prussian eagles, an enormous eagle hovers at her side like a vulture, and at her feet are Prussian soldiers and their officer aiming at the enemy.

While this personification of the nation is evolving to the point where it culminates in the figure of a bloodthirsty Fury, writers, artists, and composers are developing the figure of the woman warrior to the point where she metamorphoses into a terrifying *femme fatale*—or else is trivialized out of existence. Two examples of the depiction of Judith exemplify these two trends. Where Georg Kaiser's play about Judith, *Die jüdische Witwe*, discussed in Chapter 4, depicts an immature and sexually avid child who murders by accident, Gustav Klimt's two paintings of Judith in 1901 (Fig. 4)

³¹ See cover illustration.



Figure 3. *Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!* ('The guard at the Rhine stands firm and loyal'), postcard from World War I.

and 1909 (Fig. 5) depict respectively a sexual temptress and a witch, merging the seductive Salome with the killer Judith. Because, by this date, Judith is no longer seen as a chaste liberator but also as a sexual predator whose desire for vengeance against her rapist leads her to cut off a man's head, this makes her seem like a second Salome. We might remember that the date of Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's opera *Salome*, premiered in Dresden in 1905, falls chronologically between these two paintings. It is a work in which a woman's sexuality and blood-lust also result in the loss of a man's head.

After World War II the number of representations decreases, but it should not be forgotten that, even if there are fewer new imaginings about the woman warrior, the older works that depict her are by now canonical works taught in schools and universities, performed and viewed frequently, reproduced—for instance, in the case of Cranach and Klimt's paintings—on everything from ashtrays to posters, while the mass media now make the old imaginings available to a new audience. To cite only three examples: there were eleven separate productions of Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* in German theatres during the winter of 2004; Wagner's Brünnhilde regularly strides across the stage of German opera houses, not just that of Bayreuth; and in 2004 a two-part dramatization of the *Nibelungenlied* on German television, directed by Uli Edel with Kristanna Løken playing Brünhild, represented this quintessential German warrior woman to a new mass audience.

Women themselves only begin to have their say from the second half of the eighteenth century, when they begin to produce secular literature in German in quantity. They do not yet engage with male imaginings, but instead invent fictional women who take part in wars in the real world, imagining a space for themselves in which they can think the unthinkable, even if they sometimes feel impelled ultimately to reinforce patriarchal norms. It is only when women have achieved some measure of emancipation at the end of the nineteenth century that they begin to examine the tropes about the woman warrior for themselves, move beyond the beauty-or-beast dichotomy, and wring some emancipatory potential out of a figure such as the Amazon. It is in this period too that campaigners for women's rights begin to use the figure of Germania 'as the protector of the struggle for and the victory of women's liberation'.³²

³² Brandt, 'Germania in Armor', 109.



Figure 4. Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), *Judith with the Head of Holofernes (Judith I, 1901)*, oil on canvas, Österreichische Galerie, Vienna.



Figure 5. Gustav Klimt (1892–1918), *Judith with the Head of Holofernes (Judith II / Salome)*, 1909, oil on canvas, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Venice.

Representations of the woman warrior are so much part of German cultural memory and cultural consciousness that they are still frequently used at the time of writing as a way of thinking about women and terrorism. In the much-discussed exhibition on the 'Rote Armee Fraktion' (Red Army Faction), the terrorist group of the 1970s, shown at various locations in Germany in 2005, Cranach's painting of Judith holding the head of Holofernes was juxtaposed with a representation of the terrorist Ulrike Meinhof (1934–76) without any explanation to the viewer, who, it was assumed, would get the point unaided. In the 1970s Lohenstein's seventeenth-century drama about the revolutionary slave girl Epicharis in Nero's Rome was staged in Cologne, with Epicharis as Meinhof. As I write the last words of this book, I await, in a month's time, the release of a film by Susanne Schneider, who also wrote the script. The film is called *Es kommt der Tag* ('The Day Will Dawn', 2009) and features the well-known German actress Iris Berben. She plays a terrorist who took part in Rote Armee Fraktion activities in her youth. The name of the character is Judith.

Defining the woman warrior

In defining what is meant by the woman warrior, it is important not to equate woman warrior with woman killer. There are plenty of depictions of women killers in German literature. The woman who kills her own children is a favourite German subject in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust* (1788, 1808) is the most famous infanticide, but there are many others.³³ There are also works that imagine the dagger-drawing murderer—Chriemhild stabbing her husband Etzel on stage in Ernst Raupach's *Der Nibelungen-Hort* (1828),³⁴ for instance. There are yet other works that represent the *femme fatale*, who by her very existence, but in particular through her sexual magnetism, impels men towards their own death and destruction. The best-known example here is Frank Wedekind's Lulu, the protagonist of his dramas *Erdgeist* ('Earth Spirit', 1895) and *Die Büchse*

³³ See e.g. Kirsten Peters, *Der Kindsmord als schöne Kunst betrachtet. Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), and Helen Fronius, 'Images of Infanticide in Eighteenth-Century Germany', in Helen Fronius and Anna Linton (eds.), *Women and Death: Representations of Female Victims and Perpetrators in German Culture 1500–2000* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 93–112.

³⁴ Ernst Raupach, *Ernst Raupach's dramatische Werke ernster Gattung*, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1833).

der Pandora ('Pandora's Box', 1904), two plays on which Alban Berg based his opera *Lulu* (begun in 1929 and unfinished at Berg's death in 1935).

The woman warrior is a different character. She does not set out to kill of her own accord nor does she ask others to do her killing for her, but, like any warrior in any age, bears arms on behalf of a cause, a city, or a country. Unlike the woman killer who conceals a vial of poison in her delicate feminine hand or the woman who hides a dagger in her skirts or the unhinged woman who in a moment of madness dashes out the brains of her child against a rock, the warrior steps out boldly and publicly, holding her weapon, for she is authorized to bear arms by some higher male authority, whether this is God, a religious leader, the king, her father, her brother, or her—usually absent—husband. Lohenstein's Carthaginian queen Sophonisbe decides to put on armour and go to fight the Roman colonial power when she learns that her husband Syphax has been captured. Geibel's Sophonisbe (1868)³⁵ does the same. Judith, both in the Bible and in the many works about her discussed in Chapter 4, is authorized by the Elders of Bethulia to go out to Holofernes's camp. Zacharias Werner's eponymous heroine Wanda leads an army against the German invader on behalf of her people, the Sarmatians or Poles. Eleonore Prochaska,³⁶ who joined Major Lützow's volunteers in 1813 to fight the French, did so alongside thousands of her fellow Germans, desirous of freeing their country from the foreign invader. Schiller's Joan of Arc is mandated by God to lead the French army in order to restore the dauphin to his rightful place as king of France.

