'Arms and the (Wo)man' in Medieval Romance: The Gendered Arming of Female Warriors in the *Roman d'Eneas* and Heldris's *Roman de Silence* [1]

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An analysis of the arming of female warriors in the *Roman d'Eneas* and the *Roman de Silence* demonstrates a gendered différence between male and female warriors in medieval romance, as revealed in the presence or absence of stones of *vertu* on their armor. (LKS)

Derek Brewer's seminal proposal of the 'formal arming [of the warrior] passage' as a legitimate literary *topos* covers a daunting generic and temporal span from antique epic through the late medieval romance. However, both Brewer's identification of the *topos* and his catalogue of examples exhibit two unfortunate limitations. He defines the 'arming' passage exclusively in terms of the description of the *process* of a warrior donning armor, a narrow focus which eliminates from consideration many extended literary passages that describe armor (and implicitly arming). Therefore, in literary criticism of texts featuring warriors, such passages not fitting the 'arming passage' paradigm either are labeled rhetorical ornamentation or are cited as examples of the medieval taste for exoticism. Moreover, Brewer genders the arming *topos* a specifically male experience by omitting any consideraton of the female warriors featured in various antique and medieval literary genres, such as the epic and the romance. The purpose of this essay is to redress both these omissions by analyzing the literary treatment of one of the most extraordinary and provocative female warriors to appear in an Arthurian romance, Silence, the hero(ine) of the late thirteenth-century *Roman de Silence* by Heldris of Cornwall. If Silence epitomizes the successful female warriors who have been excluded from Brewer's arming *topos*, she did not, like the Greek goddess of war, Athena, emerge fully grown from the head of her literary father/creator. Rather, Silence's career as a female warrior can best be appreciated by comparing

Heldris's depiction of her with an earlier literary model, the Amazonic Camille in the mid-twelfth-century French *Roman d'Eneas* (for which Virgil's *Aeneid* is the obvious source). As I shall demonstrate, both medieval authors not only employ considerable decorative and thematic arming imagery in presenting their warrior women, but also reveal a negative gender bias in the way these otherwise powerful female 'knights' are 'armed.' Significantly, while Virgil created in his character Camilla a prototype for the literary female warrior, nevertheless, he opened the *Aeneid* singing of arms and the *man.* Hence, in my essay I shall attempt to establish an as yet virtually untreated medieval *topos*—arms and the *woman.*

Brewer's privileging of the male gender in defining the arming *topos* is perhaps understandable. Marking the limitations to the roles played by women in medieval literature and life, Joan Ferrante claims, 'They cannot, with rare exception, go to war or battle' (213).[2] But the examples of Camille and Silence demonstrate that medieval writers could imagine women vigorously engaging in combat with male adversaries, for whom special protective armor and a warhorse were the period's prerequisites for military success on the field. While Brewer's *topos* emphasizes the formal, ceremonial process of arming a male knight or warrior for battle (222-24), it literally does not 'cover' the exceptional[3] female warriors who are nevertheless shown participating in combat.[4] As we shall see, both Camille and Silence do wear a special costume[5] to battle, though not exactly of the same kind. Of the two, only Silence receives a classic arming scene. Camille, on the other hand, arrives at the front already 'dressed,' in a costume that is statically, if elaborately, described in the text. Moreover, Heldris extends to Silence in her battle scenes the standard chivalric courtesy offered by one male knight to another. This respectful treatment of Silence by author and fellow-knight alike results from and is inextricably tied to her maintainence of a male identity throughout her career as a warrior in the romance. As the case of Silence's literary predecessor Camille reveals, however, a female warrior who fights *in propria persona* as a female not only risks the derision of the warriors who fight her in the text, but provokes both a devaluation of her warrior status by the author who writes the text as well as a concomitant neglect by the text's interpreters. This diminution of Camille's status as compared to Silence's is indicated in the precise distinction between their arms, which are both different from that of one another and different from that of actual male warriors. The gendered *différance* in their armor governs whether or not they are permitted a genuine arming passage and, perhaps even more important, whether or not they are permitted to wear armor adorned with precious stones. Both of these issues inform the definition of the female

warrior in a vernacular reworking of Virgil's quintessential epic, the Latin *Aeneid,* into one of the earliest surviving (c. 1155-1160) French medieval romances, the *Roman d'Eneas*, to which I shall now turn.

THE FEMALE WARRIOR CAMILLE IN THE *Roman d'Eneas*

Chief among the many significant differences between the *Aeneid* and the *Eneas* is the unknown poet's considerable expansion of the role of Virgil's Amazonic female warrior Camilla, called Camille in the French text (Yunck 18).[6] Just as the account of Silence's exploits as a woman acting the role of a male warrior will be of central importance in the *Roman de Silence*, Camille 'dominates the middle "War in Latium" sections' of the *Eneas* (Gaunt 10). Thus, the Camille section of the *Eneas* occupies the central 'panel' of a feminine 'triptych' which is flanked by the encounter between Eneas and Dido in the earlier third of the plot, and the relationship of Eneas and Lavine in the latter third.[7]

The *Eneas*-poet's presentation of this warrior woman revises Virgil's conception in major ways. Briefly, Virgil introduced Camilla in the very last lines of *Aeneid* 7 as the culmination of a whole series of setpiece portraits of the Latin allies' male leaders who will fight on the side of Turnus against Aeneas and the Trojans. Significantly, upstaging even Turnus's portrait, Virgil's Camilla is the only female and the *ultimate* leader depicted, her portrait being the 'last word' of the Book (*Aeneid* 7.803-17).[8] We see more of Camilla at the actual battle in Book 9. Raised in the wilderness by her father, who nursed her from the milk of a wild brood-mare and trained her in the martial arts, Camilla, like her true Amazon models,[9] has dedicated herself to a life of valor, virginity, and the worship of Diana. The valor is expressed in Book 11, where Virgil spends nearly 60 lines cataloguing several male warriors who are slain by Camilla (664-724). However, Camilla's concentration on the battle is interrupted when she is attracted by the magnificent suit of armor worn by Chloreus (778-84). Distracted temporarily, Camilla is stalked by the Trojan Arruns, who rids the Trojans of this female menace. Camilla dies surrounded by a loyal sisterhood of warrior women, who mourn her while the stunned Latins flee from the battle. Virgil makes clear that the loss of this skilled female warrior turns the tide of the battle against the Latins.

