HIPPOLYTE, ATALANTE AND PENTHESILEIA:
MEMORY AND VISUALIZATION
OF THREE HEROIC FEMININE PROTOTYPES

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the analysis of three heroic feminine models and their representation in the literary texts: Hippolyte (an Amazon with ambiguous identity), Atalante (a huntress and a racer) and Penthesileia (an Amazon queen). The method we used is literary theory combined with text philological study. The point of departure in this research was the theory of the sign: we acknowledge specific differences between the linguistic sign and the literary signifiers of the three feminine prototypes: unlike the linguistic sign, the literary signifier is not governed by the arbitrary and in its case it is much more difficult to establish variants’ filiations. Nevertheless the literary sign still preserves the possibility to mutate by regular use and abuse and to create multiple versions.

Our main concern in this paper is to see how the three feminine models/signifiers are represented and visualized in the literary tradition: “Sight”, ”absence”, “memory” and “oblivion” will be in our case the main points of interest. All these notions create a web of interdependences within the economy of the text.

There is a certain type of visual within each literary genre: the epic, (the vehicle of Penthesileia) insist on panoramic and hyperbolic, deforming a little bit the character’s image, the lyric (in the poetic texts that represent Atalante) tends to magnify the heroine’s details and to focus on movement while the dramatic genre (the literary space for Hippolyte) uses strong imagery but it is limited by the unity of the three elements: time, action and space.

The visual presence or the absence of the visual creates in many contexts the mnemonic function. Inside of the text, before any memorial function and control, we deal with a visual diegetic empire. Sight (visual acuity) is one of the text forces
of preservation. In some versions it is the memory that reconstructs the visual itself for readers or for the passive listeners, by using its reiterative, constructive function. Subdivision of memory exists. There is memory with archiving/taxonomic function, creative memory, visual, static and kinetic memory. They all are going to be analyzed in this paper, by their report with the characters.

The literary success of the three feminine models depends a lot on their position in the mythical tradition. Therefore, Hippolyte who has a secondary role in the story of Theseus, Phaedra and Hippolytos, will tend to preserve this ancillary position in most of the texts, being subjected to confusion and name/identity alterations. Atalante has a very prominent position and a personal saga within the heroic epic, facts that make her physical presence conspicuous in most texts, especially in versions in which lyric and epic is combined (both genre having an increased power of visualization). In some cases, the abundance of details concerning her legend, determines poets and mythographers to take into consideration the existence of two heroines. Penthesileia is the most coherent sign: it is protected against confusions by its own prominent position in the epic tradition (as an Amazon queen) and by her short and concentrated story of heroism. She is a very conspicuous dynamic character and the texts tend to emphasis her physical presence. The memory of her story is also very coherent within the mythical tradition.
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INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with three literary models of wild and isolated femininity, each of them with its own destiny within the mythological tradition: Hippolyte, Atalante and Penthesileia. Our intention is to track back as much as possible their potential to mutate, to create new genera and their exploitation within the literary texts. But most of all our intention is to visualize them completing their literary destiny within the preserved texts. For this reason we use a basic notion of linguistic theory that acknowledges the possibility of the sign to mutate by regular use and abuse and to create versions of its initial abstract invariants\(^1\). In most of the cases, these "invariants" are abstract artificial constructs, tracked back by scholars and researchers, for sake of coherence within an artificial scheme: their tracking back will be therefore, in many cases, impossible. What it is possible, is to follow the actual manifestation of their abstract potential in literary texts.

We deal with wild women literary prototypes, with more or less similar features. Hippolyte is an Amazon, belonging to the female warriors of Thermodon. Even as she starts her story, perfectly integrated in a community, her identity is not very clear within the literary-mythological tradition, being confounded frequently either with the Amazons’ queen, or with one of her lieutenants; each of these versions has also multiple other variants, which will be explored further in the body of this paper. Nevertheless throughout her literary destiny we will notice one constant: she tends to be considered an

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\(^{1}\) What we are going to use as our materials are both commentaries of the texts we intend to study and theoretical materials such as the collection of essays coordinated by Liliana Barakonska and Małgorzata Nitka, The forgetful memory, Word of forgetfulness, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetting, Peter Lang, 1999, volume that we us to synthesize our theory in this chapter of introduction.
extra and will not be visualized. Her presence is more a post-mortem influence in other heroes’ stories.

Atalante, the second feminine model, is a more coherent sign. We can discern maximum two different versions of her story: Atalante “the huntress” and Atalante “the runner”. Most authors prefer to consider both two different stages in the evolution of one unitary character. Nevertheless the uniformity of her personality is reversed proportioned with the clarity of her origin: she does not belong to a permanent wild feminine community and she obviously prefers temporary reclusion and frequent mix with the male hunting teams. She is unstable in terms of belonging to a certain group, remaining ambiguous in her social affinities. Still her intriguing presence is much visualized in the text, carefully cut-out of the epic frame where she tends to have many times the main part.

The same thing happens with our third feminine model, Penthesileia. This time the heroine has a pretty uniform story, without any possible confusion over her name, characteristics, or destiny. She belongs to the Thermodon feminine community and she does not occupies just a secondary position; she is preserved in the mythical tradition, without any exception as a queen, a central figure, a heroine with her own saga, strong presence, intensely visualized within the literary texts.

“Sight”, ”absence”, “memory” and “oblivion” will be in our case the main points of interest. All these notions create a web of interdependences within the economy of the text. There is a certain type of visual within each literary genre²: the epic (the vehicle of Penthesileia) insist on panoramic and hyperbolic, deforming a little bit the character’s image; the lyric (found within the hybrid Ovidiusian poetry of Metamorphoses-Atalante’s frame) tends to magnify the details and to focus on movement; and (for Hippolyte) the dramatic genre where the image is strong but limited by the unity of the three elements-time, action and space. Within this last type of visual the view becomes extremely intense

² This distinction was introduced according to the advice of Professor Victoria Wohl, for a better understanding over the text.
but nevertheless extremely selective, eliminating the superfluous presences. Hippolyte, for example, will be lost as a character and preserved only as a shadowy presence.

Both the visual presence and absence creates in many contexts the mnemonic function. Inside of the text, before any memorial function and control, we deal with a visual diegetic empire. Sight (visual acuity) is one of the text’s forces of preservation. In some others it is memory itself that reconstructs the visual for the readers or the passive listeners, by using its reiterative, constructive function. As Leszek Drang underlined: “Recalling yields to rephrasing, which, in turn, yields to re-forming.” Sometime the visual completely foreshadows the mnemonic function or annihilates it by means of a present intense sight, in which the past is diluted within the present sensation that infiltrates the receiver with its hallucinating potential. Both forgetfulness and memory help the invariant to pass safely from one literary environment to another and determine the essential mutations of the sign. There is a memory of the mythographers and another memory of the poets, a memory of the reader and a mnemonic function within the texts, at the level of its characters. Sometimes, inside of the diegesis this function is a voluntary one: characters chose to remember or to forget in an almost active way. They create action by means of these mnemonic tools.

Subdivision of memory exists. There is memory with archiving/taxonomic function, creative memory, visual, static and kinetic memory. This archiving function works mostly within the texts with mythographic purpose (of historians, geographers). It is both a unifying and dividing force. It takes the material left aside by poetry (a highly subjective and selective literary genre) and uses it to unite side episodes or to separate over-exploited passages, already overloaded with details: an entire heterogeneous material full of contradictions, scattered episodes and loose endings is filtered and reassembled thanks to this function. Here interferes its creativity: it supplies the inexistent materials for sake of congruence. Poetry deals with a different form of memory, a highly creative one, regularly indifferent to complete detail collection. It is much more selective and, sometimes, forgetfulness shows here, a more constructive

3 Leszek Drang, Self–Inscription and self-oblivion, p. 120, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetting, Peter Lang, 1999.
function than memory itself. It is forgetfulness that shapes the plot, by eliminating the unnecessary. It actually tends to sacrifice the integrity of the story, for sake of its dramatics, privileging the most intense episodes and concentrating them. In opposition with this creative “forgetfulness” that eliminates the superfluous episodes, without minding the fate of the character left outside, the texts with explanatory and taxonomic intention tend to pile together secondary and main episodes, sometimes without any necessity for chronology or intention to create verisimilar characters.
CHAPTER I
1.1. The semantic "island" Hippolyte

As a mythical product, Hippolyte is a side character in the epic of more important heroes. This is the reason why, in most versions of her legend, this character tends to be an extra, with a limited presence within the text. Even to identify her persona and her destiny within the non-linear literary tradition, is a difficult task. She gets rapidly killed and exits the scene either majestically, in the texts where she is the Amazons' queen or by a back door in case we identify her (in most versions) with the prisoner of Theseus (a "tamed" girl, also named "Antiope" by several authors). Once captured, she casts herself out of the epic, as her presence was not primordial in the economy of the Amazonian epic. Still, here is the moment when Hippolyte, as a character shows her non-conformism to any other Amazons' model whose career in the literary texts is based on active presence and uncompromising conforming to a heroic pattern. Hippolyte's success to survive as a sign is based on her perpetual secondary position. She is never the main character but she surprises us by returning in the narrative frame in a chameleonic way, by developing new sides and new dramas out of her story, without displaying a necessary coherence. Her model survives on an ancillary position, even "outside" the Amazonian community and outside her regular matrix of behavior. And tradition is a good witness of her protean presence.

For example, Apollodorus offers us two versions of her that practically exclude each other (two variants of the same invariant). We may consider an initial dichotomy, by calling them "Alpha" and "Beta" Hippolyte, "the queen of Amazons" (Apollodorus, Epitomae. 2,5,9: "The ninth labour he enjoined on Hercules was to bring the belt of Hippolyte.1 She was queen of the Amazons, who dwelt about the river Thermodon, a
people great in war; for they cultivated the manly virtues (...) Now Hippolyte had the belt of Ares in token of her superiority to all the rest". - Perseus Digital Library; also in Apollonios Rhodianus, Argonautica, 2,778) and "the subordinated Amazon"; also named Antiope or Melanippe (Apollod. 1.16, :"Theseus joined Hercules in his expedition against the Amazons and carried off Antiope, or, as some say, Melanippe; but Simonides calls her Hippolyte."). In the first instance Hippolyte is the queen of Themodon. Heracles comes to take her girdle, she refuses to fight and obeys his order, but Hera (dressed as an Amazon) provokes a riot and the queen is killed by the furious hero. The second version (Apollod. 2.5.2) presents Hippolyte as one of the many Amazon fighters: she is taken prisoner by Theseus, during Heracles expedition, but she will follow him obediently in Athens and her fellow-fighters will not recover her, in spite of their attempt to invade the city. In some versions (Quintus Smyrnaeus, Posthomerica I, 25-27) she is accidentally killed by Penthesileia within this attempt, but Apollodorus reports that she managed to escape; later after giving birth to a boy, the young woman is betrayed by Theseus who intends to marry Phaedra. She will come at his wedding in a warrior posture, for revenge, but she will be eliminated by him or some of his men. (Apollod. 2.5.2: "And though he had a son Hippolytus by the Amazon, Theseus afterwards received from Deucalion in marriage Phaedra, daughter of Minos; and when her marriage was being celebrated, the Amazon that had before been married to him appeared in arms with her Amazons, and threatened to kill the assembled guests. But they hastily closed the doors and killed her. However, some say that she was slain in battle by Theseus."). A slight variation of this story might be that offered by Pausanias (Descriptio Graeciae, I. 41,7^4), when identifying a shield-formed tomb in Themiscyra, near the shrine of Pandion. We can call it "Gamma" Hippolyte. It is a combination of the two models: Hippolyte is here an Amazonian warrior leader (a lesser "queen", similar to the "Alpha" version), dying with a broken

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4 "Near the shrine of the hero Pandion is the tomb of Hippolyte. I will record the account the Megarians give of her. When the Amazons, having marched against the Athenians because of Antiope, were over come by Theseus, most of them met their death in the fight, but Hippolyte, the sister of Antiope and on this occasion the leader of the women, escaped with a few others to Megara. Having suffered such a military disaster, being in despair at her present situation and even more hopeless of reaching her home in Themiscyra, she died of a broken heart, and the Megarians gave her burial. The shape of her tomb is like an Amazonian shield".
heart (like the “Beta” variant), after she returns from a failed expedition in which she tried to free a prisoner of Theseus, (named here Antiope). Her warrior potential, by which she starts her saga, ends in passivity and grudge, in a similar way with the “Beta” version, mentioned earlier in the text. Still the differs from this one, as she will die of a natural death, without any secondary aggressive attempt against the city of Athens. There is also a “Delta” type of “Hippolyte”: (Pausanias I, 21, 41, 7, Isocrates, Orationes, XII, 193). Her name is Antiope and she betrayed her Amazonian race to follow Theseus. She will go to Athens where her race will lead a punishing “commando” action and an ex-fellow fighter, Molpadia will kill her. “This Antiope, Pindar says, was carried of by Peirithous and Theseus, but Hegias of Troezen gives the following account of her. Heracles was besieging Themiscyra on the Thermodon, but could not take it, but Antiope, falling in love with Theseus, who was aiding Heracles in his campaign, surrendered the stronghold. Such is the account of Hegias. But the Athenians assert that when the Amazons came, Antiope was shot by Molpadia, while Molpadia was killed by Theseus. To Molpadia also there is a monument among the Athenians” (Pausanias, I, 21, 41). This model follows almost the same love story pattern, but with a short cut in what concerns its narrative structure and total elimination of the young girl’s episode of aggressiveness against Theseus. The heroine is passive from the very beginning, seduced by her young conqueror and this is how she remains until the end. No animosity between the lovers, no confusion of identity, no complication in the heroine’s later romantic story. She and Theseus share a constant mutual love, interrupted only by a violence coming from outside. Hippolyte will die in the arms of her faithful lover.

Within the literary tradition, “Hippolyte” is a character sacrificed and split for the possibility to construct the story of some other “actors” that needed coherence and identity. She is therefore an extra in narrations about some other more dramatic heroes that would come on stage. Her individuality is sacrificed for the sake of saving the events’ chain and her identity is adjusted accordingly to the economy of the story and its needs. We actually deal not with more Hippolytes but with a protean one. All versions are imperfect repetitions of the same poorly defined model: the Amazon in the girdle
story and in its sequence (the love story between Theseus and his prisoner and the tragic end of the girl).

There is nothing wrong with our inability to find a coherent prototype, a true "unifier" among all these variants proposed in the myth. It is in the nature of the system and of the signs to be mutable, polymorphic. It represents more an "orphan story", in need of a protagonist (whatever her name might be: Melanippe, Antiope or Hippolyte), a secondary but necessary episode in some more important characters' epic development, such as Heracles, Theseus or her son, Hippolytos. Nevertheless we might consider also the reciprocal as true: "Hippolyte" is a denominator in search of a semantic sphere and a story, periodically attached either to the shadowy and mischievous character of a regular Amazon, captured by Theseus, or to the more emphasized but still secondary persona of the warrior queen killed by Heracles.