The woman warrior may be fighting for a good cause and even be mandated by God, but she is still inherently dangerous, and this danger goes beyond what one might call the 'normal' danger inherent in all women as forces of chaos and instability. The woman warrior leaves her proper sphere of hearth and home, kitchen and nursery, and invades the male sphere of the battlefield and the camp. Instead of giving life, nurturing, and healing—all functions associated with motherhood, which is considered to be woman's primary function—she takes up arms in order to kill, defeat, humiliate, and maim. Since the woman warrior does not go to war against other women but against men, the people she is going to kill, defeat, humiliate, and maim are men. By taking up arms, she is no longer automatically

³⁵ Emanuel Geibel, *Sophonisbe. Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen* (Stuttgart: Verlag der J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1868).

³⁶ Eleonore Prochaska's surname is also written Prohaska. Prochaska will be used as the standard form, except in quotations which use the other spelling.

physically weaker than a man and so cannot easily be brought to heel by being made to fear physical or sexual violence. The woman warrior is thus a transgressive figure who has to be tamed. This taming is to be carried out either by sexual means, by death, or both.

Sexual taming and defloration are built into the myths about the Amazons, for instance, in the story of Theseus' capture and rape of the Amazon Antiope and in the tale of the ninth labour of Heracles, in which Heracles has to capture the girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyta. Germanic and Nordic myth also tells how the warrior woman Brünhild is deflowered and thereby made submissive. This happens in the Nordic-inspired versions (by Fouqué and Wagner) when Sigurd/Siegfried breaks through the ring of fire to find her on her mountain-top, cuts off her breastplate, and consummates their love there and then. In those versions inspired by the medieval German *Nibelungenlied* Brünhild is the queen of Iceland, a fierce and bloodthirsty ruler possessed of superhuman strength. The king who wins her has to best her in three contests of physical strength—jumping, throwing a rock, and wounding his adversary with a spear—which the hero Siegfried, invisible thanks to his magic cap, does on behalf of his future brother-in-law Gunther. But Brünhild also has to be tamed in bed and turned into a wife, and Siegfried undertakes this too on behalf of Gunther. Emanuel Geibel, in his play of 1856,³⁷ is one of the few writers to make the audience aware that Siegfried first reduces Brünhild to a whimpering, cowering wreck by beating her and that he then rapes her, before leaving her in the marriage chamber to be raped again by Gunther.

But this does not mean that the woman who has been tamed in this way can be allowed to live. An ordinary woman who is merely rebellious can, if brought to heel, be allowed to live on as an obedient wife and mother. Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590–4) is a perfect demonstration of this. The so-called shrew Katherine rebels against the marriage she is forced into by her father, so has to be beaten, starved, and humiliated by her husband in order to be turned into his perfect—because submissive—wife. But this solution will not work in the case of the warrior woman. First of all, she may simply be too strong to tame in this way. But more important: what man wants a woman in his bed who has the potential to kill him while he sleeps, as Judith does with Holofernes, and who, perhaps, already has blood

³⁷ Emanuel Geibel, *Brunhild. Eine Tragödie aus der Nibelungensage* (Stuttgart und Augsburg: n.pub., 1857; 2nd edn. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1861).

on her hands? So women warriors by and large cannot be given the option of becoming wives—they have to die. This can happen on the battlefield—as with Schiller’s Joan of Arc and Meyer’s page-boy Gust—but much more often the solution adopted is to have the woman carry out the killing herself, which is at once both a particularly exquisite punishment and a neat way to restore order. Lohenstein’s Sophonisbe drinks the poison sent her by Masinissa, and his Epicharis chokes herself on her bonds; Kleist’s Penthesilea and Grillparzer’s Libussa³⁸ descend into the grave by a sheer act of will; and Werner’s Wanda jumps into the River Weichsel. Brünhild dies in a variety of ways, according to whether the authors concerned use the *Nibelungenlied* or the Nordic epics as their source or whether they come up with a wholly different solution. Brünhild stabs herself in the plays about her by Geibel and Ernst³⁹ and in Fritz Lang’s film;⁴⁰ she jumps into the Rhine in Raupach’s drama; in Fouqué’s play⁴¹ she stabs herself and then, bleeding to death, walks into the flames of Sigurd’s funeral pyre; while in Wagner’s opera she leaps into Siegfried’s funeral pyre on Siegfried’s horse Grane.⁴² Gramberg’s Sophonisbe puts it in a nutshell in 1808:

Entsagung ist des Weibes höchstes Loos.
Wohl mir, wenn ich bestehe als ein Weib.
Laß mich frey wandeln zu dem Tode, dem
Ich angehöre.⁴³

Renunciation is the highest destiny of woman. Well for me if I can stand the test as a woman. Let me move freely towards death, to which I belong.

In this way, the troublesome woman is removed from the scene, by deciding herself that she ‘belongs to death’. Sometimes, the woman warrior continues, vicariously, to be subjected to sexual violation and destruction even after death. Georg Kaiser’s *Gilles und Jeanne* depicts Gilles de Rais, the

³⁸ Franz Grillparzer, *Libussa*, in Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 1: Deutsche Literatur (Berlin: Direct-media Publishing, 2005), 62241–381.

³⁹ Paul Ernst, *Brunhild, Trauerspiel in drei Aufzügen* (Munich: Langen, Müller, 1936).

⁴⁰ Fritz Lang (dir.), *Die Nibelungen*, script by Thea von Harbou, shot in the Babelsberg Studios near Potsdam in 1924. Part I: *Siegfried*; Part II: *Kriemhilds Rache*.

⁴¹ Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Der Held des Nordens* (Berlin, 1810).

⁴² Richard Wagner, *Der Ring der Nibelungen*. The tetralogy—*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*—was first performed in its entirety in 1874 at Bayreuth. Wagner began work on this material in 1848 and finished *Die Walküre* first in 1856. For the libretti see Richard Wagner, *Die Musikdramen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1971).

⁴³ Gerhard Anton Hermann Gramberg, *Sophonisbe* (Oldenburg: in der Schulz’schen Buchhandlung, 1808), 168.

original model for Bluebeard the wife-killer, as falling in love with Joan of Arc, being rejected by her, and then being instrumental in her arrest and death. He still wishes to possess the dead Joan, however, and has his servants procure a series of women whom they dress up in armour and present to him as Joan. He takes a pathological pleasure in raping and then murdering these women.

As discussed in Chapter 6, it is very important that the woman warrior remain visible as a woman either by wearing a skirt or by revealing her female body at an opportune moment. Though it was well known to the historian Schiller that Joan of Arc was a determined cross-dresser, he specifies a breastplate and skirt as her costume in his stage directions. (Schiller knew too, of course, that the historical Joan was a standard-bearer and not the killer he turns her into.) Wagner specifies full armour for his Valkyrie Brünnhilde in his stage directions, yet in the first performance of the *Ring* cycle in 1876 in Bayreuth she wore a skirt, a breastplate, and a helmet, the costume that is still traditional today.⁴⁴ So long as the warrior remains visible as a woman, thereby indicating that her assumption of this role is limited in time and/or has only come about because of some exceptional circumstance, she can appear in public in the capacity of a warrior and can be allowed to die a noble death, as Schiller's Johanna and Wagner's Brünnhilde do. If she actually masquerades as a man and wears trousers, this makes her a much more ambivalent and dangerous figure.