Capitalizing upon the already serious and sustained tribute to the capabilities of a warrior woman in his Virgilian literary source, the *Eneas* poet substantially expands Camille's role in a way that, superficially at least, literally 'valor'-izes her femaleness. For example, he transforms Virgil's 17-line description of Camilla into a nearly 150-line 'tour de force' (Yunck 134n76) portrait[10] of

Camille's idealized beauty,[11] while at the same time he severely compresses the catalogue of male warriors' portraits found in the *Aeneid* (7.803-17, 647-802).[12] The opening characterization establishes her Amazonic valor:

> . . . el fu toz tens norrie an guerre
> et molt ama chevalerie
> et maintint la tote sa vie.
> Onc d'ovre a feme ne ot cure,
> ne de filer ne de costure;
> mialz prisoit armes a porter,
> a tornoier et a joster,
> ferir d'espee et de lance:
> ne fu feme de sa vaillance. (3968-76).[13]

[She had been raised always amid warfare, so that she loved chivalry greatly and upheld it her whole life.[14] She had no interest in any women's work, neither spinning nor sewing, but preferred the bearing of arms, tourneying, and jousting, striking with the sword and the lance: there was no other woman of her bravery.] (134-35)

It is noteworthy that Camille, as will also be true of Silence, explicitly disdains the feminine-gendered activity of sewing in preference for the 'manlier' practice of warfare. Following a long, quite conventional forehead to chin *effictio* of her facial features (3987-4006)[15] comes a minute description of the garments worn by this warrior woman, a description which merits comparison with the classic arming passage of the male warrior:

> Molt par ert bele la raïne.
> Vers l'ost chevalche la meschine;
> chevous ot sors, lons jusqu'as piez,
> a un fil d'or les ot treciez;
> bien fu la dame estroit vestue
> de porpre noire a sa char nue;
> la porpre fu a or broudee,
> par grant entante fu ovree:
> trois faees serors la firent,
> an une chanbre la tissirent;
> chascune d'els s'i essaia
> et son savoir i demonstra
> et firent i poissons marages,
> oissiaus volanz, bestes salvages.
> Vestu an fu estroitement;
> dessus fu ceinte cointement
> d'une sozceinte a or broudee;
> menuëment ert botonee.
> . . . . . .

Li mantiaus fu riches et chiers
et fu toz fez a eschaquiers;
l'un tavel ert de blanc hermine
el'autre ert de gole martrine;
vols fu de propre esperital,
li tassel furent a esmal,
li orles fu mervoilles biaus
et fu de gorges d'uns oisiaus
ki sollent pondre al fonz de mer
et sor l'onde sollent cover;
. . . . . .
bien fu orlez de ces oisiaus,
desi qu'a terre li mantiaus.
Ele an ot antroverz les pans,
que li parut li destre flans,
et chevalchot un palfroi
qui soz li moine grant esfroi. (4007-24, 4029-38, 4043-48)

[The queen was extremely beautiful as she rode toward the army. Her hair was long, reaching down to her feet, and she had braided it with a golden thread. The lady was very tightly clothed in dark black cloth over her bare flesh. The silk was embroidered with gold, and worked with great pains. Three fairy sisters had made it, weaving it in a chamber. Each of them labored to show her best skill on it, and embroidered it with fish from the sea, flying birds, and wild beasts. She was clothed tightly in this, and over it she was daintily girt with a sash embroidered in gold and finely ornamented with buttons. . . . Her cloak was rich and costly, all made of checkered squares: one square was of white ermine, and the adjoining one of red martin. It was lined with magnificent silk and its clasps were of enamel. The border was marvelously beautiful, made from the throat of a bird which is wont to lay its eggs on the bottom of the sea and to hatch them in the water. . . . Her cloak was well bordered as far as the ground with these birds. She had left the panels of it open, so that her right side was exposed, and she rode a palfrey, which showed great spirit beneath her.] (135-36)

Compared with the examples Brewer adduced, this scene does not constitute an official 'arming,' for no mention is made of any ceremonial putting on of any of this exotic attire, much less weapons, protective garments, helmet, or shield. Despite the fact that it depicts a fierce warrior queen riding a horse to the battlefield, the passage, the longest female portrait in French romance, is curiously static and passive. The conventions for describing a typical male warrior differ from those for a female, even if she is Amazon-like.[16] Neither the male hero's physical attractiveness nor his hairstyle would be the first attributes mentioned in *his* description; yet they set the tone for the eroticized costume description of this female warrior. The flora and fauna on her body-hugging, dark, embroidered suit perhaps distantly reflect her wilderness upbringing in the *Aeneid*, as do the exotic birds, fish, and fur pelts on the rest

of the costume. But they also resonate with the details of another 'arming' scene in the *Roman d'Eneas,* the account of the hero's armor. To be precise, even Eneas is not shown *putting on* his armor, as in Brewer's traditional male version of the arming passage. Instead, a catalogue of the various arms and the suit of armor especially fabricated for him by Vulcan, at the request of his wife Venus, is described in minute detail (4415-4542).[17] When this gift from his mother is delivered to Eneas at his camp in Montaubon, where he prepares for Turnus's impending seige of the fortress he holds, the wonderful arms not only are examined, admired, and praised by the members of his army (4550-64), but Eneas himself 'les ama' (4561) [loves them (146)]. While the text does not literally describe Eneas arming himself,[18] it is unthinkable that such a universally valued gift was not used by the hero. As this bestowing of arms on Eneas follows shortly upon Camille's portrait and occupies the same amount of textual space—nearly 150 lines (4394-4542)—these parallel 'costume descriptions,'[19] if not literal 'armings,' of a formidable female and a traditional male warrior surely are intended to be mutual foils.[20]

What is stressed about Eneas's armor is its costly splendor and, insured by Vulcan's careful workmanship,[21] its utter invincibility.[22] As a twelfth-century audience could not fail to appreciate, this invincibility was in large part attributable to the liberal adornment of the hero's armor parts with jewels of *vertu*, which would signify for a medieval audience the special talismanic strengths and properties assigned to various gemstones by medieval lapidary treatises.[23] The apotropaic strength conferred by these stones was gendered male from its very etymology.[24] Thus, in addition to an impermeable silver-mailed hauberk and a penon that had once belonged to Mars himself, the very male hero Eneas receives a blow-proof helmet:

> sus el pomel ot quatre esmaus
> et quatre pierres naturaus,
> et li cercles qui fu desorz
> ert molt bien faiz a or trestoz
> a riches pierres, a esmaus;
> et d'une pierre ert li nasaus,
> qui par arme ne fust cassee
> ne tailliee ne andoblee. (4437-44)

[On the crest were four enamel plates and four natural stones, and the circlet above was very well made, completely of gold, rich stones, and enamel work. The nose guard was made of a stone which would not be broken or cut or split by any weapon.] (143-44)

Besides this '*vertu*ously'–jeweled helmet, Eneas also was given a special apotropaic shield:

> D'or fu toz li escuz orlez,
> de trois bandes parmi listez
> o molt soltiz antailleüre
> et o molt bone anleveüre;
> pierres i ot par lous asises,
> et bons esmaus a entremises;
> d'un vert topace fu la bocle,
> sus an l'or ot un escharbocle,
> qui par nuit gitot tel clarté
> com se ce fust un jor d'esté; (4457-66)

> [The whole shield was edeged with gold, arranged in three bands with very delicate inlays and very fine embossing. By these bands were set precious stones, with good enamel-work placed between them. The boss was of green topaz, and set above in the gold was a carbuncle, which threw out such light at night that it seemed like a summer day.] (144)

Along with an unbreakable lance, Eneas also had an unbreakable sword, the pommel of whose hilt was crowned with a glittering emerald (4489-90), and whose scabbard was hung on a belt having ends tipped respectively with a jasper and a jacinth, weighing one ounce apiece, and set in gold (4511-14).[25] Clearly, loaded down with the salvific stones which are his gender-right as a *male* hero, Eneas wears arms that a medieval audience would recognize to be the most efficacious possible costume for battle.