Or, we might deal with one of the kind empty signifier. Empty signifier in our accpection means a denomination with lax and fluid semantic sphere. "Hippolyte" is both the name of a queen killed by Heracles and the name of a regular Amazon warrior captured by Theseus. Within these two versions, both the narrative line and the characteristics of the young woman are different and the mythographers' attempt to reconcile them leads to two or even more versions, pretty independent of one another or at least with a very vague relationship to each other. In this case the signifier does not become "empty" because it tends to unify in a genos, various forms that have a distinctive common point, but because it actually fragmentizes even more any possible genos, by hyper-creation and division of potential genotypes and stories. "Symbols are islands of relative certainty in a sea of meaning-although determinate in shape and extent

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5 For two actual different entries in the dictionary, that have nothing to do with the girdle and Heracles expedition, we have the testimonies of Diodorus Siculus, 4.33 (Hippolyte is Dexamenus' daughter) and that of Pindar - *The Nemean Odes*, 4.54 ff. (Hippolyte is Kretheus' daughter).

6 She is not even named anymore other than the "Amazon" (v.10; v. 307 with anassa as a determinant; 350 with noun-adjective determinant construction); or "my/your/his mother" (vv.1081-1082; v.1144).
themselves, their ‘coastlines’ are infinite (to invoke a Chaos Theory image)”7. As a character she is not reinforced but diminished.

Still, in spite of this “handicap”, Hippolyte’s progressive dissolution in her role, uniqueness, personality and physical appearance offers her an unexpected form of revitalization. In the economy of the myth, her continuous metamorphosis, weak physical presence and hybridism was part of her very original survival and longevity.

In this huge puzzle we still can detect some features of similitude between all these potential faces of the polymorphous, one of the kind Amazon: one of them is the ability of many returns, more or less successful. The “scheme” of the story is what unites them all: Antiope /Hippolyte is kidnapped by a hero during a fight and she is brought to a new city and the action moves to a different physical and affective landscape. There, the apparently abated violence returns in the form a new crisis of the fellow fighters come to save/punish her; she is killed, voluntarily or accidentally. In two major related cases this second crisis is eventually concluded without any main characters’ loss, but only to reenact again, in a much more virulent and deadly way: the Amazons are defeated, but Hippolyte has to face Theseus’ betrayal, then she fights her own war and meets death, or escapes the war and dies of a broken heart. The poles of this complex scheme are “Alpha” Hippolyte (the queen of the girdle, well integrated in a social group) and the “Delta” version (Hippolyte-Antiope, the traitor for love, a character with a fluid personality). Nevertheless, they still have some features in common: total passivity and submission to foreigners that will lead them to a quick death. The queen refuses to fight and accepts to submit her girdle, the traitor Hippolyte helps the ennemie and runs away with him. Because of their passivity, the action is actually shortcut in their stories; they are almost killed on the spot; the violence of their death is similarly reversed proportioned with the acceptance of the new comers: Hippolyte-the queen is victim of a misunderstanding and is swiftly executed by Heracles, Hippolyte-the traitor accepts to lose the fight in the favor of conqueror and she is later shot by a fellow-fighter for treason.

As mentioned in the general introduction, the theorists of the linguistic signs usually acknowledges a matrix-type of model, from which constantly evolves in various senses secondary versions. "The creative imagination is a crucial ingredient in most thought processes. The basic conceptual unit (Whitehead) discussed is the 'idealized cognitive model' of which he distinguishes various types, including the commonly encountered 'radial category', which forms around a prototypical instance." In the literary tradition the prototype is not only difficult to identify and isolate, but it is also artificially constructed. From its very birth, the literary signs suffer mutations, and develop non-symmetrical versions. Still, a unity among all these chaotic signifiers exists.

What these story-versions have in common is the difficulty of the character "Hippolyte" to be neutralized in battle. Usually within the tradition, her opponents have to fight multiple times until the Amazon is finally defeated. to come back when she is unwanted and to seek for revenge is part of her literary tradition. And this characteristic is most obvious in the "Beta" and "Delta" type. By her ambiguous status, as a lover of Theseus, these types "Hippolytes" (Apollodorus, *Epitome*, 1.16 and 2.5.2) do not seem to be the right person in the right place: she plays the role of an outcast, either because she is a prisoner ("casualty"/"loss" for her people) and an "illegitimate" sexual partner, or because she is a traitor that unconditionally follows her invader.

The scheme becomes larger if we follow within the tradition her tendency to be misunderstood or left behind, ignored or mistreated and ultimately killed. Either as the girdled queen" (the “Alpha” type-Apollodorus. 2.5.2, 2.5.9, Apollonios Rhodianus, *Argonautica* 2,778) or as Theseus’s lover (voluntarily as a traitor-"Delta", or unwillingly, as a prisoner-"Beta": Pausanias, I, 21, 41, 7, Isocrates, XII,193) she shows herself in moments when her presence irritates and is not welcomed. Within the epic tradition she has a predisposition to come back, when she is not wanted (at Theseus wedding, Apollod. 2.5.2 or in the expedition for recovering Antiope, Pausanias, I. 41, 7). Even in the less known version of her ("Gamma"), as a warrior who led war against the Athenians for recovering a prisoner fellow-fighter, she is seen, in an outcast position, dying lonely,

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abandoned in a foreign territory, where the Megarians decide to bury her out of pity. The problem of Hippolyte, whoever is her story is that she repeats herself in terms of action and keeps being rejected in various ways. Within the tradition her character is most of the time superfluous, reiterative, impossible to deny as a presence but impossible to fit in a certain pattern. Apparently submissive and ready to get absorbed in a new system (Athens), she loses her chance because of her own fury or because of the others’ intolerance and she shows a constant predisposition for betraying or being betrayed. She is often subject of accidents (killed by Penthesileia - Quintus Smyrnaeus, Posthomertica, I, vv. 25-27 and Apollod.), confusions (killed by Heracles because of Hera-Apollod. 2.5.9), and perpetual grudge and discomfort (all the other versions that implies her rebellion against Theseus). We see her acting and this should not surprise us, taking into consideration that she is an Amazon, but her disastrous acting comes as a twisted result of an initial submissiveness and passivity (all the cases in which she accepts Theseus or Heracles’ domination, either explicitly, as a traitor, or implicitly, as a prisoner and lover). She is actually in a way passive-aggressive and this aggression can turn against herself in form of a deadly depression (the case of her dying of broken heart after a failed action: this is actually the sole case in which she acts first and later becomes passive). Even her grudge (seen continuously in Euripides’, Hippolytos, in her descendant’s story) has a passive, eroding aggressiveness. She is an accident in Theseus life, but an accident with a disastrous long term repercussion. Her insignificance on the stage, her “second woman”/concubine position is reversed proportioned with her will to impose herself and her persistence in the others memory. She is indeed, the character of many unhappy returns, both in the long and twisted mythological tradition that keeps confounding her name and inside the individual versions chosen by poets and mythographers: she is haunting everybody both as a residual ghostlike memory and as a leitmotif.
1.2. Instead of visual presence...

Euripides is using exactly this type of ghostlike presence of Hippolyte. It is not even anymore her story: what he presents in *Hippolytos* are fragments of her destiny mixed within the others' stories. In opposition with the entire tradition that deals with a living and acting Amazon, Euripides is dealing with her harmful absence. Hippolyte is dead, or far remote from the present action. We are not given any details, either because they are well-known, or because they do not matter for this new diegesis in which what was in the past is no more than an amorphous harmful shadow. She is not even named anymore other than the "Amazon" (10; 307 with *anassa* as a determinant; 350 with noun-adjective determinant construction); or "my/your/his mother" (1081-1082; 1144). Her active physical presence followed by name (a strong identifier) was substituted by an ambivalent form of haunting, within the others' speech. She is no longer there, but she is still able to act, this time, by means of influence. Instead of her vivid personality, we have her "ghostly" entity acting through her blood relationships. The appellatives under which her ominous mention is made are not necessarily vague. They do not hide or fade away her presence. While "Hippolyte" is an excellent identifier, it does not talk too much about her personality. "*Meter*" and "Amazon" speak more about her relationships with the others and points out her status as a member of a special community and a mother. For the chorus her belonging to a warrior group signifies both an ethnical identifier and a personality feature. Naming her "the Amazon" the chorus admitted her both as a foreigner and as a potential threat. The nurse even shows a more resentful sense by associating "Amazon" this with *nothos* (vv.306-310: "know that if you die you have betrayed your sons, who shall have no share in their father's house, none: I tell you in the name of that horse-riding queen of the Amazons who bore a master to rule over your

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9 Within a discussion with Prof. Victoria Wohl and Prof. Duane Roller, I have been suggested to take up this kind of analysis, in order to see where exactly Hippolyte presence starts to become problematic within the play. I have followed the discussion, basically at two intradiegetical levels (speech and characters) and one extradiegetical, seen in the previous chapter.

10 As discussed during the Athenian Democracy Seminar (Professor Victoria Wohl), the mother's name is a strong identifier, usually not recommended in use, as being not very "honorable".
sons, a bastard with thoughts of legitimacy, you know him well, [310] Hippolytus..." while the chorus prefers the more neutral nominator. Recalling her as a mother, Hippolytos (and the chorus-vv.1144-1145: "O unhappy mother, [1145] it was to no purpose that you bore him. Oh, I am angry with the gods!", in those touching moments of sensitivity and empathy with the main character) is recreating and emphasizing the natural and affective bond that existed between them and in an implicit way, the natural legitimacy of the relationship, although for this social context, legitimacy as a legal guardian, or as a legitimate partner of the father and even genetic legitimacy are more than arguable. It is also an extra-diegetic way to remind us (the readers) that the play was written within a century dominated by Pericles’ strict law referring to citizenship: legitimate sons were only those with both parents Athenians11.

In several contexts by simply mentioning her, Hippolytus is creating not just a retrospective view but also a prospective one, by identifying himself with her (whatever her story might have been). The “Amazon” is not necessarily a negative identifier- in various moments its potential significance is neutral, used just for identification (vv.351: Pahedra:” Whatever his name is, son of the Amazon.” and v. 581: “It is Hippolytus, son of the horse-loving Amazon, who shouts, dreadfully upbraiding my servant.”). If the chorus is feeling her presence in a non-explicit negative way, more like a deja-vu of the tragic end, Hippolytus is mentioning her, in explicit relationship to his sorrow. He actually draws an entire parallel between his fate and her unhappy existence. In his speech, his entire life and specifically the moment of birth was a misfortune: the ill-fated conception of an unfortunate mother whom he evokes both with tenderness and sadness” a very bizarre game of positive and negative connotations (v.1083- “O unhappy mother, o birth that gave no pleasure, may no one I love ever be a bastard!”

If she still survives in these mentions as an individual or by relationship with her son (mentioned in both previous syntagmas), she receives an interesting form of “presence without presence” in the term nothos. It is a way of mentioning -without denomination- the maternal presence (both ambiguous and insulting, as the term recalls illegitimacy) in a

11 This was a suggestion coming from the part of Professor Victoria Wohl. In this case the memory is also that of the Athenian city.
relationship in which the essential (for both juridical and social purposes) is the relationship father-son. "Nothos" is by definition a hyper-awareness of the mother (which is paradoxically dead) and a tacit acknowledgement of the father's absence/incertitude (in spite of his physical presence-this presence will be even increased in speech after the crisis moment (Hippol. 902 until the end: "I heard your cry and I came in haste, father. I do not know what brought your sorrow but I would gladly hear from your lips"-trans. from Perseus Digital Classical Library.). The term suggests an incompleteness of identity without really removing any possible filial ties. Even from the previous examples the late Hippolyte was interfering in any dialog about her son, by interposing her phantasmatic presence within any syntagma that was identifying him. He was defined by his maternal filiation. Theseus was alive, but, until the climax of the play he or his filiations was never present in any speech about his son. Hippolytus was the son of the Amazon (the articulate form telling more about her and his solitary parentage than any other attribute) in many self-aware speeches (or in the injurious ones). The gentle chorus avoids his status, but it is mentioned by the nurse first 308-309, then by Theseus 962 and Hippolytus himself, indirectly (1010-1011-"You ought to show how I was corrupted. (...) Did I hope that by taking an heiress to bed I would succeed to your house?"-he was not among the heirs) and directly (1083- "O unhappy mother, o birth that gave no pleasure, may no one I love ever be a bastard!!" a nothos). The biological lineage and the physical presence seemed not to count in this context in which affective and social acknowledgement is everything. Therefore, we can admit that even removed by death and passed under silence in what concerns her part of the story, Euripides' phantomatical Hippolyte is very much present, almost obsessively, in the speech even when the characters avoid providing her name in an evasive or simply embarrassed way. "The moment of forgetting should not, therefore, be read in terms of a radical disconnection, whereby a word, ostensibly absenting itself from circulation, severs all ties, because, as Blanchot remarks, "there are always some links that have sprung (they are not missing)". She does not need to be visualized in order to have an impact over the

12 Liliana Barakonska and Malgorzata Nitka, The forgetful memory, Word of forgetfulness, in Memory-
others. It is the poly-articulate relationship she held with all the characters that brings her presence back in a numinous and surprisingly nefarious way. She does not need to bring her physical presence to break a wedding, like in the previous tradition: her complicate knot of affective and blood ties are strong enough to create a disastrous energy and a tragic web, without her live performance.

The incompleteness of Hippolyte's recurrence within speech is a prelude for a deeper form of return of her presence.

1.3. Outside of her- return in characters

Not only is the speech her form of "haunting". Hippolyte makes her scattered presence felt through her son and even through his ghost-like protector, Artemis.

This is not the only time when scholars remark a similarity between mother and son: the same appetite for war-like actions, for weapons and "adrenaline", the same tendency to be an outcast of regular society and habitual life, the same incapability to adjust to the others' norms and tendency for isolation and creation of their own realm. It is more than just mother-son similarity, more than a genetically inherited taste. Hippolyte as a man is a surprise: he worships a feminine divinity, protector of young, unmarried girls. He likes action, even danger and violence, which is normal for a young lad, but in an unsocial way, oriented towards wild beast\(^\text{13}\). It is a form to avoid any human presence which is congruent with his solitary behavior, accentuating his "unsocial behavior", well recognized by scholars\(^\text{14}\). He does not prefer war, but hunting, which is casting him out of any healthy male society, into the wilderness which constitutes the regular feminine form of isolation (as a follower of Artemis or Dionysos Hipol.546: "Aphrodite took from the house of her father Eurytus and yoked her like a footloose Naiad or a Bacchant." )

\(^\text{13}\) Barry Powell, Classical Myth, New Jersey, 2003, Heroic myths of the hunt and of the hunter, p. 508.