Sometimes the woman warrior is not fighting on behalf of society in general or a universal cause, but on behalf of other women. This is the case with the Amazons. They are imagined in the Greek tradition as founding their own state because they were attacked by men in the first place, and then of defending that state themselves with their own army. From there, as explained in Chapter 2, the Amazons begin to conquer other territories and build cities. Amazons are represented as warriors by their very nature and therefore as unnatural women, who mutilate their own bodies, burning off their right nipples so as to be able to hold a bow, solving the problem of how to sustain a society without men by capturing them by warlike means, sleeping with them so as to become pregnant, and then killing them. The Amazons are unnatural mothers too, killing or maiming any sons they produce and turning their daughters into warriors in their own image. The whole point about these women is that they represent a society that

⁴⁴ Linda Watson, who sang Brünnhilde at Bayreuth in 2007 and 2008, wore a skirt, for instance.

has to be vanquished before the proper patriarchal order can be instituted. The same applies to the Bohemian Amazons described in a series of histories from the Middle Ages on and discussed in Chapter 3. They too found their own polity and live together in their own fortress. They are depicted as temptresses, luring men to their doom by the arts of seduction, and then killing them by means of the arts of war. They, and their leader Valasca (or Wlasta or Wlastislawa, as she is also called), are represented as utterly ruthless and shockingly bloodthirsty. They invert the god-given order and are therefore monstrous. They too have to be conquered and eliminated before true patriarchal government can be instituted in Bohemia.

There is, however, one woman warrior of ancient provenance who does not fit into the patterns just described. This woman kills the general of the foreign army who is threatening her people, helps to raise a siege and bring about a signal victory against vastly superior odds, and yet she does not die. This woman is the Old Testament figure of Judith. As discussed in Chapter 4, she bravely leaves the besieged city of Bethulia when the men are too cowardly to do so, uses her beauty to ensnare the enemy general Holofernes, and then decapitates him, bringing his head back as a trophy. She lives on to a ripe old age, a chaste widow. This story already exercised great fascination in the Middle Ages, as Henrike Lähnemann has shown,⁴⁵ but takes on new life with the Reformation. From that point up to today Judith is constantly present to the German imagination, presenting the problem of what to do with a female member of society who has killed a man. The very idea arouses such unease that in 1984 Rolf Hochhuth had to invent probable execution or at the very least life-imprisonment for his Judith, who is a terrorist who kills Ronald Reagan by means of nerve gas. She stands calmly waiting for the security forces to arrest her as the curtain comes down.

From the 1830s on Judith is also imagined as having been tamed sexually by Holofernes, the man she kills. Horace Vernet painted her for the Paris Salon getting up from the bed in which he imagines her to have been deflowered—another favourite fantasy of the nineteenth century being that this widow has remained a virgin. Heine describes her, as she gets up from the bed, as being ‘an der eben überschrittenen Grenze der Jungfräulichkeit, ganz gottrein und doch weltbefleckt, wie eine entweihte Hostie’ (‘on the borderline of virginity which she has just crossed, all divine purity and

⁴⁵ See Lähnemann, *Hystoria Judith*.

yet soiled by the world, like a desecrated host'),⁴⁶ and Hebbel, as well as all writers from then on, were convinced that Judith had sex with Holofernes—indeed that he raped her—, that she probably in her heart of hearts desired him to do this, and that she castrated him in revenge. In Hebbel's version, Holofernes has probably impregnated her as well. If she does turn out to be pregnant, then the High Priests will execute her at her own request. So Hebbel's Judith too has, in all likelihood, organized her own death.

Apart from the figure of Judith and that of Courasche, the other female warrior to live on is Bucholtz's Bohemian princess, the virago Valiska (1659–60), the eponymous heroine of the novel *Herkules und Valiska* discussed in Chapter 6. Valiska, like Courasche, is not a realistic figure and furthermore, according to my reading of her, she is the 'other half' of her fiancé, later husband, Herkules, an aspect of his being. She is therefore allowed to kill and wound men, dress as a man, and engage in a range of otherwise impossible activities, such as continuing to fight in tournaments after her marriage, without infringing the gender order. Valiska's femaleness, that is, her body and her sexuality, are not depicted as clashing with her role as a warrior. This aligns her with Ariosto's warrior maiden Bradamante in the epic *Orlando Furioso* (1516), who marries the Saracen Ruggiero and is instrumental in his conversion to Christianity, rather than with Tasso's warrior maiden Clorinda, who dies after her combat with Tancredi in his *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581), begging Tancredi to baptize her as she expires.

In the early modern period, usually, and invariably from the eighteenth century on, the woman's sexuality is presented as clashing with her role as warrior. This sexuality is conceived of either as sexual voraciousness, especially in the earlier portrayals of such figures as Semiramis, Sophonisbe, and Courasche, or in terms of a fatal attractiveness that presents a problem for the men she comes into contact with—Achilles in Kleist's *Penthesilea* and Lord Rüdiger in Werner's *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* ('Wanda, Queen of the Sarmatians'), both from 1808, are examples of men destroyed because of their desire for a warrior woman. In both of these plays the male and the female protagonists die. Sometimes this fatal attractiveness leads to the death of the warrior woman because of sexual rivalry between the men around her—this is the case with Joan of Arc in Johann Gottfried Bernhold's *La Pucelle d'Orleans oder Johanna die Heldin von Orleans* ('The Maid of Orleans or

⁴⁶ Heinrich Heine, 'Horace Vernet', in Kobelt-Groch (ed.), *'Ich bin Judith'*, 203.

Johanna, the Heroine of Orleans', 1756). In other works the woman herself cannot control her own feelings of attraction for the male protagonist—Schiller's Johanna, Kleist's Penthesilea, and Meyer's Gust exemplify this. Women are by definition seductresses, for they represent a danger to the men they meet, and women are by definition irrational, so they fall in love at the most inopportune moments. A woman warrior must, therefore, avoid any expression of her sexuality and remain a virgin. Before she enters into her sexuality, she may briefly be a warrior. If she loses her virginity, she can no longer be a warrior. Men are allowed to fight as men. Women may only fight as unwomen.

A further problem for which male writers have to find a solution is that so many women warriors known from mythology or ancient history are also rulers and military commanders. These women, therefore, not only have the physical power conferred on them through their weapons, they also exercise political power, whether on a large or small scale. The warrior queen has a long tradition, as Antonia Fraser has shown.⁴⁷ She not only fights herself, she also commands an army of men who have to do her bidding, so she inverts and therefore perverts the gender order in more than one way. Warrior queens are frequently portrayed as monstrous, sexually voracious, and incestuous, as in the case of Semiramis, and as sexually voracious and prepared to kill their own children in the case of Sophonisbe, two figures discussed in Chapter 6. Such representations convey serious unease about what would happen if women were rulers rather than subjects, and could choose their own mates rather than having mates assigned to them by those who have power over them in the patriarchal order.