In contrast to the male hero's arms, however, the decorative attire Camille wears as she rides toward the battle would afford her little of the protection that is the very function of armor. The provenance of their respective battle costumes is also unevenly matched. While the origin of Eneas's arms is doubly divine (Venus and Vulcan), Camille's dark silk embroidered battle costume is the handiwork of the faeries, supernatural beings of a lower order than the gods, further diminishing its effectiveness. Her inadequate but exotic costume heightens the otherness of Amazonic Camille's problematic female identity. To succeed in such a male-gendered arena, a female candidate would almost certainly have to be not only qualified, but *over*qualified. Though a female venturing into and vying for a piece of what is traditionally considered to be both literal and metaphoric male 'turf,' the field of battle, Camille is an *Amazonic* female.[26] Thus, her exposed right side, which seems poorly protected, alludes to the Amazon penchant for cutting off one breast to allow for greater ease and success in using a bow. While her highly decorated sash is functionally worthless, it recalls the stolen girdle which set off the mythic war between the

Greeks and the Amazons, the originary template of all future gender conflict.[27] Camille's 'portrait' often is cited as an example of the exoticism in which audiences of early romances so delighted.[28] However, this explanation of its function fails to consider the impact of the description of Eneas's armor on the meaning of this passage. Eneas's attire is as 'exotic' and decorated as Camille's, but it is supremely functional as protection for a warrior, while Camille's is not. Yet, far from signifying a 'feminine' lack of seriousness on Camille's part about combat, her non-functional attire perhaps indicates—ironically, considering her ultimate death at Arruns's hand—her over-optimistic confidence in her Amazonic battle-strength.[29]

At the actual battle, Camille makes some concession toward wearing armor, but the description is a fraction of the length of the earlier portrait, which is clearly meant to be the analogue of Eneas's costume description, and her arms are no match for Eneas's impenetrable armor. Here the poet depicts her 'tote armee' (6908) [fully armed]:

Apoiee fu sor sa lance;
a son col avoit son escu;
o bocle d'or d'ivoire fu,
et la guige an estoit d'orfrois.
Ses haubers ert blans come nois
et ses hiaumes luisanz et clers,
de fin or ert toz par carters;
la coife del hauberc fu faite
en tel mainere qu'ele ot traite
sa bloie crine de defors
que el li covri tot lo cors:
derriés li vantelot aval
des que sor le dos del cheval. (6922-32)

[She was leaning on her lance, with her shield hung around her neck. Her shield was of ivory, with a boss of gold, and its grip was of orphrey. Her hauberk was as white as snow, and her helmet, glittering and bright, all quartered with fine gold. The coif[30] of the hauberk was made in such a way that she had drawn her blond hair outside, so that it covered her whole body. It fluttered down behind her as far as the horse's back.] (91-92)

Several aspects of this passage are noteworthy. First, the brevity, sketchiness, and absence of ceremonial process mitigate against even considering this a formal description of arms granted to Camille. Thus, the earlier, 150-line portrait, a match (in length and proximity) with the scene in which armor is bestowed upon Eneas, is as much of an 'arming' as the poet allows Camille to have, even though it is not an 'arming' in Brewer's nomenclature. Second,

while Eneas's armor is liberally decorated with protective, salvific, masculine-gendered '*vertu*ous' stones which contribute to its invincibility, neither Camille's attire in the long costume description, nor her armor in this short sketch is bejeweled with protective stones.[31] Indeed, if anything characterizes the imaging of Camille's garments, it is association with the world of nature—flora, fauna, snow—and, perhaps in the whiteness of the ivory and snow, her Amazonic devotion to maintaining her virginity. If jewels *are* merely decorative or exotic, why is Camille not given jeweled armor, thus fulfilling a typically patriarchal, gendered expectation about feminine interest in finery? She does have her own 'conoissance' or heraldic emblem (6921), but no apotropaic jewels. As we shall see, this absence of jeweled armor may explain her motivation in the scene leading to her death, when she shows an ultimately fatal interest in the very-jeweled armor of Cloreus. Third, Camille's exposure of her extremely long, blond hair, on one hand, puts her at risk of both physical entanglement (like Absalom in the Old Testament) and high visibility, making her a vulnerable target on the battlefield. On the other hand, in terms of gender construction, long hair is a traditional signifier of the femininity that not only distinguished Amazons from male warriors, but to some extent sexualized them. This eroticizing of Camille's long blond hair is demonstrated in Tarcon's leering 'compliment' of her coiffure—'portant blanche vos voi et bloie' (7091) [I see you are fair and blond. (194)]—just prior to offering her money to have sex with him (as discussed below). The ignominy of being bested by a *female* warrior, as we shall see, prompts in their male adversaries strong desires to harass and even contain this simultaneously attractive and yet threatening Amazonic power of Camille and her female army.

Such an adversarial relationship has less to do with the politics of the war between the Latins and the Trojans than with a more fundamental 'gender' war being waged. This strategy of textual sexual harassment and containment is practiced by the *Eneas*-poet in his most profound departures from Virgil's presentation of Camilla in the *Aeneid*, which take place in the scenes leading to Camille's death. To be sure, Virgil paved the way for him. Jove, incensed at the blow to Tuscan and *male* pride delivered by Camilla when she triumphs over the son of Aunus in hand-to-hand combat, sends Tarchon to goad the Tuscans both for allowing a *woman* to drive them off and for having energy only for sex, feasting, and the dances of Bacchus (*Aeneid* 11.705-50). Subsequently, Tarchon's slaying of a Latin inspires the Tuscans and prompts Arruns to stalk, ambush, and kill Camilla while she is distracted by the armor of Chloreus (*Aeneid* 11.751-819).

In the French romancer's hands this series of events is altered in significant ways. Camille and 100 mail-clad warrior women frighten and unnerve the Trojans who, mistaking them for goddesses, ascribe a divine invincibility to them (6988-89). Surpassing the valor of her epic model, Camille's triumphs increase in both intensity and number (200 are dead by her hand) and the Trojans flee the field (7035-60), prompting Tarcon to urge them to return to the battle (7065-68). In another major revision, the French romancer's rewritten character Tarcon does not ridicule the lascivious weakness of his men; instead, he directs his critique against Camille and all her gender:[32]

"Noz chevaliers vos voi abatre.
Feme ne se doit pas combatre,
se par nuit non tot an gisant;
la puet fere home recreant;
mais ja prodom o les escuz
par feme ne sera vencuz.
. . . . . .
[N]e mostrez vostre proëce.
Ce ne est pas vostre mestier,
mes filer, coldre, et taillier;
en bele chanbre soz cortine
fet bon esbatre o tel meschine." (7075-81, 7084-88)

["'I see you striking down our knights, but a woman should not do battle, except at night, lying down; there she can defeat any man. But a bold man with a shield will never be defeated by a woman. . . . Stop exhibiting your prowess. That is not your calling, but rather to spin, to sew, and to clip. It is good to do battle with a maiden like you in a beautiful chamber, beneath a bedcurtain.'"] (194)

Tarcon then ogles her blond hair, offers to purchase her favors (and share her with his squires), and sneers that 100 partners might tire her, but could never satisfy her unquenchable sexual appetite (7089-7106). In making these textual changes, the *Eneas*-poet thus shares complicity with his male character's leering misogyny. The poet literally authorizes Tarcon to commit the textual sexual harassment not only of Camille specifically, but all females who, Tarcon claims, would be better off sewing, are sexual commodities to be bought and redistributed at the discretion of the buyer, and are themselves sexually voracious.[33] Exhibiting the intended effect of most sexual harassment, 'Camile ot honte et molt grant ire/ de ce que el li oï dire;' [Camille was full of shame and very great anger at what she heard him say. (195)].