\(^\text{14}\) George Devereux, The character of the Euripidean Hippolytos, California, 1985, Chapter Hippolytos' Diagnosis.
Differences still exist, between this idealized form of similarity and Hippolyte. His mother actually has not shown such a behavior from the very beginning. He is “copying” a later version of her. Hippolyte, as remembered by legends, no matter how reshaped and polymorphic is her recurrent story, started as a perfectly integrated female warrior. Of course, she was not in a perfect feminine position according to the Greek standards, but she was fitting herself in a coherent society, existing by its own rules, in a functional way. And, unlike her son she was a warrior. He shares the taste for weapons, but apparently his lack of trust in human relationship is driving him away from his mother’s traditional vocation, to something more ambiguous, more androgynic in a way (as it is a habit protected by a female deity) and more mystical, if we take in consideration that requires long periods outside the human community in wilderness where a more intense relationship with gods is affordable

Hippolyte not only did not start as a solitary, but she also suffered from her impossibility of integration. She was part of a successful community and as a traitor/prisoner and later betrayed and abandoned lover she intended to socialize and integrate. She indeed started her own rebellious quest, only after she was abandoned and had given up her Amazonian status and chastity. She felt isolated, separated by the others and she showed her feed-back to Theseus’ betrayal and indifference, in a solitary action. Only a strong feeling of abandonment could have turned her from her initial compliance. If her isolation was not a chosen one (she was cast away), his is semi-voluntary. He has been forgotten and he decided to forget. He will not mate at all, as if his mother’s love, failure and trauma still lives unconsciously in this radical young man. And he does not fight back: if Hippolyte failed in her hyperactive attempt to prove herself, after an unfruitful passivity and acceptance of her conqueror, Hippolytos is entirely passive-aggressive. His disgust, obsession for purity and physical reclusion, is totally non-active. He is able to hurt a lot, produce death around him (even his own), tears, crisis and depression, without any explicit act of violence except the verbal one. His antisocial passive behavior, more fatal than any of his mother’s action is a hyperbole of her post-

15 He is forgotten by his father. This situation will be analyzed in the next chapter.
disappointment attitude. Somehow he is a copy of her persona, after being cheated and abandoned.

This is the moment when the other phantasmal presence of Hippolyte interferes: her divine doublet, Artemis. In this play in which we see the Amazon’s presence in every censored dialog about Hippolytos’s origin, in every line in which her name is not mentioned, Hippolyte managed to bring her presence and something of her behavior in almost every single character and stage: all of the stories that started with her are cursed to repeat in a mixed and scattered way something of her own destiny. It is one of her chameleonic or protean ways to return. She lives in her son’s traumatized rejection, in his divine consolation for maternal and feminine company, even in her rival’s dramatic impossibility to fit in a pattern of “happily ever after” in love and even in the disillusioned and melancholic Theseus, finally betrayed himself after so much betrayal in love that he offered to the others.

One scholar, probably intrigued by the permanent silence of Hippolytos’ invisible patron, tried to associate Artemis’ presence with hallucinations, with schizoid behavior and delirium\textsuperscript{16}. He even used the death of Hippolytos and his perpetual dialogs with his divine invisible friend, as a way to argue his suicidal latent tendency. I will not argue in favor or against this interpretation of the “imaginary friend”, born out of his extensive lack of contact with the reality of the world. All the play can offer, concerning this point, is that, by the end, this solitary “hallucination” starts to be shared by the others, including Theseus (Artemis as \textit{dea ex machina} is visible: vv.1297 ff.).

Its invisibility might indeed have another function in this text: we are on the realm of frustration, isolation and alienated contact, on a territory of scattered communication and misunderstanding, most suitable for haunting and inconsistent presence, in which nothing is total, nobody gets enough and everyone is left yearning for something. Within this territory of unfulfilled desire, invisibility and silence of a divine figure is nothing out of common: it gives a more complete sense of isolation and a more precise image of something that keeps returning again and again. Similar to his mother, Artemis is the

\textsuperscript{16} Devereux, \textit{The character of the Euripidean Hippolytos}, California, 1985, \textit{Hippolytos’ Diagnosis}, p. 115-130.
presence that concentrates his most powerful desires for affection and, like her, she keeps frustrating him of her good action and physical contact. He pretends he can see, hear or smell her, and he is aware of her partial presence and her exclusive epiphany for his senses, a phenomenon that he relates to his unique purity and chaste behavior. But in the meantime, this particularity proves her inconsistency, her shadowy appearance. Hippolytos admits this (Hippol. 1440-1441: “Farewell to you too, blessed maiden! I wish you joy in your going! Yet how easily you leave our long friendship! Still, at your bidding I end my quarrel with my father. For in times past too I obeyed your words.”). Like his dead mother Artemis, as a parental surrogate, is a distant but reiterating visitor. She is much spoken about (a leitmotif) during the play, but her physical presence is reduced. Her personality reproduces his mother’s pro-active and warrior (almost male) potential, but it also “repeats” her impossibility of action and her ineffective presence. If this incomplete relationship with her keeps his loyalty at a fanatical level, it nevertheless frustrates him by its imperfect communication.\(^\text{17}\) She cannot even act in his favor when he is unjustly accused. She appears at the end to apologize and offer him her divine tears and explanations about gods’ mutual assistance and non-aggression pacts. Her discourse legitimates his being killed and excuses her silence and passivity (Hippol.1283-1312: “As for you, Hippolytus, I urge you not to hate your father. For the manner of your death has been fated. Farewell: it is not lawful for me to look upon the dead or to defile my sight with the last breath of the dying. And I see that you are already near that misfortune.”). The only consolation he gets is her final dialog mixed with maternal sorrow and promise of revenge. Revenge is her only proactive attitude and still, it will not take place in this play.

Nevertheless, this type of entity is suitable for his form of isolation, for his appetite for more isolating occupation that does not admit more than a limited group of companions and requires at least temporary solitude. Her invisibility for the others is fitting with his desire to separate himself from them, his need of exclusivity in relationship (maybe as a feed-back of his being abandoned and rejected by his natural father and by the society)

\(^{17}\text{See also Jean Paul Vernant \textit{Myth and religion in ancient Greece}, for a similar relationship in the chapter dedicated to Dionysos.}\)
and his intense desire of total communication and complicity, in a universe that would leave the others outside this intimate circle. Artemis is indeed fitting this pattern as a wild divinity that does not need any completion, reason for which she is keeping her absolute virginity and affective independence (independence visible even in the relationship with her beloved in which she has never total communion and does not offer him a total share of her knowledge and presence).

Not only her divinity and self sufficiency keeps her away from her mortal protégé, but also the status she accomplishes by her relationship with the type of Hippolytos. She is indeed a surrogate of Hippolyte, a pair for her scattered androgynous "repetition", that is her son. Nevertheless, if he represents her secondary post-traumatic form of isolation and misanthropy, Artemis goes back in the past to a more pure, wild and unaltered Hippolyte. As we mentioned before, Artemis is not just a paradisiacal hallucination of a convinced loner, but also the idealized image of his mother as she is the wild woman, before any temporality or belonging to an ethnic or gender group. She is free of such human and ephemeral definitions. Her prototype, from the temporal and ontological point of view, is anterior to any civilization and to any form of rejection. In a way, she relates the archetypal Amazons with the more complicated hybrid models that we will analyze in the following chapters, as a model and an empty signifier. She is the image of what a perfect unspoiled woman would be, outside any possible community of Amazons or Athenians, outside the rules of the war and those of the peaceful cities: the primordial non-resentful isolation, the virginal archetypal form of an unaltered personality, before anything wrong had ever happened. Her isolation does not come from frustration but from a genuine affinity, unnatural to the other women whose major tendency is "to belong" and "to fit" (his real mother is no exception) and unnatural to the whole human kind. It is no wonder that she is so immaterial, shadowy, yet divine

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18 The answer for this male predisposition is given by Jung: "What is this subjective aptitude? Ultimately it consists in an innate psychic structure which allows man to have experiences of its kind. Thus the whole nature of man presupposes woman, both physically and spiritually. His system is tuned in to woman from the start, just as it I prepared for a quite definite world where there is water, light, air, salt, carbohydrates, etc. The form of the world into which he is born is already inborn in him as a virtual image." -Carl Gustav Jung, Aspects of the feminine, Animus and Anima, Princeton, New Jersey, 1982, p.79.
and able to accumulate functions more than that of a foster-mother as she gives answer to a different parameter of existence than the human one. This is why, like in all the other characters, Hippolyte is only partially present in this divine entity. She is in touch with her other “self”, the character of Hippolytos, but this touch is never constant and never total. Her two sides, even sharing affinity for each other, are never sufficient to each other or to themselves. Her inconsistence and her tendency to fusion are permanent, yet incomplete.

1.4. The realm of forgetfulness

As any other valid sign, Hippolyte is predisposed to social changing and systemic alteration\(^{19}\): and the most important form of alteration is that of the denial or forgetfulness, starting with vocabulary interdictions and finishing with general inconsistency.

Apparently there are two types of forgetfulness in Euripides’ *Hippolytos*: the beneficial one (the forgetfulness that helps you hide away from the others) and the one that brings havoc among the community, the forgetfulness that generates grudge and resentment for abandonment. The latter one is pretty obvious in the language.

Theseus is more likely to use forgetfulness as a weapon: he omits the name of Hippolytos and that of his mother, he calls him a “nothos”, emphasizing his outcast status and he finally decides to banish him in a voluntarily gesture of oblivion after a short and bitter acknowledgement of his blood liaison. Theseus’ forgetfulness is one of the most damaging forms of oblivion: at this point, he already has an entire “amnesia” and abandonment history, throughout the mythical tradition\(^{20}\). Ariadne, Hippolyte are some of


\(^{20}\) Vergil’s analysts noticed the same tendency at Aeneas in the episode of Creusa being left behind and “lost”.

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the previous victims of his forgetfulness\textsuperscript{21}. He is one of the characters in which forgetfulness is a weapon that acts against remorse and regulates his entourage and personal life in a way in which it becomes almost an organizing principle. In a paradoxical way it plays the role that memory has for many others: that of an archive and administrator. Theseus’ "bad remembering" is itself a protective screen against problems of conscience related to his illegitimate wife (Hippolyte). It simply filters the presence of the others, keeping alive and active only the convenient ones. Forgetfulness of Hippolyte is working in his case indirectly, by oblivion of his own illegitimate son with her. The first time he enters the stage the hero is almost unaware of Hippolytos’ role or presence in the house he leads, as if he never existed. His son’s shadowy status in the city, his predisposition for hunting and isolation has much to do with this paternal amnesic attitude. The father simply erased his presence from his vocabulary. When he is worried that something happened in his absence, he asks only about his legitimate children, leaving Hippolytos outside of any concern (\textit{Hippol.799-800}: \textit{Thes.}"Oh no! Is it my sons my life is robbed of!" \textit{Thes.} "They live. Their mother--great grief to you--is dead."). Theseus mentions him as his son, only when he needs to charge him with rape and adultery and no earlier (\textit{Hippol.940-980}: "Look at this man! He was born from my loins, and yet he disgraced my bed and is clearly convicted [945] of utter baseness by the dead woman here."); in order to augment the charge and make the crime more monstrous.

There are two types of memory in Euripides’ \textit{Hippolytos}: the personal memory (that of Theseus, Pheidra and Hippolytos) and the memory of the city represented by the nurse and, sometimes, by the chorus: they constantly influences each other as they are interdependent. This is the reason why the forgetfulness of Theseus reshapes the collective image of Hippolytos and above all, of his mother. The nurse, the chorus and even Hippolytos himself cannot help but enter this system in which certain concepts, persons and presences are carefully put aside, renamed, omitted, or mentioned by means of a third sign that helps the identification without proper nomination. The city itself develops a certain vocabulary of taboo. And within this circle that means to protect the

\textsuperscript{21} As professor Victoria Wohl noticed, this starts with his forgetting to change the sail, when he returned home from the expedition against the Minotaur, causing this way the death of his father.
community against remorse and shadows of the past, bad/harmful forgetfulness starts to take place. Even Hippolytos will unconsciously obey the system when he lets us ignorant of the story of his mother. His mentions are vague, pretty affectionate, but completely unclear (Hippol.1081:” O unhappy mother, o birth that gave no pleasure, may no one I love ever be a bastard!”). His way of memory is still a protective one and implies not only vocabulary interdictions but also physical obliteration, in a realm dominated by his mother phantom. Nevertheless, by this continuous self erasing, he is unconsciously emphasizing her shadowy presence. The balance of this universe functions perfectly until someone breaks the conventions of the forgetfulness and silence: Phaedra and her confession in which she names things, persons and states of mind that are not supposed to be together (Hippol.350-351). She pushes her protective oblivion until it actually crosses the boundaries of self identity as a human, female, part of the city, etc. Phaedra’s fever talks about self isolation in the woods in a state of natural unconsciousness and freedom, copying the conscious self-isolation of Hippolytos and his maternal shadowy presence (Hippol.228-238: ”Oh, oh! How I long to draw a drink of pure water from a dewy spring and to take my rest lying under the poplar trees and in the uncut meadow!”). In that moment, we realized how frail the equilibrium of this world based on forgetfulness was: this semi-conscious way of forgetting can only bring back the residual memory of the past, including Hippolyte, and increase again and again the temptation of talking of her, because, ”what has happened never disappears but simply passes from sphere of becoming into the sphere of being”22.

Indeed, the entire mechanism of forgetfulness is made for the purpose of protection. The city lives through forgetfulness of the past inconvenient relationships and their products. And it represents, paradoxically, the way by which Hippolyte herself finds a vehicle to come back and haunt the others, even after her death. People are so consciously and unconsciously committed to forget her, that she almost becomes a physical entity and fuses with every character’s story, by always reminding them of her

and their own guilt. All she needs is this cultural environment to be reproduced and reiterated within the memorial realm. It is recognized that between the "virtual"\textsuperscript{23} collective Memory and the individual one, the exercised faculty of human being there is a relationship. In most cases the virtual mnemonic realm shapes the natural individual capability of remembering. "Yet, without an intervention from a culturally constructed apparatus, memory remains mute. In order to become a more communicable human experience- in order to become accessible-memory requires assistance from culture: that assistance takes the form of representation and occurs at the moment of transition from virtuality to actuality."\textsuperscript{24} Within the layers of forgetfulness that go from conscious self-isolation and taboo of vocabulary to delirium and fever of return to a pure uncivilized state of nature, within this complicated way of surviving the past by erasing it, in which the entire city and each member is more or less involved, forgetfulness keeps generating memory, as Blanchot concluded in his work. And nevertheless memory reiterates the past in a hybrid, more terrifying way, reiterating it by a fusion with the present. As Blanchot concluded, memory never restores what it was; it only alters it and combines the past experience with a present that offers you the feeling of deja-vu. "Recalling yields to rephrasing, which, in turn, yields to re-forming." "Paradoxically, it is memory that denies access to the past."\textsuperscript{25} Hippolyte returns in a scattered way in this play (as she always did in the previous tradition). Her presence is never total, is never herself again, but never completely eliminated, no matter how much the others try. Paradoxically, the others' attempt sends her from the process of being in a remote past to the process of becoming, reactivating her post-mortem. It is one of the paradoxes of the memory and forgetfulness. Forgetfulness reiterates memory that brings the past into the present. "Paradoxically to

\textsuperscript{23} The collective memory is virtual, as it is not only non-uniform, but also continuously re-shapeable.