Mythical and biblical women warriors, and warriors from the distant historical past, can be cut to a particular size as needed, since their resemblance to actual women is tenuous. Their physical appearance and their deeds can be imagined and re-imagined at will. But there is also a body of material that deals with real historical women from the recent past of those who depict them. Charlotte Corday, who stabbed Jean Marat to death in 1793, is one. Other examples are the so-called heroic maidens ('Heldenmädchen'), real women who took part in the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. Twenty-three such women are known to us by name. In many cases they left home of their own accord, got hold of a uniform or at least male dress, joined the army, masquerading as men, and went to

⁴⁷ Antonia Fraser, *The Warrior Queens: Boadicea's Chariot* (London: Mandarin, 1988).

fight the national enemy, the French. Some of these women survived the war, were revealed to be women, and lived on for many years. Others were killed on the battlefield, the most famous of them being Eleonore Prochaska. She left home without telling her father, still less asking for his permission, bought a uniform, and joined Lützow's Volunteers. She was shot while drumming to rally the troops of her own side, saying, according to legend, as she expired: 'Lieutenant, I am a maiden.' The lengths to which writers and playwrights were prepared to go to justify, and by justifying to undermine, the actions of this independent-minded woman are discussed in Chapter 5. Their most important strategy was to show her to be mandated—tacitly, of course—by her own father and to portray her in some sense as his puppet. In addition, many writers invented a completely unhistorical lover for her—with whom, of course, she cannot actually have sexual relations—demonstrating, yet again, that a woman cannot be thought of as separate from her sexuality.

Another strategy to reassure the reader or audience that the gender order has not been thrown overboard in works about warrior women is the introduction of a secondary character who embodies traditional femininity. In Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* it is Agnes Sorel, the king's faithful and womanly mistress; in Zacharias Werner's *Wanda, Königin der Sarmaten* it is Ludmilla, the gentle peasant girl who tends Wanda's garden. Kleist goes so far as to write a whole other play, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1807–8), in order to present an eponymous heroine who embodies all those qualities that his wild Amazon Penthesilea does not, and of whom he said that she was the obverse of Penthesilea, the opposite pole to her ('ihre Kehrseite, ihr anderer Pol').⁴⁸

And finally, we come to Freud. This is not the place to provide an analysis of Freud's ideas about women and their sexuality, but his central notion about women's penis envy and their castration complex must be mentioned in a work about warrior women in the German imagination. Freud was convinced that women are castrated beings who realize as young girls that they lack a phallus and then spend the rest of their lives longing for this organ. They can only achieve wholeness with the help of a being who has a phallus, namely, a man, and only then when this being is kind enough to give them a child. Where can Freud have acquired this extraordinary idea? He reveals

⁴⁸ Heinrich von Kleist's *Leben und Briefe. Mit einem Anhang*, ed. Eduard von Bülow (Berlin: Besser, 1848), 50.

the source of his knowledge in his famous lecture ‘Die Weiblichkeit’ (‘Femininity’).⁴⁹ He ends it by telling his listeners how to learn more about women: ‘Wollen Sie mehr über die Weiblichkeit wissen, so befragen Sie Ihre eigenen Lebenserfahrungen, oder Sie wenden sich an die Dichter’ (‘If you want to know more about femininity, then question your own experiences in life or else turn to the poets’). He does not say, *nota bene*, ‘if you want to know more about femininity, then question a woman’. Women have already been discounted as valid sources of information on their own sexuality elsewhere in the lecture, when Freud disbelieves his women patients’ stories of sexual molestation by their own fathers, because that simply cannot be true, while believing instead that their mothers molested them. The life experience of an early twentieth-century man—that is, his own—is sure to be more informative about women’s lives than their own account of it. But the real give-away, the smoking gun, is his remark about turning to literature for information. Freud was interested in literature and, like any German-speaking intellectual of his day, was acquainted with a wide sweep of the German texts we have been discussing. Schiller was his favourite German author, as Peter Gay points out.⁵⁰ Freud significantly uses Hebbel’s play *Judith* as an example of ‘Das Tabu der Virginität’ (‘The Taboo of Virginity’, 1918).⁵¹ Hebbel’s compelling drama is almost the first extensive treatment in German of the theme of the virginal widow whose husband could not penetrate her on their wedding night, who is longing to be deflowered, who takes up the sword and uses it against Holofernes, the ‘real man’, real because he is brutal. When she lays down the sword, Hebbel’s Judith is more than probably pregnant, that is, Holofernes has given her a child as a penis/sword substitute.

Freud’s conjectures about women—for instance, ‘Die Entdeckung seiner Kastration ist ein Wendepunkt in der Entwicklung des Mädchens’

⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud, ‘Die Weiblichkeit’, in *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse Und Neue Folge*, Studienausgabe, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969), 544–65, at 565. This lecture dates from 1933, but Freud explains in a footnote that aspects of it were presented earlier in ‘Einige psychische Folgen des anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschieds’ (1925) and ‘Über die weibliche Sexualität’ (1931).

⁵⁰ Peter Gay, *Freud: Eine Biographie für unsere Zeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2000), 58–9 and 191–9.

⁵¹ Sigmund Freud, ‘Das Tabu der Virginität’, in *Beiträge zur Psychologie des Liebeslebens*, Studienausgabe, vol. 5 (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969), 211–28. See Mary Jacobus’s brilliant article on this essay, on Freud, and on the Judith story: ‘Judith, Holofernes and the Phallic Woman’, in Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 110–36.

(‘the discovery of her own castration is a turning-point in a girl’s development’⁵²—have been much criticized.⁵³ Even though Freud professed himself puzzled about women and their sexuality to the last, his huge authority as a thinker turns into a science a series of fictions about women which, as this book shows, have a long ancestry. This scientific and medical account of women as beings of lack takes the place of the theological account that held women responsible for the Fall and consequently for the exposure of the human race to sin and death, and to much the same effect. When one reads Freud in his place in the chronology of German literature, art, and thought, at the end of the long line of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women in literature and art who are made whole and complete beings for a brief span by taking up the sword and becoming phallic women, one cannot avoid the conclusion that he did indeed get many of his ideas about women from literature. Marina Warner shows how, practically everywhere Freud looked in turn-of-the-century Vienna, he saw the face of Medusa with her open jaw and her snake-like hair, and explains how Freud’s vision of the vagina as a symbol of female castration and as a death-dealing hairy orifice is related to the Medusa.⁵⁴ Art and literature do not show us reality—we see reality through them and allow them to structure reality for us. Freud is no exception. As Warner puts it: ‘Male repression seeks an outlet in fantasies of phallic power that women are made to bear, reassuring the voyeur of his own potency, and confirming the rationale of his antagonism.’⁵⁵

Women write back

In setting out the ground-rules for depictions of the woman warrior I have so far deliberately only used as examples works by male authors, for it is they who over two millennia designed and maintained those ground-rules. Women writers begin to imagine the woman warrior for themselves towards the end of the eighteenth century, at which late date, in contrast to France or England, secular writing by German-speaking women begins to become

⁵² Freud, ‘Die Weiblichkeit’, 557.