However, in a change from the Virgilian source that adds extra emphasis to the motif of arms and armor, the *Eneas*-poet allows Camille to direct her shame and anger toward a constructive goal. She not only shatters Tarcon's

shield, tears his hauberk, and strips off his mail, but, after this almost ritual dis-'arming,' throws him dead from his charger (7107-16). Moreover, just before this addition, to balance his invented misogynistic speech to her, Camille is given her own invented refutation of Tarcon's sexist innuendoes:

> "Ne ving pas ça por moi mostrer
> ne por putage demener,
> mais por fere chevalrie.
> De voz deniers ne voil ge mie,
> trop avez fait fole bargaigne;" (7117-21).

["'I do not come here to show myself off, or to indulge in debauchery, but to practice chivalry. I want none of your deniers: you have made a most foolish bargain.'"] (195)

In the gender war which forms the subtext of this section of the romance, the two invented speeches strike verbal blows equal to those exchanged on the actual battlefield between Camille's female warriors and the Trojan/Tuscan allied troops. The added speech also attests Camille's low valuation of ostentation, money, and worldly goods for their own sake. This, as we shall see presently, is an important point in her defense in the poet's gender-biased analysis of the causes of her death, another section of the *Aeneid* which the *Eneas*-poet inventively expands and alters.

While the broad outline of events leading to Camille's death in the *Eneas* remains similar to Virgil's account, the French romancer complicates the issue of Camille's motives for attacking Cloreus in his crucial 'translation' of Cloreus's armor. Virgil's Chloreus wears arms that would appeal to the taste of Augustan Rome—gilded and brazen arms, lavishly decorated with purple and saffron colored fabric, and a golden helmet (*Aeneid* 11.768-77). The twelfth-century French translator's version of Cloreus's armor, like that of Eneas's transformed armor earlier, is liberally studded with the masculine-gendered jewels of *vertu* that a medieval audience would recognize as apotropaic:

> [Cloreüs] a or ert tote s'armeüre
> et conoissance et coverture,
> et avoit un hialme tant cler
> que nus nel pooit esgarder:
> contre soloil reflanbeot,
> sus el pomel un pierre ot
> qui estoit bien se set colors,
> an fin or sist, taillié a flors,
> toz li cercles et li nasaus
> faiz a pierres et a esmaus. (7167-76)

[(Cloreus') armor and his blazon and his covering were all of gold, and he had a helmet so bright that none could gaze upon it as it glittered in the sunlight. Beneath the crest it had a stone of a good seven colors, set in fine gold carved with flowers. All the helmet's rims and its nose-guard were made of precious stones and enamel.] (196)

Whereas Virgil allows Camilla two possible reasons for interest in Chloreus's luxurious armor—either she wanted to hang the Trojan armor in the temple as a trophy, *or* she desired the golden armor for herself (*Aeneid* 11.778-82)—the only motive the *Eneas*-poet attributes to her is a greedy desire for treasure. Psychologically analyzing what prompts both her attack on Cloreus and her seizure of his arms, the narrator reports that Camille 'a l'elme aperceü/. . . qui riches fu,/ porpansa soi que, s'ele ne l'a/ *malvesement se prisera*' (7177-80; emphasis added) [saw the. . . helmet, which was rich. She thought to herself that if she did not get it, she would *estimate that she had a poor reputation.*[34] (my translation)]. After first literally dis-'arming' her victim—she strikes his shield, rips his hauberk, and tears off the mail—Camille kills Cloreus, and then unlaces and seizes the helmet bearing the seven-colored '*vertu*ous' stone (7180-88). Clearly, the extra emphasis on his armor distinguishes Cloreus from the other two hundred anonymous victims of Camille's valor. In another expansion of Virgil's text,[35] the narrator editorializes about her action:

De grant noiant s'est antremise,
mais ansi vet coveitise:
mainte chose convoite l'*on*
don l'an n'avra ja se mort non;
el s'en poïst bien consirrer,
ne l'an laira mes retorner:
ses maus et sa morz i gisoit. (7189-95; emphasis added)

[She was occupied with a great deal of nothing, but thus it goes with covetousness: *men* covet many things from which they will gain nothing but their deaths. She could have well have left the helmet, and not let herself be drawn to it: her harm and her death lay there.] (196; emphasis added)

Seizing an opportunity to indulge in a bit of Christian moralizing about the spiritual perils of cupidity, the poet reduces Virgil's Camilla's divinely fated death to moral retribution for a grasping *woman's* fatal attraction to a mere trinket. Although covetousness is not a sin bound by gender, and so theoretically men and women are equally susceptible to it, in this specific case the coveted object is armor. Since armor is an almost exclusively male-gendered costume, the expected gender of the 'one' who covets it logically would be *male*. Therefore, while the expression 'mainte chose convoite l'*on*' (7191) either impersonalizes the covetous under consideration as men, people, or specifically

identifies them as males,[36] the statement illogically follows an incident in which a *female* has coveted the helmet. Earlier in the text, Euryalus and Turnus, both splendid male warriors, succumbed to the temptation to pillage a valuable from the body of an opponent. At least Euryalus took a helmet, which arguably could offer protection on the battlefield (5085-5136, 5272); Turnus took, not a belt, as in the *Aeneid,* but an even more useless bauble in the French version, a ring (5763-74). On neither occasion did the poet do more than note in passing that the desire for an object resulted in the taker's paying a high price for what he took. Yet, when the *Eneas*-poet portrays a female warrior desiring a helmet which she does not even get a chance to take in the *Aeneid*, he subjects her to textual sexual harassment by attaching to her act a lecture about the greed of 'men.' This and another textual inconsistency, Camille's earlier avowal to Tarcon that she is not on the battlefield to show herself off or to gain money, but to practice chivalry, render this sermon thematically irrelevant to the immediate textual situation and, thus, a definite structural flaw. Yet there is a method behind the madness of these otherwise puzzling interpolations.