\textsuperscript{24} Wojciech Kalaga, \textit{Memory and ontology}, p.35, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetfulness, Peter Lang, 1999: "The domain of virtual Memory is at the same time the domain of the nature. Constituted by a 'pure past' which always IS, Memory reites to being- the pre-semiotic and pre-linguistic condition of any cultural event inseparably and most directly linked with being itself, it ontologically precedes any intervention from culture."

\textsuperscript{25} Leszek Drang, \textit{Self-Inscription and self-oblivion}, p. 120, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetfulness, Peter Lang, 1999.
participate into the present is to participate in becoming rather than in being.”\textsuperscript{26} So, the presence of the remembered one is increased and endowed with new potential by this reiteration. But her haunting does not come from an identical reiteration, from a perfect duplicate of her story or of her character: she is a little bit of everybody, she lives in Phaedra’s mistakes, caress her child through Artemis’ character, runs away from the city together with her son. This type of return shows how the memory operates the past not by revitalizing it completely, but by remixing it. Remembering and \textit{mnemosyne}, especially the repressed memories try to recombine the stored reality of the past with the fiction and by this fusion, alter the present.

This is how the feeling of similarity functions. The archival function of the memory gives way to its agglutinating potential. “The twin functions of the memory in our lives-the archival and the amalgamative-(have) two coupled sources: geneic and semiotic”. 

“The amalgamative aspect of the memory, on the other hand, is that which insures ‘the continuity of our semiotic persona <and> an enduring, more or less singularly consolidated autobiographical identity’\textsuperscript{27}. We could add “an identity in general”. This is why we keep bumping into Hippolyte in the others’ speech, in their silences, in their dreams and fears and more and more in their actions, acts of forgetfulness and in their destinies.

As Wojciech Kalaga concluded, forgetfulness is salutary and healthy only when it is natural and involuntarily and gives space to useful entries, by eliminating the unnecessary. “If unintentional, forgetting is a mere scar to identity; if done on purpose, it becomes a form of suicide, of self-inflicted euthanasia.”\textsuperscript{28} Hippolyte was not part of the superfluous luggage; even secondary her story is determinant for the others. This is why

\textsuperscript{26} Wojciek Kalaga, \textit{op. cit}. see the previous note.

\textsuperscript{27} Emanuel Prower, \textit{Memory as a sign}, p. 22, in \textit{Memory- Remebering-Forgetfulness}, Peter Lang, 1999.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid}. 

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she is one of the wounds that will never heal\textsuperscript{29}, a misbalanced, contortioned and tormenting presence that will make the others forgetfulness an "act of suicide".

And this is her way to be a hybrid narrative product. She was and she is part of a "becoming story" with enhanced potential.

\textsuperscript{29} Slawomir Maslon, \textit{The dead of memory}, in \textit{Memory-Remembering-Forgetfulness}, Peter Lang, 1999, p.181; "But what if the wounds will not heal, if they contain poison? Can it be that the data which add to the picture prepare a different event?" He actually started by considering present, past and future identical from the point of view of their potential.
CHAPTER II
2.1. Atalante—one sign for two signifiers?

In both previous cases, the sign of “Hippolyte” and her story is marked by incoherence, forgetfulness and fatal confusion, as her presence and story are not autonomous, but satellites to other characters as side-episodes of their diegesis. Her action is secondary and indirect even when it determines grave consequences, as in Hippolytos’ tragedy:\(^{30}\) she acts in absence by a negative, yet undeniable influential. Plays and theatrical performance privilege the visual contact, but as a side character in the tragedy of Theseus, Phaedra and in the story of her own son, Hipollytos, Hippolyte is left aside from the stage light.

In case of “Atalante” we move on a quite stable territory: the two stories/episodes that circumscribe the signifier have at least a solid structure and the denomination itself does not support alternatives. The problem of scholars is no longer to fight among a heterogeneous nomenclature or to sum up in a more or less coherent group scattered episodes manipulated in various ways by the authors, but to detect if “Atalante” as a sign has one or two semantic spheres: in other words, if it defines only one or two homonymous heroines. According to this we might have one story with two distinct episodes or two parallel stories concerning two different identities with similar personalities but separate existences and different topographical situation: the Boeotian Atalante with her swift feet and the Arcadian hunting princess, eminent in the defeating

\(^{30}\) See the previous chapter dedicated to “Hippolyte” and her hunting son, Hippolytos.
of the Calydonian boar (as Ovidius uses in his *Metamorphoses*, VIII. 380 and 426 and X. 560 ff. and Ioannes Tzetzes suggests *Historiae*, XII, 928-930)\(^{31}\).

As I have mentioned earlier the general line is more or less congruent. We have a pretty uniform tradition of two basic narrative structures that may form a single story. The literary texts (the majority of the sources quoted later) deal with a virago of extreme courage who dared to take part in the hunting of the Calydonian boar and because of her incredible courage and archer performances manages to obtain the skin (and possibly the head also) of the wild animal. Male co-fighters feel this reward is an offense directed towards their virile pride. Thus, her award is either verbally contested or (in many sources) reclaimed by means of arms. Her only defender is Meleager, a main character of the boar hunting who jumps for her protection over the limits of blood relationships and murders his own uncles. Not only does this episode/story present the signifier “Atalante” as the mark of a trouble-maker: we encounter the same name in a princess confined by her father’s high standards or by her own stubbornness in delaying her wedding (preserving her virginity) by a cruel footrace with her suitors. The winner may have her as his wife, while any loser has to receive capital punishment. All sources of this episode also present a winner, after a long line of defeated challengers who testify both to her physical excellence and the popularity of her beauty. Nevertheless the name of the lucky suitor is inconsequential in many sources: either Melanion (Ioannes Tzetzes, *Chil.*, XII, *Historia*, 65, Euripides, *Phoiniceae*, 150-153,\(^{32}\), or Hippomenes (Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*, VIII, 380-440; X, 560-680, Hyginus, *Fabulae*, CC XLIII and CLXXIV, A similar problem occurs with the name of her father, alternating between Iasos/Iasion (Propertius and Apollonius-see above references) Schoeneus (more common version-almost all the other sources, including Ovidius, X. 560 ff. ) or a very rare form, Mainilos (visible in the territory of the dramas, especially in Euripides Phoin.150-153,

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\(^{31}\) Tzetzes version represents a late version of separation. Nevertheless Ovidius used it too, in his *Metamorphoses*, as he has a swift-foot Atalante and a huntress Atalante which is indeed a copy of Vergil’s Camilla.

Supplicantes. 888 ff., but also Aristophanes, Lysistrata 785 and Aeschylus, Septem. 532). Even this incongruence of denomination for her father and for her lover versus the constant preservation of the signifier “Atalante” proves the popularity of the heroine/heroines as a main character with independent story and not as a mere adjuvant character/”intruder” (see Hippolyte\(^3^3\)) in the biography of a major hero. “Atalante” is definitely a protagonist even when her story intersects with that of a notorious hero: Meleager. “Atalante” the huntress defines the climax of his story: she determines by her uniqueness and eminence a rupture in his successful heroic existence, and ultimately, although indirectly, as she brings about his death. As a runner, “Atalante” surpasses in popularity and literary success not only the character of her father, marked by a scattered presence, but also that of her clever conqueror. The latter one simply gravitates around her story, successfully interfering with her, but remaining a secondary agent in many versions (Meleager and Hippomenes\(^3^4\)). Her name has no alternative. In opposition to Hippolyte- the champion of alternatives and incoherencies, the signifier, “Atalante” surprises by consequence, popularity and uniformity of nomenclatural transmission.

2.2. Atalante and the functions of the memory- taxonomic versus poetic

If in the case of Hippolyte the literary memory was functioning more by its opposite, (oblivion) and by its social and psychological consequences in the text, in the case of Atalante we deal with a realm of constructive memory, in which the act of remembering

\(^3^3\) “The domain of virtual Memory is at the same time the domain of the nature. Constituted by a ‘pure past’ which always IS, Memory relates to being- the pre-semiotic and pre-linguistic condition of any cultural event inseparably and most directly linked with being itself, it ontologically precedes any intervention from culture.” “Yet, without an intervention from a culturally constructed apparatus, memory remains mute. In order to become a more communicable human experience- in order to become accessible-memory requires assistance from culture; that assistance takes the form of representation and occurs at the moment of transition from virtuality to actuality.” Wojciech Kalaga, Memory and ontology, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetfulness, Peter Lang, 1999 p.39. See the previous notes and the way forgetfulness works for Hippolyte, as a recurrent menacing presence.

\(^3^4\) Ovidius himself does not give a much to important role to the father, although he seems to be the one who imposes his will to his daughter.
has actually more than just one function. "What has happened never disappears but simply passes from sphere of becoming into the sphere of being". The intriguing story of the isolated girl who is not confined to any particular wild or warrior community, but who shows a certain affinity for hunting, weapons and travel but also for man companionship (without sexual intentions) was in a definite need of some definitions.

The memory of the scholiasts, mythographers and epitomists was particularly oriented towards this aspect. From "the twin functions of the memory in our lives—the archival and the amalgamative", their efforts, combined with old Alexandrine taste, were accomplishing the archiving function of the memory together with its consequential explanatory role. Examining previous material and separating pieces of information, creating explanations and commentaries is part of this managerial function of their mnemonic exercise. We can also call it the taxonomic function: a little bit more bureaucratic, exhaustive in intentions, but not without any form of creativity: it can actually compensate knowledge by a form of inventio—the creation of episodes. This is how the story of Atalante's infant adventures, as well as that of her potential end/death/"retirement" from the heroic scene were created and encouraged: the heroine needed a "real", coherent identity, with all the possible episodes. It is the completeness and the coherence of Atalante's biography that matter within the archiving memory.

As specified in the introduction, poetry encourages a different sector of the memory to become active: the one that conserved the most dramatic episodes. This is why evidences about Atalante's birth, origin or previous life, before the hunting of the boar, tend to remain marginal, secondary and underdeveloped; and so are most of the

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35 Wojciech Kalaga, Memory and ontology, p.35, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetfulness, Peter Lang, 1999.
36 Ibid.

37 About memory and invention see also the work of Patricia Hampl, I could tell you stories: sojourns in the land of memory, New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

38 We have mostly the example of the mythographers who tried to develop a complete biography of Atalante. The geographers like Pausanias or the historians like Herodotus were less interested in her story. Ovidius focuses only on the race itself and a little over the metamorphosis, while most tragedians or other elegiacs mentioned her as a notorious example of cruel virgin seduces by gifts and the perseverance of her suitor without further interest in details.
characters who form her familial/childhood environment or social entourage: father, lovers and admirers (except Meleager), even her son, in many episodes. The epic and lyric tradition is privileging the exceptional and the detailed, in many cases creating hyperboles and cutting-out the action in kinetic slides (as when Atalante is visualized in her flight toward the finish mark, Ovidius, X. 590-596). This is what we may call the *poietic* memory: a highly selective and permeable system that works within the limits of a certain diegesis. Invention is mandatory being both the purpose and the generator of the poetic universe. It is the moment and the image which dominates within the poetic memory. The whole biography is short cut, for a game of significant details: the minimal unities of sense are at this photographic level that preserves the incidental and the momentary, while the beginning and end of Atalante’s story are floating in the oblivious side of the lyric, tragic and epic memory. Many poetic texts do not even mention her story, limiting themselves to a simple allusive mention that proves both the success of her model and the selectivity of the poetic universe. They forget the superfluous and they encourage the emblematic. Because of their need to construct a coherent story, out of a large mythic material that accumulated in time a huge disorganized biographical ballast, mythographers encouraged Atalante’s split into two models. Poetry is careless about these aspects of absolute coherence and links between the biographical details conserved in the tradition: this is why it is rarely in need of differentiating between the potential “two Atalantes”.

Both forms of memory over Atalante have their adjacent form of forgetfulness. The poetic forgetfulness and all its potential will be analyzed in the next chapter. It consists more in eliminating superfluous episodes, in focusing on one biographical episode. In order to create a diegetic space, it operates a careful selection to privilege the dramatic while leaving outside the mere informative. Once inside of the story the forgetfulness’s function can be as complex as that of the memory: it is a diegetic source. In the realm of

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41 See previous notes.
the characters both forgetting and remembering triggers the course of action.\textsuperscript{42} The taxonomic memory is avid both of unusual and conventional (in order to create coherence) and it usually falls into little paradoxes of report. Lack of forgetfulness at the microscopic level in their case means lack of memory at a larger level: its "forgetfulness" is that of diegetic motivation. The story floats for the sake of mere narration, with a purpose of "brute" information, in which the only division is that operated by chapters and catalogs' series (as that of Argonauts and the other one consecrated to love murders-in Hyginus CCXLIII)

On one side this form of memory is coalescent: the usual and the obvious episodes create sure links and "safe" guiding places throughout the story: therefore we hear again and again about Atalante's successful hunting, her foot race and the fame of her beauty. The unusual ones construct the delight of the excursus and, possibly, the purpose of it. Even if servile in intention, made for a report purpose, sometimes the taxonomic function of the memory is creative. It adjusts cuts, add and innovate links within the general thread of the story. To motivate wilderness and aggressiveness, Apollodorus supposes a deficient parent-child relationship in Atalante's infant story, early abandoning of her in the woods, foster caring from a savage beast and from an isolated community of shepherds (a plausible reason for her adult choices of men social groups and behavior) and even a juvenile unhappy experience, when she faces male brutal sexuality. Her unsecured environment is both a sensational episode and a potential explanation: still the mythographer will not develop it.