⁵³ See Renate Schlesier, *Mythos und Weiblichkeit bei Sigmund Freud. Zum Problem von Entmythologisierung und Remythologisierung in der psychoanalytischen Theorie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Hain, 1990), and Margarete Mitscherlich (eds.), *Psychoanalytische Diskurse über die Weiblichkeit von Freud bis heute* (Stuttgart: Verlag Internationale Psychoanalyse), 1996.

⁵⁴ Warner, *Monuments and Maidens*, 110–11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 175.

available in quantity. This is the very period in which women's subordination was becoming firmly entrenched in a new and more restrictive way, thanks to the definition of men and women according to essentialist criteria that the period itself called the 'Geschlechtscharaktere'. These essentialist definitions mean that the virago, the exceptional 'almost-man', is no longer possible and is therefore not plausible either as a literary character.⁵⁶ If hitherto a woman, in exceptional circumstances, might move, and might be imagined as moving, up the scale closer to the perfect male, now, according to the binary model, she cannot, because the boundaries between the two sexes are no longer permeable.⁵⁷ Women, of their nature, simply cannot do certain things and should not attempt them. They are not constituted so as to be able to be brave, eloquent, wise generals and warriors, and if they try to be these things they will upset the natural and God-given social order, and chaos will ensue. Women—all women—are by definition weak, fickle, modest, devoted, dependent, receptive, conformist, loving, sympathetic, and emotional. These qualities stand in direct contrast to those of the strong, steadfast, brave, daring, independent, active, aggressive, rational male. Thinkers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) removed the distinction between man and woman from the religious sphere, with its ideas about sin and woman's responsibility for the Fall. Instead, however, they deduced the subordinate position of women from nature, a position that prevented them from playing a role in the state, still less in its defence, and from enjoying the benefits of higher education and participation in the public sphere. Since the distinction stemmed from nature, it must be inevitable and unalterable.

Fichte, for instance, sees women as entirely passive and subordinate. Isabel Hull has spelled out his views on gender, sexuality, marriage, and women in her magisterial study, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815*.⁵⁸ Basing his ideas on the sexual act as he (and, alas, his wife) must have experienced it, Fichte sees woman as entirely passive and

⁵⁶ See the pioneering and now classic essay by Karin Hausen, 'Die Polarisierung der "Geschlechtscharaktere"'. Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben', in Werner Conze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1976), 363–93.

⁵⁷ See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard UP, 1990).

⁵⁸ See Isabel V. Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1996), 314–23, and, much more briefly, Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche—Werke—Wirkung* (Munich: Beck, 2000), 43–55.

subordinate. To quote from his 'Grundriss des Familienrechts', the first appendix to the *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* ('Foundations of Natural Right According to the Principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*')

Die Ruhe des Weibes hängt davon ab, dass sie ihrem Gatten ganz unterworfen sei, und keinen anderen Willen habe, als den seinigen.⁵⁹

Das Weib ist nicht unterworfen, so dass der Mann ein Zwangsrecht auf sie hätte, sie ist unterworfen durch ihren eigenen fortdauernden nothwendigen und ihre Moralität bedingenden Wunsch, unterworfen zu sein. Sie dürfte wohl ihre Freiheit zurücknehmen, wenn sie *wollte*; aber gerade hier liegt es; sie kann es vernünftigerweise nicht *wollen*. Sie muss, da ihre Verbindung nun einmal allgemein bekannt ist, allen denen sie bekannt ist, erscheinen // wollen, als gänzlich unterworfen dem Manne, als ja ihm gänzlich verloren.⁶⁰

The calm of the woman resides in the fact that she is completely subordinate to her husband and that she has no will other than his.

Woman is not subordinate in the sense that man has the right of force over her. She is subordinate through her own constant necessary wish to be subordinate, which is the condition of her morality. She might take her freedom back, if she *wanted*, but that's the point: she cannot reasonably *want* this. Once her marriage bond is generally known to all her acquaintances she must want to appear as totally subject to the man, indeed, as lost in him.

This is a very neat way to justify the exclusion of women from the public sphere: women themselves do not want to be free. Women had to marry, because this was their 'Bestimmung' or destiny, but, in Hull's words, 'marriage was the institution in which the complete civil erasure of women occurred'.⁶¹ Of course women could not take up public office, and Fichte does not even bother to discuss whether women might fight for their country. Fichte does not think that married women should be writers either. A married woman, he says again in the 'Grundriss des Familienrechts', 'erhält durch ihren schriftstellerischen Ruhm eine von ihrem Gatten unabhängige Selbstständigkeit, die das eheliche Verhältnis notwendig entkräftet und zu lösen droht' ('attains through her fame as a writer an independence from her husband which threatens to weaken and dissolve the marriage relationship').⁶²

⁵⁹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre, Erster Anhang des Naturrechts. Grundriss des Familienrechts*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. J. H. Fichte, vol. 3 (Berlin: Veit, 1845), 171.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 215–16.

⁶¹ Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society*, 318.

⁶² Fichte, *Grundriss des Familienrechts*, 226.

Naturally, Fichte is talking about married women, for it would be unthinkable for a young single girl to put herself forward in this way. There is, therefore, no need to prohibit her from doing so.

Women writers are not, therefore, supposed to be entering the public sphere at all, and, if they try to, they always have the handicap of writing within a cultural system and using rhetorical tools that they themselves did not create. No wonder, then, that they were not attracted by the idea of depicting women in terms of the commonly accepted imaginings about them that had become established as the stock-in-trade of literature and art. If they had used these imaginings, they would only have been able to use them to look at other women with what Sigrid Weigel twenty years ago called ‘*der schielende Blick*’ (‘the squinting gaze’).⁶³ If they decide to engage with those tropes about the woman warrior that express such deep male fears about women, they are then faced with two choices: they can either simply reproduce them or, in the best case, write against them.⁶⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that women writers leave the tropes well alone and invent their own fictional warrior women instead—the subject of Chapter 7. They imagine women putting on trousers and taking part in war and revolution, acting in a way that society would never allow a virtuous woman to act in real life. Fiction, therefore, allows women to think the unthinkable, and they sometimes create the most surprising works. In her novel *Die Familie Seldorf* (‘The Seldorf Family’, 1795/6),⁶⁵ about the revolution in the Vendée, Therese Huber calls into question a whole series of tropes about motherhood, women’s role in war, and the institution of marriage as women’s destiny. Something over fifty years later, in her novel *Revolution und Contrerevolution* (‘Revolution and Counter-Revolution’, 1849),⁶⁶ Louise Aston (1814–71) depicts a revolutionary heroine, Baroness Alice, who is the president of a revolutionary club, takes part in the 1848 revolution in Berlin, striding over the barricades through a hail of bullets, and then plays a part in the revolution in Schleswig-Holstein. Alice also practises free love, manipulates men to her

⁶³ Sigrid Weigel, ‘Der schielende Blick. Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis’, in *Die verborgene Frau. Sechs Beiträge zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Argument, 1983), 83–137.