What is common to all of these textual changes in the French romance version of Virgil's epic is an added focus on armor as well as significant changes to the arms displayed by these male warriors in the *Aeneid.* The male warriors in the French text—Eneas, Turnus, Cloreus—are endowed with armor that has been 'medievalized' by the inclusion of protective gemstones of *vertu*, which bestow a power on the wearer that is etymologically related to masculine puissance or virility (see n24). In a way, the wearer must already possess male power or virility in order to benefit from the purported power of the gemstones. If this 'rule' prevails in phallocentric, patriarchal medieval culture, where does that leave a female warrior, fighting *in propria persona* as a female, who is not obviously endowed with the physical testifier[37] of virility that is a requisite for wearing another set of protective 'stones'? As is demonstrated by the *Eneas*-poet's Camille, she is left both without a proper arming scene and arrayed initially in exotically decorated, but non-protective clothing (the first costume description), and then later wearing armor that is noticibly without protective stones of *vertu* (the second, short costume description). Since, notwithstanding a lack of protective stones, she is a formidable warrior who has already despatched more than 200 of the enemy, Camille, not wanting 'to estimate that she had a poor reputation,' takes from Cloreus the helmet which displays the seven-colored stone of *vertu* that, but for the accident of her gender, she has proved she *earned* by fighting for Turnus. Thus, her chivalric valor, her *haute prise*, will not be complete without this valuable armor, a visible signifier

that she is indeed a praiseworthy warrior of the highest reputation. As Turnus and Euryalus—males who did not need extra protective 'jewels'[38] but who took them anyway—proved, '*men* covet many things from which they will gain nothing but their deaths.' However, perhaps because already prevalent misogyny made females an easier target, the *Eneas*-poet, this time following Virgil's model, also punishes Camille with death for wanting what any wise warrior, male or female, would want, protection on the battlefield afforded by the magnificant jewel of *vertu* on Cloreus's helmet. Camille thus demonstrates how difficult, if not impossible, it was for an authentic female warrior to receive respectful chivalric treatment either from her fellow warriors in the text or from the narrator who, employing certain gendered 'rules' for the descriptions of warriors, controls her *prise*. Furthermore, the case of Silence in Heldris of Cornwall's unusual late-thirteenth-century French *Roman de Silence*, to which we shall now turn, illustrates just how far the rules about gendered roles in Arthurian romance must be 'bent' for a female warrior to elicit, even if through artifice and impersonation, that level of respect.

SILENCE AS WARRIOR (WO)MAN IN HELDRIS OF CORNWALL'S *Roman de Silence*

The title character of the *Roman de Silence*, a romance which 'refus[es] to behave according to our expectations, to fit into our categories' (Allen 103), is a female who, in order to obviate King Ebain's law disinheriting females, impersonates a male by cross-dressing and assuming the culturally male-gendered prerogatives and responsibilities of knighthood. The most extreme aspect of Silence's gender-bending is her extremely successful appropriation of the typical activities and demeanor of the male warrior. Aptly enough, this transformation is effected in the text through not only a classic arming passage, but battle scenes and individual combat scenes worthy of any of the best male medieval literary warriors—Roland, William of Orange, or Gawain himself.

Disguised from birth as a male, Silence is sent to France and becomes a favorite young 'bachelor' at the French court.[39] As part of her French experience, Silence receives an opportunity to demonstrate all the male-nurtured skills she has been practicing since infancy: hunting, jousting, and swordplay. At the age of seventeen, after she is dubbed a knight by the King of France on the feast of Pentecost, a tournament is held in Silence's honor, at which she excels over all the other knights and takes the prize (5132-44). With respect to Silence's real gender and its effect on her performance the narrator relates:

Moult le fist bien ens en l'arainne
Entre .ii. rens a la quintainne.
Ainc feme ne fu mains laniere
De contoier en tel mainere.
Kil veïst joster sans mantel
Et l'escu porter en cantiel
Et faire donques l'ademise,
La lance sor le faltre mise,
Dire peüst que Noreture
Puet moult ovrer contre Nature,[40]
Quant ele aprent si et escole
A tel us fem et tendre et mole. (5145-56)

[He did very well in the arena
between two turns at the quintain.
No woman was ever more ready
to arm herself in such a way.
Anyone who saw him joust without a mantle,
carrying a shield on his left arm,
and set to the attack, lance on the lance-rest,
would say that Nurture,
can do much against Nature,
when she teaches and trains
a tender, delicate woman in such behavior.] (139)

Given the conflict between Nurture and Nature alluded to in the above lines, however, it is clear that even if Nurture's training makes Silence's impersonation of a male successful, that martial success (by a woman *in propria persona*) is still considered unnatural. Were her true gender identity revealed, moreover, there would be a suitably ambivalent gender-constructed response:

Tels chevaliers par li i vierse
Que se il le tenist envierse
Et il peüst la fin savoir
Que grante honte en peüst avoir
Que feme tendre, fainte et malle,
Ki rien n'a d'ome fors le halle,
Et fors les dras et contenance,
L'eüst abatu de sa lance. (5157-64)

[Silence upset many a knight there who,
if he had thought his opponent male
and then learned the truth,
would feel great shame
that a tender, fragile, gentle woman—
with nothing masculine about her
but her tanned complexion, dress, and appearance—
should have beaten him at the lance.] (139)

Clearly, it is one kind of embarrassment for a male knight to be bested by another male knight, but it is a 'grant honte' [great shame] to be bested by a fragile female. Silence herself feels no such ambivalence about what she does: 'Silences ne se repent rien/ De son usage, ains l'ainme bien.' (5177-78) [Silence did not at all regret/ his habits; indeed he loved them. (140)].

When Silence's reputation for being the most skilled knight in France (5181-85; 5191-94) reaches King Ebain, he calls Silence back to fight on his side in the civil war that has broken out in England (5207-11). In preparation for a crucial battle against the Count of Chester, Ebain and his men arm themselves while Silence brings thirty of the best French knights under her banner to aid him. In a classic arming scene worthy of inclusion in Brewer's catalogue, Silence outfits herself in a magnificent suit of armor, a gift of the King of France:

Desor un ganbizon de soie
Giete l'obierc malié menu
Que li rois de France ot tenu
En tel cierté qu'il nel donast
Por rien c'on li abandonast.
Legiers est, ne puet faire falle.
Calces de meïsmes la malle
Li lacent qui moult bones sunt.
Si esporon a proisier funt:
De fin or sunt bien avenant,
Se li fremerent maintenant.
Doi sien vallet de gregnor los.
Li gietent donc l'obierc el dos.
Sa bone espee a donques çainte
C'uns siens vallés li a atainnte.
Et maintenant ainz qu'il s'en alle
Li ont fremee la ventalle.
Moult tost li ont puis lacié l'elme:
Nen a si bon en nul roialme.
Pieres i a et cercle d'or
Ki valent bien tolt un tressor.
Li rois de France li dona.
Bien ait quant il l'abandona.
Il ot esté a un sien oncle:
El nasal a un escarboncle.
Li auferrans est amenés
Uns siens vallés li plus senés
L'estraint moult bien et donc li rent.
Puis monta sus, qu'arçon n'i prent.
Des esporons d'or qu'il avoit

Com cil qui faire le savoit
Le tolce es costés et il salt
.xiiii. piés, que rien n'i falt. (5336 -5368)

[Over a gambison of silk
he threw a small enamelled hauberk
which the King of France loved so dearly
that he wouldn't have given it away
for anything anyone could offer him.
It was light, and could not fail.
They laced leggings of the same mail
onto him, which were very good.
His spurs were most valuable,
being of beautiful fine gold.
Two of his squires, of great merit,
attached them to him.
They threw the hauberk on his back.
He then girded on his good sword,
which one of his squires brought to him;
just before he left,
they closed his ventail.
Then they quickly laced up his helm;
there was not a better one in any kingdom.
It had precious stones and gold circlet
which were worth a treasure.
The King of France gave it to him—
may he be blessed for his gift!
It had belonged to an uncle of his;
there was a ruby in the nasal.
The warhorse was led in.
The ablest of his squires
held the horse firmly and gave him to Silence,
who mounted him without grasping the pommel.
Like one expert at it,
with his golden spurs
he touched the horse's sides,
and it leaped fourteen feet, not an inch less.] (144-45)