In spite of its general clarifying intentions the taxonomic memory remains deficient: by this amalgamation the heroine actually reaches its very point of hybridism. "Paradoxically, it is memory that denies access to the past."; a past that gets more and more confused because of all this mnemonic luggage.\textsuperscript{43} The cumulative function of the memory becomes mutagen. Atalante looks stable as a character, protected by her unique signifier and typical signs of recognition (she is swift footed, she participates to the

\textsuperscript{42} Most of this function will be analyzed in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{43} Leszek Drang, \textit{Self-Inscription and self-oblivion}, p. 120, in \textit{Memory-Remebering-Forgetfulness}, Peter Lang, 1999.
hunting of the boar), but by frequent addition of side-characters catalogs, her behavior gets metamorphic. With every new mention, scholiasts and epitomists are pushing her to minor behavioral variants: a child illegitimately conceived with Meleager (a supposedly married hero in Apollodorus’ version-II.8.2) brings as a consequence her abandoning of the child on the mount Parthenion-Apollod.III.9.2, Hyginus, *Fabulae*, CCLXX. In another version, the child is legitimate and his mother preserves him until older, even if she remains remote within a wild mountain environment (the tragic texts- Aeschylus, *Septem*. 532.d, e, f).

Here appears the first consequence of this tyrannical form of memory that privileges the mere information. The obsession of collecting episodes, the overwhelming charge of her character with multiple and sometime highly distinctive features determine the signifier “Atalante” to become non-functional, difficult to maneuver. Over-memory leads to lack of memory. A later mutation in Tzetzes (after centuries of confusion) points out, by his scholastic “wanders”, the general deficiency of perception. In opposition with Hippolyte, a too vague signifier, “Atalante” is too predominant, overexploited. This is the point when the coalescent function of the memory turns to strict archiving, simplification and even to splitting her *persona* in two later characters each charged with a reasonable amount of characteristics and a more or less coherent “biography”. Confusions were to get accumulated: on one side a heroine with a non-warrior behavior, good in race and present within a “civilized” realm of human relationships, on the other a demi-hunter, demi-explorer, more or less successful in being accepted by men for what she is, and determined to preserve her status in spite of her social isolation. Most mythographers admit her banishment from the hunt and being refused access to travel\(^44\). The first model is successful in lining herself up within feminine normality (by marriage), the other remains more or less isolated in her mountain world, having (or not) an illegitimate child. She never “converts”. The split was late (Tzetzes\(^45\)), motivated by the gap of personality

\(^{44}\) Apollodorus, 2.8.2. He probably remembered an episode from Apollonios Rhodianus in which Atalante was denied access to the Argonautes’ quest, by Jason. Nevertheless, he respects her bravery.

\(^{45}\) Chil.XII, Hist. 928-930.
created between that Atalante confined to her father's hearth, offered by him as a prize of contest and disputed by many suitors from what we might call the civilized world of her oikia, and the more adventurous and mobile Atalante, able to move from a territory to another in the search of the Calydonian boar or the golden fleece. The latter is a freer heroine, paradoxically more exposed to men but in the meantime less receptive to their charms (beauty or golden apples with erotic power do not function in her story). Her bizarre difference of social status and personality triggered this last form of memory, the simplifying, partitioning and archiving one, meant to eliminate the increasing confusion of her symbol: it is a feed-back of the taxonomic memory leaping slowly into pernicious confusion (a form of forgetfulness). Opposed to the coalescent memory, this one is preoccupied more by the present confusion than by past retrospection and recovery of the entire diegetic discourse (inherited or artificially inserted).

2.3. Ovidius and the revealing eyes-passive and active sight

Ovidius's version of Atalante-the runner is definitely passing within a realm of retrospective and perpetual track of the past. It is the creative memory that, choosing forgetfulness over the "biographic" whole and the irrelevant, deals with a better focusing over the chosen episode. If the eyes of the text are closed to anecdotal detail of the extra-diegetic, they become a magnifying glass for the intra-diegetic world. Concentration of the diegesis within a limited space (the episode of the race), forgetfulness of any external connection, creates a better power of focus, a hypersensitive receiver, able both of detailed recovering and further broadcasting to an outside viewer. The first witness of this functional memory is the speech of Aphrodite that opens the story (sic ait ac mediis interserit oscula verbis: "Forsitan audieris aliquam certamine cursu..." vv.559-560). She remembers in precise details (vv. 559-708) a sad and tormenting story about a young man who asked for her help in order to conquer an unconquerable girl. Through the voice of Aphrodite Ovidius also gives a reason for the apparently unnecessary cruelty of the racing girl. It was not her father who asked for this terrible nuptial ritual, but the
bride herself who wanted to remain unwedded for fear of an oracle who predicted her doom. Hippomenes (this is the name Ovidius chose for his hero) pronounced a prayer and he was promptly advised by the fair goddess of beauty to use during the contest three golden apples: he was supposed to throw them in the opposite direction of the race, just to distract the girl's attention and win the bloody race and her hand. Later, victorious, Hippomenes will forget to thank his protector (vv.680-685) and Aphrodite’s revenge will be merciless. Indirectly, she will provoke the fury of the Great Mother, by stirring Hippomenes’ lust for his bride in a cave next to her temple. The miserable pair will be transformed into lions, animals meant to be tamed and controlled by the goddess herself (vv.689-701).

What intrigues us within this story is not the Ovidius’ possibility to use his own creative memory to filter the mythographers material and add new personal ideas (explanation of the race reason and introduction of a feminine strong character, the love goddess who has an extended role in the story, and an unusual revengeful character in the end46). We are not even surprised by this frame story that makes use of the memory (Aphrodite’s speech and her use of remembering) in order to create exposition of a new epic plot and to serve stylistically the Callimachian taste for unusual and over-detailed framed picture.47. It is the specific function of the memory and its results and also the involvement of the affectivity that propel Atalante in a new light. Aphrodite’s (and Ovidius’s) memory is not passive, strictly cumulative (and superficial) like the taxonomic one. It is a memory endowed with creative power of sight and visual reproduction. This form of memory is binocular, bi-dimensional and hyper-visual: it compensates any possible form of oblivion adjacent to poetry, by an exceptional cinematographic power of vision attached to the episodes that satisfied its selective taste. It is a form of

46 "Dunque nella versione Ovidiana il ruolo di Venere è molto più importante rispetto alla tradizione" Luigi Galasso, Commento, Ovidio, Opere II Metamorfosi, Torino, 2000, p.1336.

47 "Ma a Ovidio, la definizione (‘Callimaco Romano’) si attaglia meglio. Egli riprende Calimaco i poeti ellenisitici nelle sue elegie, seve di quella passionalità che aveva caratterizzato la produzione del suo predecessore, riprende pure il Callimaco degli Aitia nei Fasti e anche nelle Metamorfosi." Alessandro Perutelli, Il fascino ambiguo del miracolo laico, Torino 2000, LXVII.
remembering quite compatible with the type of character represented by the runner
“Atalante”: a kinetic, highly visual and magnifying memory, an excellent tool of the
creative instance-Ovidius (superior and sovereign in the text) to offer complete
visualization over a hyper-mobile character. “Ovide se rencontre avec les sculpiteurs et les
peinteurs parce qu’ils ont en commun une imagination qui organise des formes, des
lignes et des couleurs, en tenant compte de la matière où des possibilités d’expression
fanthomatique d’une surface plate.”48 It serves well the economy of text and, in the mean
time, it satisfies the poetic instance and his quasi-alexandrine taste for unusual and
pictographic: a polyfunctional, protean form of remembering. Ovidius wanted to tell the
huntress’ story, in which each detail should be reproduced in details, tasted, seen and felt
in a quasi-tactile way. And it is exactly this power of this omnipotent sight that
transforms Atalante into a passive visual object of contemplation.

Nevertheless, at the beginning, the readers have a very active image about her: she
imposes her volition over her natural desire (and that of her father) to look for a husband,
first by removing herself in the forest and opting for perpetual virginity, secondly by
creating an almost impossible game of race: running away is a sign of her will. (Territa
sorte dei per opacas innuba silvas/vivit et instantem turbam violenta
procorum/condicione fugat, nec “sum potienda, nisi” inquit/“victa prius cursu.
Pedibus/contendite mecum:/praemia veloci coniunx thalamique dabuntur,/mors pretium
tardis. Ea lex certaminis esto.”vv.567-572). It prevents her from getting married and it is
a good form to propel her on a territory dominated by men: that of athletics. She also
adopts the regular posture of the male racers, giving up any sign of shyness or pudor that
would have confined her on the territory of feminine subordination and domestic
reclusion. She eventually accepts running naked armed with a spear with which she was
probably piercing the losers (vv.572 ff.).

Her entire attitude is defying the feminine traditional submission. Reclusion in the
forest is a non-feminine attitude as it defies both the paternal authority and the supposed

48 Simone Viarre, L’image et la pensée dans les Métamorphoses d’Ovide, Presses Universitaires de France
Paris, 1964, Une parenté fondamentale avec le cinéma, p. 99, see also page 48, about Ovid’s predisposition
for ivory in feminine/ephetic representations.
feminine mission. She tries to transform a temporary possible consecration to Artemis into a permanent state: perpetual virginity. Accepting to race is actually both a form of activeness and passivity in front of her suitor: it is a form to manipulate him sexually, by showing herself naked. “Lo sviluppo della nudità agonale nel campo mascile costitutiva un problema nell’antichità; [Esiodo], fr. 74, M.-W. deve averla proiettata all’indietro nella storia di Ippomene a proposito del personaggio mascile; quanto ad Atalanta, non abiamo alcuna prova in tal senso, nonostante il fatto che la ragazze proverbialmente partecipassero nude alle gare atletiche a Sparta.” 49 Her nudity is an unbeatable weapon that will drag even the despising Hippomenes into this unusual contest and a form of self exposure as a token for an active winner. It is somehow working against her, by turning her into mere bait.

None of her active gesture of rebellion works in Ovidius’s scheme. Permanent virginity and solitude meet her impossibility of cutting completely the ties with civilization (she still remains within the family bounds50, even if she practice hunting in the woods), although her father’s imperative attitude is almost unperceived in Ovidius51. Race, as a plan B solution against marriage and prophesized doom meets a stubborn and clever competitor who defeats her swiftness by intelligence. Competing is actually her very first sign of weakness as together with the contest she offers a chance of winning and control over her will, although a minute one. Psychoanalysts might say that by setting a competition she secretly expresses her wish to be defeated, a wish that Ovidius formulates later in clearer terms (see her monologue: vv.629-630: Sed non culpa mea est. Utinam desistere velles, aut, quoniam es demens, utinam velocior esses!). By running she becomes a prey: “L’autre comme proie, l’autre comme praeda, voilà ce qui caractérise l’un des aspects des rapport entre homes et femmes et qui a inspiré au poète tout la partie

49 Luigi Galasso, Commento, Ovidio, Opere II, Metamorfosi, Torino, 2000, p.1330.; “[in Esiodo], fr. 75, 9 sg.M.-W. c’e un’insistenza sulla sua bellezza nel gioco del vento con la sua veste sul petto”.

50 Apparently her status was not that of an isolated woman or servant of Artemis, even if Scholia Ad Aeschyum. Sepemt 332 d,e,f tend to explain it this way.

érotique de son oeuvre, sans qu’on puisse préjuger de la connaissance qu’il a d’une autre forme de l’amour.” Picking up apples will be in this case just an excuse, a good pretext to motivate her intentional loss. By the very elements that prove her secret or open will (competition proclaiming and speech about Hippomenes’ youth) Atalante also proves her predisposition to passivity and her hidden intention to let the others dominate her or to offer to herself, in an apparently active form of resistance, a chance to lose and to become a token. To be seen naked during the race is a form of being exposed as a visual object. The entire race is actually read in this code of domination and sexual access by sight. Running, although it is a sign of strong anti-marital/anti-sexual stubborness is also a form that transforms her into a hunted (passive) item.

And the first character who has visual power over the “kinetic object” Atalante is the goddess of lust herself. As the “main narrator” in Ovidius’s story, Aphrodite is contaminated by the author’s power over the visual memory. She is able to create a window and to re-actualize the past in a coherent kinetic way: she is the one who will depict Atalante and her competition (vv.590-598: *et cursus facit ipse decorem./Aura refert ablata citis talaria plantis,/tergaque iactantur crines per eburnea, quaque/poplitibus suberant picto genualia limbo;/inque puellari corpus candore ruborem/traxerat, haud aliter, quam cum super atria velum/candida purpureum simulatas inficit umbras*). As a goddess of love, the emotional side of the memory and its attributes will be surely involved, even in the portraittistic part of her speech. Scholars have long ago remarked how intensely sentimental is the passage that describes the blooming feelings of Hippomenes, as everything comes from the perspective of a goddess that personifies feelings and lustful emotions (vv.578-580:*Ut faciem et posito corpus velamine vidit,/quale meum, vel quale tuum, si femina fias,/obstipuit tollensque  

manus "ignoscite," dixit. Hippomenes watches his bride through the goddess' eyes or we should imagine him being somehow emotionally connected to Aphrodite, who impersonates a cumulus of sensations and feelings connected almost entirely to the visual sector. Nudity, motion, physical details and colors, they all mix in a sentimental picture of the young girl.

Aphrodite's power of action and her power of induction and suggestion are transmitted through the visual analyzer- the wide opened eyes. She can look both outside and inside, while she reads minds, prayers, while she hears doubts and insistent requests (vv.609-613: *Talia dicentem molli Schoeneia vultu/adspicit et dubitat, superari an vincere malit./Atque ita "quis deus hunc formosis" inquit "iniquus/perdere vult caraeque iubet discrimine vitae/coniugium petere hoc?; vv. 639-640; invocat Hippomenes "Cytherea" que 'comprecor, ausis/adsit' ait "nosteris et quos dedit adiuget ignes."). Her watching has no passivity in it. It is organically linked with action. It denudes, it reveals. A certain power is temporarily within Atalante, too. The power to see Hippomenes turns her into an analyzer and an active erastes. She acts erotically by her active sight (watching him naked?), which is unusual and dangerous in the Ovidiusian realm where male are the initiators of erotic watch: as a maiden, her "inappropriate" watching with male eyes could and will have bad consequences. It is she who watches and contemplates him, admires and lusts in an almost male way; although she tries to hide her active sexuality in a cloud of so called compassion, denying her active sensual desire (vv.609-610: *Talia dicentem molli Schoeneia vultu/adspicit et dubitat, superari an vincere malit./Atque ita "quis deus hunc formosis" inquit "iniquus/perdere vult caraeque iubet discrimine vitae/coniugium petere hoc?; vv.614-615: non me movet ipse, sed


55 A conversation with Professor Victoria Wohl and Professor Duane Roller lead to this fruitful conclusion. Also, check the previous notes over Barry Powell, for this idea about feminine active sexuality in the ancient myth.
aetas./Quid quod inest virtus et mens interrita leti?)\textsuperscript{56}. Sight and pure revealed beauty mutates also her from a beautiful chased token to an active pursuer. She analyzes, penetrates and cuts out what she sees, in the same active way as Aphrodite and Hippomenes. Still, her speech is silent, inner and bashful. We could say that, it remains a feminine virginal speech, by contrast both with the opened loud-voice admiration of Hippomenes- (vv.616 ff: Nondum mihi praemia nota,/quae peteretis, erant." Laudando concipit ignes/et, ne quis iuvenum currat velocius, optat/invidiaque timet.) and by contrast with the speech of Aphrodite-the narrator (see again vv.578-580). In the same way as being seen, seeing and admiring is a weapon that works both to sustain her active potential and to defeat her and point out her future passivity. The speech is recognition of weakness towards her lover in the same way in which there is a sign of active eroticism. It is undermining her initial will of virginity. Even unexpressed it is going to mark her decision of being defeated. After this speech she will become increasingly passive, erased as personality, only visually represented as a beautiful object of pursuit. By this speech she is also the object of an invasion of her mind by Aphrodite. By means of sight she falls in love (both of the man and his golden objects).