⁶⁴ Inge Stephan, ‘“Bilder und immer wieder Bilder . . .” Überlegungen zur Untersuchung von Frauenbildern in männlicher Literatur’, in *Die verborgene Frau*, 15–34.

⁶⁵ Therese Huber, *Die Familie Seldorf* (Norderstedt: Zenodot, 2008).

⁶⁶ Louise Aston, *Revolution und Contrerevolution* quoted from www.zeno.org, accessed 10 June 2009.

political ends, bears arms, and cross-dresses. There are also isolated examples of women examining male imaginings about the Bohemian Amazons, Charlotte Corday, or Eleonore Prochaska.

But what about the chamber opera about Amazons, *Talestri regina delle Amazzoni* ('Talestris, Queen of the Amazons'), written in the 1760s by Maria Antonia Walpurgis, electoral princess of Saxony (1724–80), for performance by members of her own family in the intimate setting of the court?⁶⁷ Is this not an example of a woman in the middle of the eighteenth century examining the myth of the Amazons and coming up with a new vision of them as friends and allies of the Scyths? Yes, it is, but at this early date it stands alone. It is not until the late nineteenth century that women writers and thinkers begin to imagine for themselves what an Amazon state would be like, and to see it as having utopian and emancipatory potential for their own lives.⁶⁸ Ilse Langner's play *Amazonen* (1933)⁶⁹ is the most positive and affirmative example here, showing in the epilogue how technology can compensate for women's physical weakness and how, in a new age, men and women can be comrades in some great endeavour, instead of encountering each other only either in an adversarial or in an erotic relationship. It is at this late date, too, that women begin to question the eroticized depiction of Judith as *femme fatale* and to use the figure to debate very different questions. In her novella *Königin Judith* ('Queen Judith', 1895), for instance, Maria Janitschek claims an agency for her heroine that comes from Judith's own sense of self, which gives her an ascendancy over the Holofernes figure that has nothing to do with seductiveness and everything to do with sheer force of personality.⁷⁰

Naturally, even when women invent their own fictional warriors, it turns out at times that they have internalized patriarchal ideas about women as passive, helpless, emotional, and irrational victims, and present such characters to their readers as models,⁷¹ thus policing the boundaries of woman's sphere even more thoroughly than male writers did. Louise Aston knew this, and in

⁶⁷ Maria Antonia Walpurgis, electress of Saxony, *Talestri, regina delle amazzoni: dramma per musica* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1765).

⁶⁸ I do not count those occurrences in the work of any author of the word Amazon to mean simply 'emancipated woman' or 'skilful rider' without any further exploration of the concept.

⁶⁹ Ilse Langner, *Amazonen. Komödie*, in *Dramen*, II, ed. Eberhard Günter Schulz (Würzburg: Bergstadtverlag Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 1991).

⁷⁰ Maria Janitschek, *Königin Judith*, in *Lilienzäuber. Novellen* (1895). Deutsche Literatur von Frauen, Digitale Bibliothek, vol. 45 (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2001), 35561–81.

⁷¹ Sigrid Weigel, 'Die geopferte Heldin und das Opfer als Heldin. Zum Entwurf weiblicher Helden in der Literatur von Männern und Frauen', in *Die verborgene Frau*, 138–52.

'Den Frauen' ('To Women'), one of the poems in her collection *Freischärler-Reminiszenzen* ('Reminiscences of a Revolutionary Volunteer', 1850), writes:

Ihr richtet streng, der Sitte heil'ge Vehm',
Und schleudert auf mein Haupt das Anathem!

You judge harshly, you sacred secret moral court, and hurl anathema upon my head.⁷²

Writers such as Friederike Lohmann and Benedikte Naubert, discussed in Chapter 7, display in their work women's own nervousness about one of their sex leaving the restricted safety of hearth and home, no matter how much this might be dictated by outside circumstances such as war. They make sure that, even though the woman is in a war zone, she should never attempt to defend herself physically, and, in order to demonstrate to the reader that their heroine is virtuous, they show her to be appalled by the necessity of cross-dressing and anguished about how authority figures such as father, brother, or lover will view this masquerade. Yet they do still imagine a real woman moving around during a war in a realistic setting, as opposed to a mythological or biblical one, and Naubert shows the censorious guardians of women's honour to be mean-minded and unjust.

Most of the works by men that this study discusses are dramas: plays about Judith from the Reformation period and into the seventeenth century, Baroque tragedies about warrior women, Amazon operas and ballets to be put on in court theatres up to the middle of the eighteenth century, and the many nineteenth- and twentieth-century works already mentioned. The stage—what Schiller called, in a speech he gave in 1784, 'Die Bühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet' ('the stage regarded as a moral institution')—is the forum in which the woman warrior is portrayed in all her transgressiveness before being disciplined through death. The drama is an official art form, licensed and subject to censorship, needing a public building and considerable finance, performed by a collective, and witnessed by a collective. Being presented with an idea in such a setting necessitates a disciplined response that must conform to social expectations. The stage articulates and enforces social norms and ideas, and presents them to its audience in a pre-arranged setting from which it takes a considerable act of will and even courage to dissent publicly.

⁷² Louise Aston, *Freischärler-Reminiszenzen* (Leipzig, 1850), 20, quoted from www.zeno.org (accessed on 10 June 2009).

The novel, on the other hand, is a genre consumed in private, where one is free to think what one likes and express what one feels, even if only through exclamations pencilled in the margin of the text. Though revisionist scholarship has begun to show that women dramatists had more access to the theatre than used to be claimed,⁷³ it is still the case that, whatever the case with other subjects, plays by women on the topic of the woman warrior were not, and still are not, performed in public theatres. Maria Antonia Walpurgis of Saxony's chamber opera was performed in private in the 1760s, with the parts sung by members of her family; Christine Westphalen's *Charlotte Corday* (1804) was published anonymously and not performed at all. Langner and Erika Mitterer⁷⁴ never saw their plays from the 1930s (*Die Amazonen* and *Charlotte Corday* respectively) performed either, while Grach's play about the heroic drummer-girl on the battlefield in the 1870–1 war and Menschick's play about Judith were written for girls' schools.⁷⁵ It is, therefore, no surprise that the works by women studied here are either mostly novels or, if they are plays, are small-scale plays to be put on by girls' schools or women's groups.

Can women be heroes?

In the early modern period, with its one-sex model of the human being, it is perfectly possible for women to execute exceptional deeds of physical bravery and emotional toughness, and so rise up the sliding scale closer to the perfection of the man. These viragos—*Männinnen* ('she-men'), as they were called—are exceptions to the rule of female inferiority. They rise to the occasion, defending their city against the enemy as the historical woman Gesche Meiburg did in Braunschweig in 1615, or leading an army as the equally historical Joan of Arc did in fifteenth-century France. They are *femmes fortes*, women who exhibit qualities of courage, steadfastness, and leadership, qualities that are connoted male. They sometimes die, like Lohenstein's revolutionary leader Epicharis, who chokes herself on her

⁷³ See Anne Fleig, *Handlungs—Spiel—Räume. Dramen von Autorinnen im Theater des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wurzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999).