If this were a male knight in a typical romance or *chanson de geste* being armed ceremonially in the manner of Brewer's paradigm, the financial and sentimental value attached to the armor given to Silence by the King of France would be the primary signified of these particular signifiers. The hauberk was such that the King would not have given it away to *anyone*; yet he gave it to Silence. The helmet is not only preciously ornamented, but of sentimental value, as it had belonged to the King's uncle. Considering its royal/familial provenance and its intrinsic financial value, both the receipt and the display of such armor would inestimably add to the *los* and *prise*, the culturally valued

esteem, renown, and worthiness of any male warrior, the same *prise* that Camille so eagerly tried to attain by seizing Cloreus's jeweled armor. In this unusual text, however, the arming *topos* is translated from being an obligatory, conventional signifier of object/implement-oriented male 'warriorhood' or reputation to being the metaphor for the crossed-gender identity formation of the hero(ine). Silence must 'pass' as a male knight. As Brewer's catalogue indicates, an elaborate, ceremonial arming scene is expected of a male warrior. Because the special dynamics of a gender-crossing story warrant it, Heldris includes a 30-line[41] version of this obligatory scene, even though Silence is really a female.[42] In including a classic male-gendered arming scene, Heldris thus actually enhances the verisimilitude of this otherwise fantastic story. While actual male warriors seem to rely on the physical substance of the armor for their valor/protection, Silence's elaborate armor functions additionally as a disguise validating her male identity, demonstrating (however falsely) that she is a 'male' warrior.[43]

Although they are described in a much more cursory manner (5389-92, a mere 4 lines as compared to 32 lines for Silence), the French knights are also splendidly armed, and Silence, as their leader, articulates a classic, pre-battle, exhortatory speech to her troops (5376-86), which she delivers 'com senés' (5375) [wisely (145)].[44] The ensuing bloody battle between the rebels and the English army, ably aided by Silence's French contingent, is described in over 100 lines (5413-5520) as a mass melee which the narrator ruefully characterizes a 'martyre' [martyrdom] (5470). When the Count of Chester, a formidable warrior who is compared to Alexander the Great (5518), surrounds Ebain, Silence valiantly comes to the King's rescue and eventually engages in a fierce 'man to (wo)man' combat with Chester, which climaxes when Silence severs the Count's right arm and delivers him as prisoner to Ebain (5521-5638). Throughout this one-on-one engagement between Silence and Chester, items of Silence's magnificent armor are emphasized, not only her Moorish sword (5539, 5593, 5624), but especially her helmet, which the Count struck so severely:

> Qu'il en abat pieres et flors.
> Ja eüst mort, cho fust dolors,
> De l'espee que tint trenchant
> Mais que li brans torna en chant:
> *Par tant*[45] est guaris de la mort.
> (5613-17; emphasis added)
>
> [so as to flatten the gems and engraved flowers.
> He wounded him, and would have killed him
> with the cutting sword he held,
> but Silence's blade whistled:
> thus he was saved from death.] (151)

Silence's sumptuously jeweled helmet is not merely decorative or 'fashionable' (as a token acknowledgment of a gender-constructed proclivity of her natural sex), for many suits of armor of male knights were so decorated.[46] Rather, as they deflect an otherwise mortal blow from Silence's head, these jewels obviously evince a prophylactic or salvific power, in keeping with the *vertu*[47] attributed to various gemstones in medieval lapidary books. By crowning Silence with her jeweled helmet, Heldris is investing her with another important armorial feature customarily attributed to male warriors. Because she is a *woman* impersonating a male warrior, Silence's armor incorporates *vertu*ous stones, but in a perfunctory way. In this manner, Heldris alludes to the elaborately described jeweled armor from the tradition of armed literary and actual male knights,[48] but abbreviates and generalizes Silence's version of it; after all, she is only a woman impersonating a male knight. While Eneas's arms include such specific gems as green topaz, carbuncle, emerald, jasper, and jacinth, the jewels that literally save Silence's head are generalized 'pieres' [stones].

Heldris's depiction of a female's attempt to act the part of a male warrior *convincingly* culminates in a final, quite disturbing scene, her last as a warrior in the romance. Even after the Count of Chester has been taken captive and, technically, Ebain's war is over, Silence cannot downshift from her peak battle-frenzy. In fact, she escalates as if she is an out-of-control fighting machine: 'Silences n'a soig de juër:/ Ne violt pas la guerre atriuër,/ Cui colpe jambe, u piet, u puig.' (5639-41) [Silence had no desire to trifle; he did not want to conclude a truce, no matter whose leg, or foot, or fist was lost. (152)]. Clearly, this text disproves the essentialized construction of females as the 'weaker' sex, squeamish about violence and bloodshed. While it is necessary to her successful impersonation of a male warror, Silence's frank enjoyment of the use of excessive prowess suggests that her pose gets out of bounds. And as superficially empowering as this impersonation is, it also deprives her of her natural feminine 'arms.' If male warriors use weapons with which they must be armed while female warriors fight with words, Silence's adoption of a male persona equips her with the tools and material accoutrements (jeweled helmet, chainmail, sword) that render her impersonation of a male warrior successful. However, she achieves this 'arming' at the expense of the loss of the one weapon, as Boccaccio's Amazons and Camille illustrate, that females wield as adroitly as males use their arms—speech. Put another way, Silence's adoption of an unnatural gender affiliation grants her fame and respect in a traditionally male-dominated arena, but 'silences' the one weapon 'natural' to her real gender—her words. This renders her name, Silence, even more significant

and multi-valenced than received criticism of this romance acknowledges, concentrating on the obvious feminist themes of the traditional silencing of females by the medieval patriarchy.[49] As a female who trades her naturally gendered experience for that of a nurtured male warrior, complete with jewels of *vertu*, effectively Silence is 'silenced' on yet another level. In those terms, the tradeoff may not have been such a bargain.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to demonstrate how descriptions of armor and arming scenes are powerful signifiers in medieval romance, not only of valor, status, and personal esteem, but of gender roles. Severely underestimating their thematic and structural significance, most critics have assumed that the expansions and transformations of the descriptions of armor, such as those found in the *Roman d'Eneas*, merely feed their medieval audience's taste for the exotic and the ornamental. In fact, however, these arming passages, or the absence of them, teach us how to read the the significance of the *details* of romance, details that often get passed over in the contemporary quest to master the grand theme of the work. When the romance in question features both male and female warriors, or in the case of the *Roman de Silence*, a female impersonating a male warrior, issues of gender construction inevitably inform those details. What we learn from the representation of Camille, as juxtaposed against such male warriors as Eneas, Turnus, and Cloreus in the *Roman d'Eneas*, is that wearing '*vertu*ously'-jeweled armor is a gendered privilege rooted in the very linguistic association between stones, jewels,[50] and the Latin definition of masculinity itself, *virtus*. As is clear from Camille's attempt to appropriate such 'stones' *in propria persona* as a female in *Eneas*, such audacity or 'unnaturalness' exhibited by a woman is punishable by death. Thus, the handling of arms and arming scenes in the *Roman d'Eneas* paves the way for Heldris's arming of his hero(ine). In addition to her other talents, Silence proves herself to be a shrewd reader of her culture's gender signifiers. In the *Roman de Silence*, by wearing jeweled armor, perhaps at the insistence of Nurture, Silence exemplifies the corroboration between jewels and 'manliness.' The '*vertu*ous' jewels on her helmet not only preserve her life, but maintain the 'cover' of a woman masquerading as a male knight; and until Merlin 'un'-covers her 'cover' at the end, no one ever thinks to question it. Nurtured in the ways of medieval male-gendered behavior, Silence understands that a knight must at least appear to have 'stones' to wear stones on his armor.[51]

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NOTES

1 This paper is respectfully dedicated to Alice Colby-Hall, who introduced me to Old French language and literature at Cornell University.