Unlike the human eyes that both reveal, but mostly transform the watcher into a passive object of seduction, the divine eyes have an active impact. Here Aphrodite’s eye does not only transport the seen image to the reader/receiver of the text, but also penetrates the visualized object and alter its nature by inducing passion. When she has Atalante see the apples, she transmits her impulses of a visual-erotic nature. Atalante cannot resist going and picking the fruits: vv. 665-666: Obstipuit virgo, nitidique cupidine pomi/declinat cursus aurumque volubile tollit. \textsuperscript{57} Even if her feelings are more elaborate than mere desire to posses some miraculous fruits, they actually function as a catalyzer for her. Aphrodite sees her and sends a visual encouragement to the blooming feelings she started to develop for Hippomenes. If this “watch and seduce by watching” transforms the vision of Aphrodite into an active weapon, for Atalante it has the reversed

\textsuperscript{56} See also the previous notes.

\textsuperscript{57} As seen later, Aphrodite admits this game.
form: she is reduced to passivity by this visual stimulus. She has to go and pick the items up because she saw them: a hypnotizing effect comes by visual means that keeps her out of her own volition. Seeing and being seen are therefore both forms of reification and passivity for Atalante. As a mere human she cannot have totally control over sight. The others' sight concentrated on her body represents denuding, revealing her femininity and seducing her and breaking her will. To be seen, even if it produces lust and uncontrollable desire from the part of her suitors and lead them to misery is also a form of exposing her as a token and ultimately giving up her will: once set and seen as a price, Atalante actually gives up her chance of total unbreakable freedom. It is Hippomenes' interest and eyes that attract her attention and then transforms her in a demi-passive agent who ultimately, by repeated actions of picking up apples will lead to her defeat. If for the goddess to see means to judge, take action and induce action, for Atalante to see means to be seduced, convinced and to accept passivity. The inner monologue is the actual trial of her will and also her last sign of active behavior. After this short introspection Aphrodite (and Ovidius) will stop analyzing or visualizing her thoughts\textsuperscript{58}. It is a sign that the will and the end is already outside her and she gave up any form of volition. What we have after this manifestation of personality is more or less a childish appetite for shiny things that contrasts both with her initial sophisticated, self aware and contradictory feelings of love and with her stubborn and full of personality refusal of marriage. Seduced like a child, Atalante gives up what makes her will active by picking the golden tokens. And she is fully visualized in this action.\textsuperscript{59} What apparently sustains her active desire for gold is actually a passive magic coordination: Aphrodite admits that she manipulated her heavily at the last cast of apple: vv. 676-678: \textit{An peteret, virgo visa est dubitare: coegi/tollere et adieci sublato pondera malo/impediique oneris pariter gravitate moraque}. The last picking was not even her will anymore, but a rough manipulation, as if in a voodoo game.

\textsuperscript{58} In exchange other thoughts and intentions will be developed: those of Aphrodite.

In the end the active eyes staring upon her will strip her out of any form of volition. She will be not only conquered but totally reduced to passivity: it is not even she who takes the initiative of the sinful copulation with her husband in the gods’ cave. Aphrodite will use sight over her to manipulate and punish Hippomenes, who, seduced by Atalante’s graceful forms, will try to accomplish his lust next to Great Mother’s temple (vv.689-690: *Illicit concubitus intempestiva cupidito/occupat Hippomenen, a numine concita nostro*). Totally passive this time, Atalante will suffer a punishment actually meant for her erotically active husband. She will become a lioness together with him.

2.4. Atalante and the weapon of the memory

We treated earlier a case of intentional collective and individual oblivion and voluntary “civic” lack of memory: forgetting an individual who did not fit the pattern, a recurrent Hippolyte in the texts of Apollodorus, a haunting presence with various forms of manifestation in the text of Euripides. Both forms were deficient. Oblivion was a general voluntary tendency of self preservation, pretty constant but with inefficient results. Memory was a residual one: a shadowy disturbing undefined presence. Civic, personal, inner and external levels were affected by the fact that she existed in a not so remote past. The forgetfulness of the disturbing “other” was somehow dysfunctional.

In Ovidius’ text, the oblivion is involuntary and constitutes a handicap; the basic rule of success in this narrative structure is memory. Outsider forces tend and wish to remember (vv. 681-683: *Dignane, cui grates ageret, cui turis honorem/serret, Adoni, fui? -- nec grates inmemor egit,/nec mihi tura dedit. Subitam convertor in iram*;) They keep traces of stories, mistakes, lack of gratitude and sins, they reveal and punish voluntarily. In the Ovidian text forgetfulness is a human fatal mistake and memory is a divine attribute. Oblivion and passivity go together and affect mortal by robbing them of

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60 See the previous chapter.

their sight and ability to act. To see and to remember are two strong weapons in the story. Both vision and memory trigger verbs of action and impulses. In the same way as the power of visualization, it is oriented towards help and towards punishment. Their memory is a form of salvation (a salvation that does not work, unfortunately for their protégés: vv.705-707: *Hos tu, care mihi, cumque his genus omne ferarum,/quod non terga fugae, sed pugiae pectora praebet,/effuge, ne virtus tua sit damnosa duobus.*) and a modality of checking the accounts with the others. Therefore, Aphrodite will use both her memory of Atalanta’s story to warn Adonis against the aggressive potential of the lions and to nurture a grudge against the ungrateful Hippomenes. In her case, memory and vision completes each other, in approximately the same way described above. Memory creates a magic mirror or a window of vision towards a past that is reenacted (see the first verse of her monologue). Within this past Atalanta is an object of visual delight. But also resentful memory can track and involve the eyes of the others, in an inappropriate moment of lust, for a more efficient punishment. The old gods of the cave will be involved in her revenge by being visually engaged in the erotic scene between Hippomenes and Atalanta, also consumend because of visual impulse (vv.695-696: *Hunc init et vetito temerat sacraria probro./Sacra retorserunt oculis;*). Aphrodite will use her power over the visual here both to seduce the groom and to provoke anger while Atalante will be caught between being a seduction object and a mere tool of revenge. She is not even the target of the divine grudge, but, again, a mere expendable instrument. The statues of the gods will visually witness her copulation with her husband. And as a punishment of the Great Goddess both their appearances (again a visual stimulus) will be changed. “La pointe proriamente erotica il narratore l’ha tacita; si trova in Igino, *Fab.*,185, 6: *quos Iuppiter ob id factum in leonem et leam convertit, quibus di concubitum Veneris denegat*”.62

As I mentioned memory is persistent and tend to be an attribute of gods (protective memory, but mostly, the resentful one). Humans are forgetful and tend to live for the

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moment in this Ovidian version. Both Hippomenes and Adonis (by disregarding Aphrodite’s speech and advice) will prove this.

Still the main exception to this rule is the heroine herself. Although a passive visual stimulus and a helpless pawn, in the final game of revenge Aphrodite-Hippomenes, she shows (at the beginning) more understanding over the memory mechanism than her “fatally forgetful” suitor. She voluntarily tried to induce in the others a form of forgetfulness that could have saved her (see vv.: 567-569)\(^{63}\) Finding out that she is going to be doomed by marriage she tried to make herself forgotten, to diminish or completely erase her presence in the woods. As to see and to be seen means exposure, seduction and endangering, she opted for isolation. This voluntary, conscious measure of protection did not function, as the environment was not so permissive towards her potential absence. She lived in a civilized environment, dominated by royal and paternal authority and her presence and conformation to the society rules was imposed. Pretending to be a huntress when she was not initially part of a feminine hunting community was a failed attempt\(^{64}\). Her intended reclusion was therefore partial and unsuccessful.

We could read even her final transformation in this code of mnemonic/visual key. She and her man were not actually forgotten/ erased by this punishment. Once their nudity was covered by a new form (a furry one), in order to appease the bashful eyes of the divinities that choose not to participate in the visual act, their “true nature” was actually revealed: a wild sexual one (vv.698-704: \textit{Ergo modo levia fulvae/colla iubae velant, digiti curvuntur in ungues,/ex umeris armi fiunt, in pectora totum/pondus abit, summae cauda verruntur harenae.})\(^{65}\). For the Ovidian Atalante, her transformation into a lioness is at the same time banishment from the human realm and a form of conservation. She will

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\(^{63}\) Voluntary forgetfulness is always unsuccessful. It could even reach the point of danger: “If unintentional, forgetting is a mere scar to identity; if done on purpose, it becomes a form of suicide, of self-inflicted euthanasia.” Emanuel Prower, Memory as a sign, in Memory-Remebering-Forgetfulness, Peter Lang, 1999, p. 22 (see notes from the previous chapter).

\(^{64}\) She initially wanted to be married.

leave under this new form and the goddess will never forget again her true wild potential or the ancient grudge that bounded her under this form. Somehow, cover and metamorphosis here is a form of memory: the most bitter and resentful one. As the oracle predicted, no balance was achieved. In a seriously altered shape, she survives, both as a physical presence and in the emotional memory of the goddess. Even metamorphosis itself is a form of dynamic preservation, a form of “memory”: ”Comme celle de la nature, la vie de l’homme peut s’identifier matériellement avec le mouvement c’est-à-dire ici avec un dynamisme intérieur don’t l’amplification aboutit à la métamorphose.” 66 In Aphrodite’s version of the story, memory is all together a form of revenge (the grudge for Atalanta), a means of protection (for Adonis) and a continuous menace, an impossibility to reach an equilibrium.

CHAPTER III
3.1. Penthesileia - a successful sign

This is how we may name this last sign that reached complexity without any obvious alteration. By contrast both with Hippolyte, the signifier with many denominations and many significances, and Atalante, the sign overwhelmed by details in the point of losing its unity, Penthesileia made her career by being a coherent figure. It seems that the texts which took up her story agreed in most details about her. She is definitely a princess, an Amazon queen, although the generation and the relationship with her potential ancestor Hippolyte are still confused (as Hippolyte herself is inconsequential in mythical tradition). For Quintus Smyrnaeus (Posthomerica, Book I) she is a virgin from all points of view, unaccustomed to be tamed by men and unaccustomed to the idea of defeat. Brought up as a daughter of Ares, she considers herself invincible and she boasts her origin excessively in front of the Achaeans (vv.325-335). The war of Troy is her very first and last act of bravery, so the episode is pretty intense and concentrated. Her main deed was the participation in the Trojan War, a deed in which she lost her life by the hands of Achilles who later regretted killing her, as Penthesileia's charm melted his implacable heart (vv. 657-665). Scorned by Thersites for his excessive sufferance, Achilles kills this one in an access of fury (vv.756-770).

Only a few versions exist concerning her postmortem treatment. Proclus in his Epitome of Aithiopis suggests that Achilles showed lust towards the dead Amazon and his form of repentence and love was more than platonic (Eustathius, 2.219). More graphic in
shocking his reader, later, Tzetzes (Scholia ad Lycophrontem, 996) will include a scene of mutilation of Penthesileia’s face by Thersites, who plucks out the eyes of her dead body, legitimazing in this way Achilles’ excessive fury and murder.

Side stories that talk about her previous identity are dealing most of all with her origins and the motivation of her intense participation, as an ally of Priam. Quintus Smyrnaeus and Tzetzes consider her guilty of killing, Hippolyte her sister (a huge generation gap is shortcut by the two poets68) within a hunting (Quintus Smyrnaeus, Posthomerica, vv.21-25), while Apollodorus considers her guilty of an accidental murder of Hippolyte, during the Amazons’ rescue operation, when she tried to rescue the prisoner from Theseus. Both versions suggest an accidental murder and serious conscience problems, fact that integrates Penthesileia within the heroic model of dark-sided characters69, looking for redemption in a foreign land, a demi-exile, demi-voluntary experience for Penthesileia. She mixes this way her virginal incompetence in wars and her sexual purity with a surprising form of impurity (by bloodshed) and a “not so feminine” tangency of death (but a characteristic not foreign to many male heroes-Patrocles or Phoinix had a history of violence, exile and even murder on their background70). More graphical than Tzetzes and Proclus, Quintus Smyrnaeus suggests even Furies chasing her around, a picture pretty incompatible with her apparent daily calm and joviality, as it appears when she present herself to Priam (vv.86-87, 91-92). Both blessed and cursed, Penthesileia is a seducing character for their readers. Tzetzes, allowing her a presumption of innocence, considers that she came to Troy, not so much

68 See La Suite d’Homère, Quintus de Smyrne, texte établi et traduit par Francis Vian, Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1963-1969, the notes about this tradition.

69 See again Barry Powell and his interpretations in Heracles: Classical Myth, New Jersey, 2003, Marriage, Madness and Murder, p.360-362: professor Sarah Johnston, during her lecture accentuated this dark side as being a common treat of many heroes.

70 It is not only a heroic treat it is a Homeric feature: Iliad, IX, 430.ff,
for the purpose of redemption, but also to find glory and a suitable husband (Tzetzes, Posthomerica, I, 18, sqq.)\textsuperscript{71}.