⁷⁴ Engel Christine Westphalen, *Charlotte Corday. Tragödie in 5 Akten mit Chören* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1804); Erika Mitterer, *Charlotte Corday, Drama in vier Aufzügen*, in *Dramen*, vol. 3 (Vienna: Edition Doppelpunkt, 2003).

⁷⁵ Josephine Grach, *Der Kleine Tambour oder Ein deutsches Heldenmädchen* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1898); Rosemarie Menschick, *Judith. Biblisches Schauspiel* (Munich: Buchhandlung Leohaus, 1921).

own bonds in order to cheat Nero of the voyeuristic triumph of watching her die, but they do not have to. In Andreas Buchholtz's novel *Herkules und Valiska* (1659), both of the main characters, the German prince Herkules and the Bohemian princess Valiska, having surmounted the most fearsome dangers, live on to rule their kingdoms in peace and unity, and Valiska, as Herkules' 'other half', is not only allowed to be as heroic as he is and to engage in knightly deeds just as he does, she is also allowed to live. Both of these characters, of course, are acting under divine guidance.

A virago is still possible in a German play as late as 1757. This is the year in which Johann Friedrich Cronegk (1731–58) wrote his tragedy in rhyming Alexandrines *Olint und Sophronia*, left unfinished at his early death and published posthumously by his friend Johann Peter Uz.⁷⁶ In this drama, based on Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*—and it is, of course, significant that Cronegk is dramatizing an early modern source—the Persian princess Clorinde is depicted at the beginning of the play as a fearless warrior:

[. . .] Du weißt es daß mich nie
 Das niedre Leben reizt das fern von Ruhm und Müh
 Mein furchtsames Geschlecht zu seinem Zweck erlesen,
 Unnützlich, unbekannt. Viel besser, nie gewesen,
 Als ganz vergessen seyn; viel besser ist der Tod,
 Als Leben, das uns nur mit Zwang und Knechtschaft droht.
 In jüngsten Jahren schon erwählt ich Krieg und Waffen.
 [. . .]
 Olint, erlaube mir, da wo du kämpfst, zu stehn!
 Dein Beyspiel lehre mich dem Tod entgegen gehn.⁷⁷

You know that that life of baseness never attracts me which, far from fame and danger, my fearful sex has chosen as its goal, useless, unknown. Much better never to have existed than to be quite forgotten; death is much better than life, which only threatens us with coercion and slavery. In my youngest years I already chose war and arms. [. . .] Olint, allow me to stand where you will fight. Your example will teach me to face death.

Clorinde is an exceptional woman, who wants to win glory on the battle-field just as though she were a man and who finds the circumscribed life of most women base and pointless. She is, however, expecting to die and, since

⁷⁶ Johann Friedrich von Cronegk, *Schriften. Zweyte verbeßerte Auflage* (Ansbach und Leipzig: Jakob Christoph Posch, 1761). The play was actually written in 1757.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 289–90.

this play is based on Tasso's epic, we know that she will die. Before then, and just before the play peters out in Act IV, she has renounced her love for Olint and given up her desire to be revenged on her rival. She is, therefore, a Renaissance virago, but her fate is the prototype of that inevitable trajectory which all warrior women follow from now on, away from fearless independence and towards renunciation and death.

It is in these decades too, from the period of the Seven Years War (1756–63) on, that death, in particular death for the Fatherland, becomes an essential component of the hero, whether man or woman. 'The patriot as martyr' is Hans-Martin Blitz's term for this development, and he cites Christian Felix Weiße's *Amazonenlieder* ('Songs of an Amazon', 1762) as an example.⁷⁸ In that poem cycle, spoken by the young soldier's beloved and discussed in Chapter 2, the soldier dies an exemplary death for the Fatherland, and the language of the poems anticipates the rhetoric used in the nineteenth-century cult of the hero. From this point on, a hero has to die in order to become a hero.

The definition of the hero in some of the major encyclopedias and dictionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries does not at first appear to include dying as an essential condition. A second look reveals, however, that death and suffering are brought in by the back door. Zedler's encyclopedia explains in 1732, for instance, that the hero is 'von Natur mit einer ansehnlichen Gestalt und ausnehmender Leibesstärke begabet, durch tapffere Thaten Ruhm erlanget, und sich über den gemeinen Stand derer Menschen erhoben . . .' ('the hero is gifted by nature with a commanding figure and exceptional physical strength, achieves fame by brave deeds, and has raised himself above the ordinary run of people').⁷⁹ However, Christ is cited as a pre-eminent example of a hero, so the idea of passive suffering and of death for mankind mitigates the initial impression of a he-man and warrior. Half-a-century later Johann Christoph Adelung's dictionary of 1793 also singles out exceptional physical strength, bravery, and resolution, and stresses that the hero has to use these qualities for the good of many, but this work too cites Christ as a hero.⁸⁰ In 1877, more than eighty years later

⁷⁸ Hans-Martin Blitz, *Aus Liebe zum Vaterland. Die deutsche Nation im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000), 262.

⁷⁹ Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle und Leipzig: Zedler, 1732), vol. 12, col. 1214.

⁸⁰ Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1793–1801), 1094–5.

again, the dictionary of the Brothers Grimm had reached volume 10 and therefore the letter 'H'.⁸¹ According to the very substantial entry on the hero, the first and principal meaning is given as brave and skilful warrior but, again, the second meaning is of a spiritual hero like Christ, because 'er hat über hölle und tod besiegt' ('he has triumphed over hell and death').⁸² This kind of victory is wholly different from the victory of a warrior who overcomes ten other men or of a muscle-man who kills a dragon. It is a passive victory in which exceptional suffering bravely borne is the outstanding virtue on display. Then Grimms' dictionary goes on to say that the term hero can be applied to any person who does something exceptional, to the person in the centre of events or in the centre of a literary work, and finally, that in older usage the term hero was used to mean any man, stemming from the idea that all men are warriors ('aus der anschauung der allgemeinen wehrhaftigkeit'). These definitions, spread over 150 years, all include exceptional physical strength, courage in the use of arms, exceptional actions for the good of others, and imply that hero often means warrior, but all include the idea that passive suffering and death for the greater good can be heroic too.