2 Ferrante does not explain what exceptions she has in mind, though McLaughlin cites several possible examples. Historical exceptions included Eleanor of Aquitaine and Joan of Arc. On Eleanor, see Kelly 34-39. Christine de Pizan's seminal 1429 *Ditié De Jehanne D'Arc* presents a contemporary's estimation of Joan as warrior. On Christine's discussions of Amazons and other warrior women see Kleinbaum 64-68; Willard *passim*.

3 These females are exceptional in two senses: they are exceptions to the rule that warriors are automatically gendered male; and because they are women participating in a traditionally male-gendered activity, they must prove themselves to be *exceptionally* valorous, especially as compared to *male* knights.

4 Possibly, this absence of 'coverage' of female warriors at both the textual and the critical levels simply reflects conventionally *gendered* propriety. Such textual representation of the 'dressing' of *female* warriors (in the manner of the formal, public investiture of male warriors with armor) invites voyeurism.

5 I use 'costume' in the generic sense of a set of attire and appropriate accessories worn over the body for a specific occasion. In this sense, armor and arms comprise an appropriate costume to wear for a battle or a tournament.

6 The transformation of Virgil's Camilla has been the frequent focus of critical comparisons—the early examples were quite scathing in their contempt for the vernacular version—between the Latin and French poems. For example, Faral faults the Camille expansion for the laughable naiveté of its details, but acknowledges its influence on portraits in later romances (413); Crosland deplores 'the conventional description of Camilla and her ridiculous horse' (285); Auerbach complains that the French poet destroyed Virgil's sublime style by diluting it with long, moralistic and ornamental descriptions, such as those in the Camille expansion (191). For more positive evaluations of the French romancer's Camille, see Petit and Gottlieb.

7 The triptych paradigm is my own structural analogy. For different tripartite structural configurations of the *Eneas*, see Cormier 111-13; Gaunt 10.

8 Line citations of Virgil's *Aeneid* are from the Williams edition.

9 Although Camilla exhibits many of the habits of the ancient Amazons from Scythia, she is not an Amazon *per se*, as Virgil clearly distinquishes when he compares her to actual Amazons from Thrace such as Hippolyta and Penthesilea (*Aeneid* 11. 659-63).

10 As Petit notes, this long description of a secondary character is hardly justified thematically when neither Dido nor Lavine, major female characters who interact directly with the hero, is given a detailed physical description (20-21).

11 Colby identifies the portrait as a typical stylistic feature of twelfth-century romance (17). In Colby's comparative catalogue of the portraits of ideal female beauties, Camille achieves a 'score' of 126, for having the greatest number of features mentioned in the greatest number of lines of text, with most other heroines having scores averaging in the 40s. Petit calls this passage the most important female portrait in the genre of the *romans antiques*, and a model for other such portraits in later romances (6-7).

12 Gottleib estimates that Camille's portrait 'occupies the same amount of space in the text as all the rest of the knights combined' (157).

13 All quotations and line references from the Old French text of *Eneas* will be from the Salverda de Grave edition and will be noted parenthetically. All translated passages are cited by page reference from the Yunck translation. Occasionally, I shall emend Yunck's phrasing for greater literalness.

14 In Virgil's very different account of her upbringing, her father raises her in the wilderness (far from the 'chivalry' of organized, 'civilized' centers of training) where, like Silence, she learns the skills of hunting and fighting.

15 Petit discusses the poet's creativity and close adherance to the contemporary canons of esthetics in this passage (10-12).

16 The arms and arming of genuine Amazons, who blatantly promote their otherness, may be treated more like those of male warriors, as the example of Penthesilea in the *Roman de Troie* illustrates (Constans 4. 23417-71).

17 Eneas's arms are almost as exotic in origin as Camille's array. The helmet is made of the skin of a sea fish; the shield is also made of the side of a great fish, the *cetus*; the scabbard is made of the tooth of a fish.

18 As Brewer notes, even Virgil's *Aeneid* (12. 87-96) only has 'one relatively full example of the arming of the hero, though he curiously enough applies it to Turnus rather than Aeneas' (224).

19 See n5 on the definition of 'costume.'

20 Paralleling Camille with both Dido and Pallas, Petit postulates a different structural purpose for the extended treatment of Camille by the French poet (21-25). On one hand, he argues that because both are powerful queens and are elaborately entombed after death, Dido and Camille are foils for one another. On the other hand, the heroic deaths and the elaborate tombs of Pallas and Camille are cited as structural parallels linking them. Petit does not consider, however, that while this is true, the portraits of Camille, which are the focus of his argument, have no equivalent in the poet's treatment of Pallas. In fact, though the *Eneas*-poet invents a dubbing scene for Pallas which would have provided a

suitable opportunity for a classic arming passage, the poet devotes only four lines to the scene (4811-14). Moreover, with the exception of his single combat against Turnus, Pallas's battle feats are described briefly and generally (5657-66), as compared to the longer, more specific account of Camille's successes on the battlefield (6979-7212). Therefore, the costume description of Eneas's arms and the costume description of Camille (usually referred to as her portrait) are better-matched structural parallels.

21 The rarity of Eneas's armor is such that: 'bones furent, el mont n'ot taus,/ nes peüst faire hom mortaus,/ ne il puis teles ne feïst,/ ja tant bien s'en entremeïst.' (4411-14) [They were good arms—none such in the world—nor could mortal man have made them. Vulcan never after made such arms, nor took such pains. (143)].

22 This invinciblity is cited in theory in the costume description of Eneas's armor; it is proved in practice as Eneas and Pallas fight against Turnus (5647-56).

23 On the prophylactic and salvific qualities attributed to gemstones in the Middle Ages, see Kunz 28-33, 311-13; Evans and Serjeantson *passim*; Evans, *Magical Jewels* 29-94, 110-32; Lightbown 11-22, 96-100; Smith 99-104.

24 The Old French noun, *vertu*, derives etymologically from the Latin *virtus*, virile force. See Greimas (*vertu*, 2°) for the word's association with *bonnes pierres* [precious stones].

25 The equivalent passage in Virgil's *Aeneid* is of almost the same length, 123 lines (*Aeneid* 8.761-608), but its content is very different. Here the most important piece of armor brought by Venus from Vulcan is the shield, which rather than being heavily jeweled, like Eneas's, is pictorial, narrating the future story of Italy. Clearly Virgil's version of the shield prophesies and signifies the post-war future of the hero while the French version is focussed on the jewels' immediate salvific protection of the male warrior on the battlefield.