As it is obvious the model does not encounter many variations. The episodes in dispute are minor and disparate. They are so insignificant that a certain inconsequence could pass unobserved or can simply get integrated and survive in “symbiosis” within the very generous body of pretty linear and unaltered tradition. We do not find Penthesileia much in classical texts. Homer has no chance to talk about her: the Trojans are still mourning Hector when he finishes his Iliad. \textit{Aithiopis} and the other pieces of epic cycle got lost because of their own literary insignificance and because of the readers’ own negligence. The Roman classicism and Augustan period mentioned her a few times, using the already known Alexandrian form of denomination by appellative\textsuperscript{72}, without developing her story for real. Only late epitomists and conscious mythographers, gave themselves a task in reproducing her entire story. The most interested were the late poets Quintus Smyrnaeus, in the III-IV century A.D. and Tzetzes, in a period of intense scholarship but even more intense confusion\textsuperscript{73}. Still, without any serious early development, a career must have existed for Penthesileia. It is proven not only by the very early and constant vase painting, a commercial form of art that proves the success of the sign but also by the later imitations. This is in fact her form of proliferation. Unlike the previous models, Penthesileia is not a hybrid because of the confusion her signifier generates but because of its extreme clarity, success and fame. Her sign mutated without losing its contour or individuality. She simply developed, “clones”, later satellites, characters with their own story and name, but with an intense borrowing of her mental profile and physical characteristics. Penthesileia survives in Ovidius’s Atalante (the “No. 2”-VIII.382. ff. model-the Huntress of the Claydonian boar) and in Vergil’s Camilla, so


\textsuperscript{73} The same affirmation can be made about Hyginus. He was writing in a period of confusion and for a not too erudite public: “Le corps de l’œuvre, consacrée aux fables propement dites, a vocation pédagogique. Hygin écrit manifestement pour un lecteur latin peu familiarisé avec les étymologies gréque.” \textit{Introduction, Hyginus, Fables}, Jean-Yves Boriaud, Paris Les Belles Lettres, 1997,p.XXX.
famous but never replicated in later tradition. But first, we need to find how Penthesileia was perceived in one of the longest texts dedicated to her: Quintus Smyrnaeus' chapter in Posthomerica.

3.2. To see Penthesileia—the transformation of the visual

The heroine's most complete image in the texts preserved to us is indeed that of Quintus Smyrnaeus. He is probably the only one who manages to create a clear visualization of the heroine; and he actually used two forms of sight to create this androgynous model: the sight of the others concentrated on her and her own sight, as an active feed-back to the exterior. Both versions create the same effect of power coming from the heroine and seducing the environment.

Unlike Atalante, Penthesileia of Quintus Smyrnaeus is not only a beautiful queen with unusual male abilities, a pleasure for the eyes and an obvious temptation for the hearts. In her case the power of visualization does not reify her, but transforms her into an active force. The eye who watches her is never the same again. Seduced by her potential, it will start to add features to her potential, instead of denuding her of her active form and potential and transferring her to an object of desire. She is not just an object of visual delight. To see her means to be actively affected by the sight. Companions, allies, even enemies are transformed into satellites in front of her (vv. 45-53: "And twelve beside followed her, each one/A princess, hot for war and battle grim,/Far-famous each, yet handmaids to her:/Penthesileia far outshone them all./As when in the broad sky amidst the stars/The moon rides over all pre-eminent,/When through the thunderclouds the cleaving heavens/Open, when the fury-breathing winds sleep;/So peerless was she among that charging host"). She comes as a queen from the very beginning and she keeps her central position both physically among her faithful servants and figuratively, in the visual field of the outside viewers. She is not just seen: she actively replies to their view and she modifies their perspective. In front of her, people can mutate their mentality, and pretty often their feelings. Primus sees her with the eyes of a parent, not just with that of an ally
(or possible mercenary, according to Allan James, *op.cit.* p.268) (vv.80-86: "So, after all his sighing and his pain,/Gladdened a little while was Priam's soul."). Troy is also totally in admiration of her: during the fight women almost fall under a spell comparable to the Bacchic one, being obsessed to join her in the battle field (vv.439-450: "From Troy afar the women gazed marveling /At the Maid's battle-prowess. Suddenly/A fiery passion for the fray had seized/ Tisiphone, Antimachus' daughter and Meneptolemus' wife,/ Her heart waxed strong, and filled/With lust of fight."). Her hyper-active potential is contagious and her power of contagion is as strong as it is involuntary. The mere sight of her induces action and frenzy.

Further more, when people see her they actually envision more than just her physical image: they tend to perceive more her potential than her physical appearance: Penthesileia’s presence leads their view in a realm of involuntary introspection that passes beyond her simple beauty, on a territory of metaphors and similitude with more powerful forces than those of a human being. It is no surprise that she is compared with hurricane, natural disasters of all kinds and with wild beasts (vv. 191-199: "Then on her head/She settled the bright helmet/With a wild mane of golden-glistening hairs./So she stood, lapped about with flaming mail,/ Just like the lightning, which/The never-weared might of Zeus, hurls to earth/, When he shows forth to men/Fury of thunderous-roaring rain, or swoop/Resistless of his shouting host of winds."). All these metaphors suggest not only her very wild nature, but also her almost male potential, her total compatibility with the war realm and its violence. By these metaphors she is recognized as an epic hero with full rights, in a perfectly conserved Homeric tradition that Quintus Smyrnaeus tries to imitate. All these bursts of energy and it is able to offer it unconsciously, in an excess of warrior inspiration.

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75 "The contents of Quintus Smyrnaeus’ narrative of the Trojan War from the end of the *Iliad* to the beginning of the *Odyssey* were virtually dictated by tradition. Because of this essential character of Quintus’ undertaking, the prevailing assessment of his achievement has been little more than application to it of Aristotle’s negative judgment of the Cyclic epics as lacking the dramatic unity of the Homeric." Alan
But her presence is not active just indirectly, by pushing the eyes to look for more under her fragile appearance or by seducing the thoughts into developed similes and metaphors and by inspiring force and crazy loyalty. She does not just receive well the sight of the others: she can actively mutate it, not only by her simple presence but by her active sight back to her admirers. In the same way as Atalante, when she was contemplating the nude beauty of Hipomenes, Pentesileia is a woman with a male sight. Her eyes are active, courageous and inquisitive. She is not just seen. She actively returns the sight, by watching back from the position of an equal, the sight of an ally with full rights. In the same way as her silhouette and pure presence (non-active) her sight has almost miraculous power, although even temporarily. She can make Priam, the blind seer, see again for a couple of minutes, just to watch her fascinating form and chafe his soul under the power of her visual feed-back (vv.75-79: "Yet, after all his anguish/ Some small relief, albeit the stings of pain/ Prick sharply yet beneath his eyelids; -- so/ Joyful the old king to see that terrible queen --/ The shadowy joy of one in anguish whelmed/ For slain sons"). She is here not as an extra or as a beautiful token, but as an active force with her own aristeia. Unlike Atalante and her provocative foot race, Pentesileia's presence here is not sexually ambiguous. "The socially respectable terms in which the sexual attraction felt for Pentesileia is described certainly reflect the overall moral tone of the Trojan Epic, but they are equally in keeping with that of the Homeric epics." The intention of Quintus Smyrnaeus is not to present her as an erotic stimulus. She is on the men's territory and she fits into this world. The eyes that lean on her, discover her strength in the very minute they perceive her beauty.

In this sense Quintus Smyrnaeus loads her description with elements of non-erotic beauty. His description does not reveal any form of nudity and when referring to her body he only mentions the general excellence of her form (vv.56-61:"Pentesileia: even as when descends,/ Dawn from Olympus' crest of adamant,/Dawn, heart-exultant in her


radiant steeds/Amidst the bright-haired Hours; and o'er them all,/How flawless-fair ever these may be,/Her splendor of beauty glows pre-eminent."") (no flesh or accentuated details of shape). His sight insists and lingers only on objects that form her arsenal and weapons (vv.140-150: "First she laid/Beneath her silver-gleaming knees the greaves./Fashioned of gold, close-clipping the strong limbs./Her rainbow-radiant corselet clasped she then/About her, and around her shoulders stung./With glory in her heart, the massy brand/Whose shining length was in a scabbard sheathed/Of ivory and silver. Next, her shield/Unearthly splendid she caught up, whose rim/Swelled like the young moon's arching chariot-rail"). There is beauty in this description, but in a gleaming, metallic martial form, that does not mean to suggest sexuality, or at least, not the type we should expect from a woman. Sounds, colors and contour, are present in this visualization in a cold form of art. No flesh, no rosy fingers, no breast. Virgil was more graphic in his short description of Penthesileia and her denuded breast (vv.490-494)77, even if we should agree that in the frightening circumstances of the battle, this was hardly an element of attractiveness. Whenever we perceive Smyrnaeus' character under all this sophisticated clothing, the details are not going lower than the line of her neck. The neck itself, too erotic in essence is not described: but we may see her face, the delicate form of her brows and the strong, yet warm expression of her eyes (57-69: "Her love-enkindling eyes shone like to stars,/And with the crimson rose of shyness/Bright were her cheeks, and mantled over them/Unearthly grace with battle-prowess clad." ). We may notice the rose of her cheeks, a soft virginal detail which should not create any impetues: on the contrary it is meant to accentuate her total bashfulness and decency. The facial description entirely filters sensuality in order to transmit only the less erotic signs of her deep emotions. In this way, Penthesileia shows a beauty of her own, beside the manufactured perfection of her weapons that we may still appreciate, too, as good Homeric readers. This beauty is still bashful, almost androgynous, as it filters the feminine shyness through the air of the male martial seriousness, completing the general presentation of her warrior potential. An expression of her bashfulness by the rosy line of

77 Contrary to this anatomic detail we have the bashfulness of Quintus' Penthesileia when dying; see also Alan James' commentary, p.273.
her cheeks is both a detail that drags her back to the feminine fragility and pushes her further on the territory of her self-control. We can read it in both senses. Quintus needed to offer us this sight, to make us clear that she is still a woman, a natural beauty and that she lives like all of us, bursting with feelings, emotions and even enthusiasm: she is not an artificial and cold construct of his poetic memory. We have an expression of her soul, but only of the non-sensual part of it. Any effeminacy (natural at a certain point), any possible softened features are counterbalanced by something strong, masculine and controlled. Her origin tells a lot about her androgynous status: "Penthesileia is daughter of the war god Ares both literally, according to the tradition, and metaphorically." 78 As a reader we should not forget who she is, what power she possesses and what her target is here. Expression of energy and vitality prevails over delicacy and eroticism.

The male side of this powerful androgyny is so pronounced that her femininity is discovered indeed very late and even then, only by one attentive eye: that of Achilles (vv. 716-719: "and Achilles' very heart was wrung/With love's remorse to have slain a thing so sweet,/Who might have borne her home, his queenly bride,/To chariot-glorious Phthia; for she was/Flawless, a very daughter of the Gods,/Divinely tall, and most divinely fair."). He will be the only one who will uncover under the mass of gold, silver and bronze, the natural femininity of this transformed human being, somehow deterred from her natural potential. Still, in her death she will still remain unaltered by any form of sensuality: "The description of Penthesileia's modesty in her death throes may have been prompted by that of Polyxena at Euripides, Hekabe 568-70, especially as Polyxena's sacrifice is narrated in book 14 of the Trojan Epic. A similar statement about Penthesileia is made by Tzetzes." 79 Even in the description of her funeral pyre Quinuts Smyrnaeus will be more interested in the panoramic view of the glorious moment, in the outside details that compose her burial (785-790). He will more gladly visualize the multitude of gifts than to peep for the last time at this beauty without any future: it was actually his


79 Ibid., p.273.
very last chance to uncover her, as the economy of the text, was in no need for a warrior. Nevertheless, Quintus Smyrnaeus treated her until the end as a maie Homeric hero: Kleos and its pursuit is what should be emphasized.

Her extreme mobility and the aggressive nature of her deeds determine the sight to remain exterior to her hidden feminine features. Even when she was alive she was seen in action, always in an aggressive, male posture. Whenever she was fighting she was completely active, self-controlled, uninterested and maybe unaware of her own feminine charms. "The simile of a lioness attacking cattle is a more elaborate variation on the one applied to Meges at 277. In essence it is one of the most repeated simile subjects in the Iliad and the Trojan Epic, but the appropriate specification of the female beast, [...] is unusual."80 We lose track even of her beauty in all the graphical scenes of cruelty that reminds us of Homeric heroes. Nothing so intense was present in Atalante’s portrait where we lost any sight of the cruelties to follow (the punishment of the suitors: Dum notat haec hospes, decursa novissimam et est et tegitur festa victrix Atalanta corona/ Dan tgemitum victim penduntue ex foedere poenas; X 596-598.) just to keep unaltered her seducing nudity and the charming illusion created around her. In the case of Penthesileia an overactive visual feed-back deforms the view of the watcher, up to the point that the visualize object itself and its perception is distorted. As the visual does not reify her, and she does not conform to be revealed entirely as what she is, the receivers might not recognize her essence. This is the price for reflecting back the viewers’ sight and actively responding to it. This is how the author and reader are seeing her most of the time: a compact poly-articulated shiny mass of metal, a smooth supple silhouette, distinct among the others but still indifferent to any gender, a combination of impulses and successful energy. The sight either remains outside, at the gleaming cover of her armor, either “sleeps” too deep, to the pure nucleon of the Amazonian heart. In both cases it fails proper visualization of her feminine side. She is known to be a woman but she is in the mean time a warrior insensitive to any discrimination. There is no wonder why Quintus Smyrnaeus sacrifices huge kinetic passages to compare her with other natural forces,

80 Ibid., Notes, p.271.
losing in that moments any visual trace of this character, the flesh and blood Penthesileia: because, in those moments, what really matters is her pure potential, her energy filtered through her muscles.

We are led to a paradox in which the sight over a hyperactive model “endangers” the acuity of sight itself. Penetrating vision sees only potential, losing the exterior form of the visualized object. In many moments the author is unable to actually have a visual contact: as a hyperactive and mobile visual object, Penthesileia can take active action over the watcher, mutating his perspective into a quasi-hallucination: people look at her and their imagination run wild on the territory of natural forces and impulsive elements that her energy suggests.

3.3. Sight as a memory substitute-retrospectio, prospectio

If in the world of Quintus’s Penthesileia we have a strong function of the visual, this is in many cases because of the epic format of the story. It is a diegesis about heroes, about mighty warriors and their quests for glory which deals more or less with their ability to visually display their power. Bravery and strength constitute a show, in most case a panoramic one. This is why, as we mentioned in the previous chapters, for Penthesileia as a female warrior, most of the details of her femininity, her personal charm, the delicate lines and curves of her beauty are lost on the way in this hallucinating, blinding gleam of pure metal devices in the sun. The large picture prevails over deeper introspection. As a warrior, we almost never perceive her whispering intimate thoughts to herself. Whenever she speaks, her speeches are bold, conventional and perfectly compatible with the heroic “official” form of bragging and intimidating the adversary (vv.758-766). She mentions her origin, her deeds and reputation, either to legitimize herself as a successful ally or as a valid adversary in the battle. The official prevails over the personal, “public” image and shine over her deeper feelings and inner corners of mind. We have more access to what the other characters fear (Andromache’s speech: vv.122-124: "Ah hapless! why with arrogant heart dost thou/Speak such great swelling words? No strength is thine/To
grapple in fight with Peleus’ aweless son.”81) than to whatever she loves, hates or regrets. In this game of shinning mirrors, the human dimension and the interpersonal touch is lost. In the best case, this one is recovered very late when everything is lost (see Achilles’s tardy feelings for her). The intense visualization both elevates her and loses her and because everything is reflecting into everything, this is the perfect realm where hallucination, amalgam and forgetfulness begin. The intense sight foreshadows and substitutes memory. It is the past which is absorbed in the present, one more time: "What has happened never disappears but simply passes from sphere of becoming into the sphere of being.”82

Penthesileia’s hyper-visualization tends permanently to lose track over the past, as her aristeia is a show of the present. We are on a realm of action in which “now” and “here” prevails.