So it would appear, on the face of it, that women can be heroes. Schiller's Joan of Arc, Werner's Wanda, queen of the Sarmatians, and any of the Judith figures before Kaiser's all show exceptional strength in the use of arms. They and Caroline de la Motte Fouqué's Elisabeth de la Rochefoucauld, the historical figure of Eleonore Prochaska, Brünhild in some versions of her story, Meyer's Gust Leubelfing who dies at the Battle of Lützen, serving the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus, all show extraordinary—extraordinary for a woman, that is—physical strength and courage, and all act and die for the greater good. They have, however, one insuperable barrier to becoming a hero, and it is not something that they do, it is something that they are: they are women. Their sex will always stand between them and the status of a hero. They have to renounce love, rise above desire, refuse the advances even of a good man whom they love; they cannot even entertain the thought of being mothers. In work after work by male authors, the woman warrior has publicly to renounce her own womanly nature and then die. This is shown in most of the works examined in this study, and is exemplified particularly clearly by the works depicting the heroic maidens of the

⁸¹ Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854–1960), vol. 10 (1877), cols. 930–7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, col. 932.

Napoleonic Wars examined in Chapter 5. Only women writers do not see a conflict between having a woman's body—and therefore a woman's sexuality—and heroism. Elisabeth Grube, for instance, in her play *Die Lützower* ('Lützow's Volunteers') of 1864 does not feel she has to give Eleonore Prochaska a wholly fictitious lover so that Eleonore may be seen to renounce him. Most daring of all—uniquely daring, in fact—is Louise Aston's Alice. She is not a virgin, is not married, and certainly does not renounce love and desire. Male writers do not see things this way.

Another factor comes into play too. As Germany becomes more militarized and centralized, Germania, the personification of the nation, needs male heroes to fight for her, not female ones. It is Siegfried, after all, not Brünhild, who kills the dragon. She may kill herself, but he kills the enemy. Emanuel Geibel's play *Sophonisbe* (1868) illustrates very well the development in the conception of heroism from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.⁸³ When Daniel Casper von Lohenstein dramatizes the story of Sophonisbe in 1666, the heroine is the centre of the action, a strong and feisty Carthaginian queen. She is prepared to lead an army and to sacrifice her own children, and she hurls defiance at the Roman colonizer to the last. She never meets Scipio face to face, however, and goes nobly to her death by drinking the poison sent her by Masinissa, the Roman ally whom she has suborned. The poison is the last service he can render her, as it saves her from the dishonour of being taken to Rome to figure in the triumph of the Roman general Scipio. Scipio is certainly the model statesman in Lohenstein's play, but Sophonisbe is the figure who possesses a heroic dimension.

Geibel provides a very different take on the story. At the end of Act I and as in the original story, Sophonisbe is shown putting on her armour and taking up her weapons to fight the Roman enemy, a task she has to assume because in Geibel's version her husband Syphax is dead. Geibel has him fall on his dagger in a hero's death to avoid dishonour on the battlefield and, with his dying breath, he sends Sophonisbe this dagger to encourage her to kill herself also. She, however, has a plan to win the war and beat the Romans: she persuades the Romanized Carthaginian Masinissa to break his oath of loyalty to Rome and come over to her side with his troops. Geibel's greatest innovation is then to have Sophonisbe and Scipio meet *à deux* in several long scenes and to make their relationship the central one, not that between Masinissa and Sophonisbe. On the first occasion when

⁸³ Emanuel Geibel, *Sophonisbe. Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1868).

Sophonisbe meets Scipio at the end of Act III she already recognizes his heroic dimension—‘Welch ein Mann!’ (‘What a man!’),⁸⁴ she exclaims – even though, indeed precisely because, he has taken her prisoner and thwarted her plan. In a long scene between the two of them —Act IV, scene 2—he treats her with great respect, magnanimity, and trust, whereupon Sophonisbe falls in love with him! On being told, wrongly as it turns out, that he intends to take her to Rome as part of the spoils of war, she feels intense anger against him and wants revenge. She creeps into his tent at dead of night, intending to kill him with the dagger her late husband sent her. Here, however, she sees a letter Scipio has written to the authorities in Rome, saying that he wants to make her his friend and ally. Scipio appears and Sophonisbe confesses all, saying:

O bitterer als der Tod
Ist dies Gefühl, daß ich so klein, so ganz
Dein unwerth war.⁸⁵

Oh more bitter than death is this feeling, that I am so small, so wholly unworthy of you.

She confesses her love for him, telling him that in him she saw ‘meinen kühnsten Traum . . . erfüllt’ (‘my wildest dream fulfilled’).⁸⁶ She explains how it is possible for her to be so open:

Ich bin
Nicht schamlos, Scipio. Nur weil ich Verzicht
Gethan auf Alles, darf ich Alles sagen,
Und wie aus Wolken red’ ich schon zu dir.⁸⁷

I am not shameless, Scipio. Only because I have renounced everything may I say everything. I speak to you as though from the clouds.

Having said this, she stabs herself with her husband’s dagger. Sophonisbe has recognized Scipio’s greatness and his heroic nature, and so removes herself from the scene. She dies not because she is a hero, but because he is, and because she will always be inferior to him. Scipio mourns her for all of four lines, orders her corpse to be cremated, and then has the military trumpets sound for his march on Zama, where, as history tells us, he fought the final and decisive battle of the Second Punic War. Geibel takes a story about a famous warrior queen and turns her into a woman who falls in love with her

⁸⁴ Emanuel Geibel, *Sophonisbe*, 98.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 137.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 145.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

own conqueror and kills herself, clearing the way for his heroic victory. Scipio is the hero of this play, successful in war, magnanimous in victory. Germans wanted a male hero in the years before the establishment of the German Empire in 1871 and they continued to want one until 1945.

Gustav Roethe (1859–1926), professor of German Studies at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin University, puts this with exemplary clarity in a speech entitled ‘Deutsches Heldentum’ (‘German Heroism’) that he gave in 1906 on the occasion of the birthday of the emperor Wilhelm II. This is his opening:

Das deutsche Land ist heute übersät mit einer Fülle gepanzerter Machtweiber in Marmor und Bronze, die als ‚Germania‘ das Symbol unserer nationalen Einheit darstellen sollen. Ich würde mich dieser undeutschen künstlerischen Ausdrucksform nicht freuen, selbst wenn sie ästhetisch wertvoller geraten wäre. Sie berührt uns nicht das Herz. Die frostige weibliche Personifikation hat für uns nie Blut und Leben gewonnen. Der Deutsche hat von jeher sein Ideal, den Inbegriff seiner Wünsche, in die Gestalt des *Helden* gekleidet. Der Held aber ist ein Mann.⁸⁸

The German lands are strewn today with a plenitude of powerful women in marble and bronze, who as ‘Germania’ are supposed to represent the symbol of our national unity. I would not rejoice at this un-German form of artistic expression even if it were of higher aesthetic value. It does not touch our hearts. The chilly female personification has never acquired blood and life for us. The German has always clothed his ideal, the quintessence of his desires, in the form of a *hero*. The hero, however, is a man.

Women cannot be heroes. Why? Because they are women. If they want to be heroes, they have to create a fictional space all their own, as the women writers discussed in Chapter 7 do. Even then it is the exceptional writer who manages to show that the heroine’s femininity is not necessarily a problem on the battlefield.

⁸⁸ Gustav Roethe, ‘Deutsches Heldentum’, in *Deutsche Reden* (Leipzig: Quelle u. Meyer, 1927), 1–18, at 1.