26 On the subject of Camille's 'double otherness' see Gottlieb 156.

27 For a good summary of the versions of this tale see Kleinbaum 5-38. Kleinbaum affirms, 'Virtually all authors, whether they viewed the attack as myth or history, agreed that the Amazon motive was to avenge the theft of the girdle, the abduction of Princess Hippolyta and the burning of Themiscyra by Theseus and/or Heracles' (9). Kleinbaum posits that the almost archetypal enmity between male warriors and Amazons is a paradigm for transcendent, transhistorical, generalized gender conflict: 'For nearly three millennia, generation after generation of men in the West, champions all, have enlisted in the war against the Amazons. The opponents are mythical, but the battles are nonetheless real' (1).

28 On the medieval taste for the exotic, see Muscatine 12; Petit 38-39.

29 Following her non-arming costume description, the text presents a 35-line description of her horse and its trappings (4049-84), after which the narrator summarizes her portrait: 'Camille vint molt richement/ an l'ost et amena grant gent:/ bien ot o soi de chevaliers/ desi que a quatre milliers.' (4085-88) [Camille came to the army very splendidly equipped, leading a large following. Indeed, she had with her as many as four thousand knights.' (137)].

30 Yunck translates the French 'coife' as 'cape.' Perhaps he meant the hood of a cape, but clearly the headcovering beneath the helmet is what is referred to in this line. Therefore, I have emended the translation to 'coif.'

31 Though Turnus seems to consider Camille his equal as a warrior and greatly grieves her loss, it is significant that she has no protective jewels on her arms, while he clearly does. In the scene in which Turnus kills Pallas, Pallas first knocks thirteen precious stones from the top of Turnus's helmet (5733-34).

32 In the *Aeneid*, after Tarchon criticizes the men for their laziness, he provides a positive model for them by launching into the melee. He delivers no speech to Camilla.

33 Tarcon's taunts in the *Eneas* reflect many clichés of medieval antifeminist propaganda as gathered by Blamires and discussed in Bloch's *Medieval Misogyny*.

34 Yunck translates 'malvesement se prisera' as 'would value herself *poorly*' which unduly emphasizes the covetousness to which the narrator will presently ascribe Camille's desire for the helmet. However, the verb *prisier* can mean not only to value or evaluate, but to appreciate and estimate one's *prise*, that is, personal esteem or *reputation;* see 'prise, proise' (II) and 'prisier, proisier' (2°) in Greimas.

35 Yunck (196) claims the *Eneas*-poet builds the moralized passage from a brief comment in *Aeneid* 11.781-82.

36 This depends on whether the 'on' is taken to be *om* or *ome*. Morphologically, the Latin *homo* has two declensions in Old French: nominative *(h)om/on*; and oblique *(h)ome/omme*. Thus, in early texts at least, 'on' presents not simply a variant spelling, but a form perfectly equivalent to the masculine substantive *homme*; see 'home' in Raynaud de Lage (12). Over time, the two systems separate and simplify, resulting in the indefinite pronoun *on* and the masculine substantive *homme*. This morphological situation suggests that in an early text like the *Eneas*, one can legitimately include 'masculine' in the semantic field of *on*. See 'om,' 'ome,' and 'on' in Greimas; 'on' in Godefroy. I am grateful to Michelle Wright for valuable technical advice about 'on' here; nevertheless, ultimate responsibility for reading the gender of 'on' as intentionally masculine is mine.

37 The verbs 'to testify' and 'to attest' are related to the Latin *testis,* meaning witness, also assumed to relate to the plural *testes,* meaning 'testicles,' as in 'testifiers of virility' (OED 'testis').

38 It is possible that the reason the *Eneas*-poet changed the object of Turnus's covetousness from an engraved gold, un-jeweled belt to a ring is the general medieval association of protective power with rings (Smith 147). Turnus, who already has jewels of *vertu* on his helmet, commits covetousness in wanting the extra protection afforded by Pallas's ring.

39 Silence is sent to France because Ebain's wife, Queen Eufeme, becomes sexually attracted to what she believes is a handsome young man, attempts to seduce him, and retaliates when 'he' (understandably) refuses her advances. Eufeme forges a letter to the French court ordering the assassination of the letter's bearer, Silence. The French King, upon advice of his Council, decides to ignore the orders, and welcomes Silence as a member of his court (4285-5122). All line

citations from the Old French text of the *Roman de Silence* will be from Thorpe's edition; translated passages will be cited from Psaki's translation by page number.

40 Silence's transformation is at turns abetted and thwarted by two allegorical figures, personified Nurture and Nature, who are both gendered female, and who respectively have the power to bend Silence away from her 'natural' female gender to the 'learned' behavior of a male knight, and then to lure her back to the traditional female-gendered role of king's bride at the end of the work.

41 While the 30-line description of the armor is enough to establish this as a *bona-fide* arming passage, it is important to note that Heldris does not permit his naturally female warrior as extensive an arming description as is given to a naturally male knight such as Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where the arming is presented twice in 110 and 38 lines respectively (Tolkien and Gordon 565-670; 2011-49). Both of Gawain's arming passages conclude with him spurring his horse, just as Silence's does.

42 Book 1 of Boccaccio's mid-fourteenth-century *Teseida*, an Italian epic featuring the war between Theseus and the Amazons, does not allocate such arming scenes, a male gendered trope, to the Amazons. Unlike Silence, the Amazons are never anything other than women, but they manage to be fierce warriors, nevertheless, without elaborate arming ceremonies. However, Hippolyta gives her Amazon troops all kinds of verbal 'arming' in the form of exhortative speeches, to get the women ready for battle.

43 She convinces the French contingent of her 'maleness.' Inspired by her conduct on the battlefield, '"Tels *hom*," font il, "fait a amer."' (5553; emphasis added) [They said, 'Such a *man* commands love.' (150)].

44 Ferrante theorizes a dichotomy between female and male roles so that males fight with weapons; females fight with words (218-20). This gender division is illustrated in Book 1 of the *Teseida* in Hippolyta's verbal 'arming' of her Amazons with many exhortatory speeches (stanzas 23-36). Also fighting *in propria persona* as a woman, Camille fulfills this paradigm when she combats Tarcon's misogyny in the invented speech which responds to his invented diatribe against her and her gender. Silence, on the other hand, who must externally play and display a *male* role, is permitted only one brief exhortatory speech to her French contingent.

45 The 'par tant' can refer either to the whistling sword or to the helmet or collectively to both. I prefer to interpret the helmet's jewels as Silence's saviors.

46 This is true of the armor of the male warriors in many texts, such as Gawain in *SGGK* and Eneas, Turnus, and Cloreus in the *Roman d'Eneas*.

47 Just before Chester strikes the blow to her helmet, Silence directs a prayer to God, '"Done moi *vertu* viers cestui!/ Cho qu'afoiblie en moi Nature/ Cho puist efforcier T'aventure."' (5606-08; emphasis added) ['Give me *strength* against this man!/ That which Nature makes weak in me,/ May your providence strengthen.' (151)]. See n23 on *vertu*.

48 For evidence from the royal and noble inventories about historical figures who owned jeweled armor, see FFoulkes 73-74.

49 See: Gaunt 'Significance'; Bloch 'Silence and Holes'; Cooper; Gallagher; Brahney.

50 The association between gemstones, jewels, and male genitalia, especially the testes, is well attested in early English. See the citations for 'jewellys,' stonez,' and 'testicles' in the MED.

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