This is why in front of this hyperactive world of the hyperbolic visual we loose the track of the memory. The past survives in a rudimentary form, in reports and heroic boasting about origins, in a perfect Homeric style. This actual form of memory is residual and inconsistent, but it is the dominant form we encounter in the text. It is represented both by fame (the report of the other) and self-bragging in front of the adversary: “Die ye shall, and so/Lighier shall be the load of war’s affliction/That lies upon the Trojan chariot-lords./Draw nigh, come through the press to grips with me,/So shall ye learn what might wells up in breasts/Of Amazons. With my blood is mingled war!/No mortal man begat me, but the Lord/Of War, insatiate of the battle-cry./Therefore my might is more than any man's." (vv.758-776). Fame always tends to be retrospective as it relates the notorious person to his/her past. The report, as (self) re-assurance/intimidation by boasting, contains also, beside the necessary retrospective excursus (ancestors and origins), a prospective view: the speaker promises and expects to accomplish his menaces


82 Wojciech Kalaga, Memory and ontology, p.35, in Memory-Remembrance-Forgetfulness, Peter Lang,1999, p.39.
in a close future and the poem itself and the authorial (extradiegetic) memory over their saga proved that their expectations were true. But inside of the poem’s time we do not have (yet) access to the future. Although anticipatory in essence, within the diegetic frame, kleos covers here the sphere of the past (glory of the previous deeds or of the ancestors). Our sight is still fixed on the present, the only certain, territory while future memory is at this point only a heroic dream.  

Relationship with the past exists, but, in reality is as poor as the image about the future. It subsists at the level of report, undeveloped, non-visualized in its details. It is impressive how Quintus’ eye, concentrated on the present, fails to offer too many details about the past: his memory of what happened before Penthesileia’s arrival at Troy lacks any consistency. It consists in a vague report about why she is at Troy: She allegedly killed her sister and came for redemption (vv.25-31: “came athirst indeed/For groan-resounding battle, but yet more/Fleeing abhorred reproach and evil fame./Lest they of her own folk should rail on her/Because of her own sister’s death, for whom/Ever her sorrows waxed, Hippolyte,/Whom she had struck dead with her mighty spear,/Not of her will – it was at a stag she hurled.”). She is called a daughter of Ares, but her filiation is both real and metaphorical and Quintus preserves this ambiguity until very late. Later than Quintus, in his own version, Tzetzes will be more precise, but in the mean time profoundly ambiguous: both Eros and Ares, pretend to be her father, a fact that confines her even more in an androgynous position.  

Nevertheless, we should not blame entirely the authorial memory: as an epic character, Penthesileia is at her very first monomachic experience. If the memory is residual here, on this territory, if visualization is everything we should expect in this warrior universe, and analytical or descriptive memory tends to fail, it is because of her special position in the story. She is somehow a warrior without a past. Although she acts as any heroic character of Homeric tradition, we should not forget that the Trojan War is actually her

83 This clarification, suggested by Professor Victoria Wohl and Professor Thomas Hawkins was necessary, as the epic genre itself is based on memory about heroes.

84 See La Suite d’Homère, Quintus de Smyrne, texte établi et traduit par Francis Vian, Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1963-1969, the notes about this tradition.
first battle (vv.223-225: "And ever were the ghastly-visaged Fates/Thrusting her on into the battle, doomed/To be her first against the Greeks -- and last!"). She might have experience in using weapons (and the hunting in which she accidentally killed her sister is a good proof), but a complex combative scene is a new territory: this is why what she can offer is a highly visual present, a dynamic and glamorous *aristeia* and a shiny unforgettable end in the arms of Achilles: her war encounter, the best of her courage and force is one intense and ephemeral episode in an epic cycle, that forms the post-Homeric experience of the Trojan War.

On Penthesileia's territory, the present is an imperative, memory- a necessary introduction to the stage. This diminution of memory's role does not imply under any circumstances, absence of retrospection. This one keeps the place of the memory on a territory of present incertitude and instability, dominated by dynamism and by her hyper-mobile silhouette. Retrospective is the regretful glance of Achilles after killing her, the auctorial gentle sight over her luminous face and body when she is dead. It is an attempt to stop the rush of a present of battle in hope of a recovery of a past, already scattered, conventional, and reduced to ancestral fame and previous deeds. And one more time like the memory in Ovidius's story about Atalante, retrospective sight comes as a divine attribute. It is the beauty that Aphrodite's gives her in the very last moments that surprises and catches the eyes of Achilles. "She was made/A wonder of beauty even in her death/By Aphrodite glorious-crowned, the Bride/Of the strong War-god, to the end that he,/The son of noble Peleus, might be pierced/With the sharp arrow of repentant love". (vv. 908-913)

Usually this type of glance back is sterile. We have no real recovery; still, it tends to be penetrating, it breaks the actual shell of the armor, it reconstructs, the beauty both inner, (bashful) and exterior and it partially recovers the details, ignoring for a few moments the panoramic. It is, even if only partial, the same glance that denuded and emphasized

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Atalante’s motion and graceful forms: silent, visual reducing the mobile to slow motion or static.

Diminished memory and excessive emphasis on a kinetic present push the limits of imagination (both auctorial and that of the characters) to the realm of the potential. As we mentioned before, the visual tends to become wild, borrowing elements from the universe of the unreal and from the realm of desire. Both metaphors and similes project the heroine into this world and so do the vows, whishes and blessings that follow her in the battle. They create, each with its own means a visual realm of the potential: they push her image forth by increasing, adjusting and hyperbolizing it. If the retrospective is limited to a resigned glance of love, unable to recover anything in its desolation, it is the prospective look that shows a certain constructive potential. There are the hopes and the wishes which push Penthesileia over the limit of her human condition and over the possibilities of the present moment. The prospective look creates for the heroine a world of total success and invincible magnitude. In Priam’s vows and hopes, in the others cheers and comparisons or in her own boasting, Penthesileia could never be the victim of Achilles: "Father, give ear! Vouchsafe that on this day/Achaeas’s host may fall before the hands/Of this our warrior-queen, the War-god’s child;/And do thou bring her back unscathed again/Unto mine halls: we pray thee by the love/Thou bear’st to Ares of the fiery heart/Thy son, yea, to her also! is she not/Most wondrous like the heavenly Goddesses?"(vv.242-250).  

Projection is what the glance of the others and her own self perspective do when she passes in the company of her sisters and servants, fully armored and self-trusting. It is the same type of projection that we might see in Vergil’s Camilla when the young heroine (an Italic replica of this Thermodon queen, in the same way in which the war for Lavinia is a repeated Trojan War) passes among the mothers of Latium who admire her and want her as a daughter in law: "Men, boys, and women, stupid with surprise,/Wherever she passes, fix their wondering eyes:/Longing they look, and, gaping at the sight,/Devour her

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86 “Priam’s unsuccessful prayer to Zeus for victory is an adaptation of the successful one made by him, on Hekabe’s advice, for safe return from the Greek camp at Iliad 11.155- and Argonautica 1.1027-8.” Ibid., p. 270.
o'er and o'er with vast delight;/Her purple habit sits with such a grace/On her smooth shoulders, and so suits her face.”(VII, vv.814-818, Perseus Digital Library on-line sources). The entire textual space is filled with promises of victory and happiness ever after, that pass over the sphere of actual reality of the work: . Prospective look, in the same way as the retrospective one, fails to recompose or to materialize. It remains on the territory of the potential and does not achieve the function of an anticipative look. It remains on the parallel territory of imagination. In this text it is more developed than the retrospective look, a more realistic form of glance (pessimistic by its nature, as it comes after a failure) and the context offers a good reason: times of war and insecurity stimulate this “happy dreaming” form of glance.

Looking back and forth, trying to reconstruct the past or to anticipate the future are hopeless epic attempts in the story of Penthesileia. Even the glance over the present fails to perceive entirely the complicated nature of the heroine. What we have is as fruitless as it is intriguing: a mysterious androgynous beauty without a future which we may never contemplate in her entire splendor.

Memory over her past is deficient and confined to “standard” heroic report, prospective sight is rich but limited to the territory of wish, while glance over her present is over-dynamic, consumed in rushed fighting episodes and conventional kinetic scenes while it actually fails detail and introspection. We have only a little sight over her fears, next to her tragic end. In the alert rhythm of the fight we perceive her fear and incertitude, a little bit before being killed by Achilles (vv.814-818: “A mist of darkness overveiled her eyes,/And anguish thrilled her soul. Yet even so/Still drew she difficult breath, still dimly saw/The hero, even now in act to drag/Her from the swift steed's back”.)

A lot of her status deals with her dominant position in the story: this eclipse of the memorial realm has to do not only with her limited experience over the past, but also with her over-glamorous physical presence: as a character she is not overshadowed, she eclipses: she is not a side agent but a main one in her own heroic story (there is no wonder why Quintus dedicated a chapter to her). Achilles is a strong character of the epic
tradition that could have put her presence in shadow. And in a way, he does, by physically eliminating her. But his presence is late in the story, expressly retarded by the author in order to offer her a “super-nova” rapid and explosive aristeia. Nevertheless, he ultimately falls, too, under her charm: she remains an active force even after her death.

Not only the visual stimulus, by which she acts upon the others, hyperbolizes her image, but also the way she is treated by the gods. She is actually attracted in the battle field, like a male traditional hero (Agamemnon^{87}), by means of a fake dream. A divine message propels her to battle, fact that proves both her acknowledged warrior status and (again) the extraordinary power of the visual in her story and its potential to fall into the form of hallucination, and miraculous (just like her image during the fight).

Falling into the category of the report, this type of nocturnal phenomenon is probably the weakest form of the memory function we have here: the dream appeals both prospectively to her ambitions and retrospectively to her memory, by reminding her position in the war and what it is expected from her according to her blood relationship and social status. In the meantime it actually makes her forget about any form of precaution (vv.159-167): “In this wise: The Tritó-born, the subtle-soul, contrived:/Stood o'er the maiden's head that baleful dream/In likeness of her father, kindling her/Fearlessly front to front to meet in fight/ Swift-footed Achilles. And she heard the voice./And all her heart exulted, for she weaned/That she should on that dawning day achieve/ A mighty deed in battle's deadly toil.”

One more time in her story, perception and human memorial function prove themselves weak, this time not because the heroine is unwise or deficiently forgetful (like Hipomènes or Atalante), but because of her genuine absence of experience and memories in this delicate matter of strategic thinking and mantic consultation.

Again lack of memory proves itself fatal. She takes what she sees and hears for what it is, in this complicated realm of the story in which glamour and intense visual is a way

^{87} "The deceptive dreams sent by Athena to give Penthesilea false hope resembles the one sent by Zeus to Agamemnon (Iliad 2.1-36), with the novel toue that a dream of early night is said to be untrustworthy; cf. Moschos, Europa 1-5. In Tzetzes, *Posthomerica*, vv. 119-35) Hera sends dreams to Priam and Penthesileia indicating the latter’s death.” *Ibidem*, 270.
to mask the true nature of the things: even her own true nature. The dream, as a small mind impulse, works against reason one more time, here, as it did in Homeric times and in the general Greek mythological tradition.
CONCLUSION

None of the three feminine models previously analyzed expresses purity as a sign. Hippolyte finds herself on a territory of forgetfulness in which her own image, story and even her name are insecure features. She tends to be an extra in others' stories and both the realm of mythography and that of the tragedy show inconsistency in finding a coherent story for her. In the auctorial memory, be it taxonomic or poetic, with archiving or creative function, her sign tends to lose and change features, until losing any possible individuality in a multitude of versions. There is no visual image of her, no round constructed character, only subtle influences and a presence in absence. But it is this absence that drives the tragic thread in the story of her son, pulling the characters out of their realm of protective forgetfulness. In the realm of tragedy Hippolyte is an apparently minor agent predisposed to invisibility. But it is this invisibility that offers her a tremendous influence by means of one important function of memory: the ability of involuntary reiteration.

Atalante is somehow filling a middle position. The taxonomic memory keeps her alive as she has a main role to accomplish in her own aristeia and also an important secondary role to fill in the story of Meleager. But she tends to be too exceptional, as a literary figure and this makes her story accumulate heroic features to the point of becoming divisible into two different stories of too different extraordinary characters.

Atalante is also (in opposition with the "invisible" Hippolyte) by her kinetic nature one of the most visual characters, in a text where sight is a strong function. In Ovidius's story she is integrated in a universe in which memory and penetrating sight are vital and usually act as a divine force, exterior to the characters. In her case memory is both
expressed by the metamorphosis (conservation under a form of a hybrid being?) and by the visual faithful preservation of her human delicate forms in the speech of the love goddess. Unlike other texts, in the Ovidiusian poetic construct, retrospection, another form of “sight” is able to recover, recreate and preserve. Vision is here one of the most faithful forms of memory.

Pentesilea’s sign does not have the same lucky fate. It is true that she remains pretty “faithful” to herself, as a signifier, well preserved with all her characteristics of an Amazon queen, throughout the written and oral tradition and her name does not suffer mutations or late reorientations. It is true that late creations have tried to develop new characters starting from her example (like Vergil’s Camilla which borrowed directly features from Pentesilea’s traditional model), but her character itself did not ever suffer mutations or confusions of any kind, other than minor: she remains until the end a central, dominating character. If in Atalante’s model memory was able to produce visualization it is over-visualization of Pentesilea that obliterates memory. The eyes fixed over the shine present and over the glamorous presence of the queen tends not to concentrate over the past, or to go beyond what is beyond the crust of glamour. If sight reifies Atalante, it is Pentesilea here that reifies her watcher to the point of pushing him to the realm of hallucination: a hallucination that is stuck on the present, dissolving any relevance of the past and any possibility of the future.

Regarded from the perspective of their progeny, the three characters confirm one more time their status: Hippolyte transfers all her potential to her descendant, starting from her stereotypic name that we use as her denominator, and finishing with all the psychological and physical characteristics that remind the others about her. She haunts the other characters in spite of their protective norm of oblivion, both in their own speeches and by the presence of her nothos, a pretty preeminent figure in the realm of the Euripidian tragedy.

Atalante is again in the middle: she is somehow too important to live in the memories of the others through her child. Her relationship with him is strictly relational. They do not intersect too much within the universe of myth. Each of them has his/her own way to
impose their own image in the myth, each of them stays away from the other one, with his/her own aristeia. She is seen in running, eventually hunting, he is visualized at the gates of Thebes. Conveniently, mythographers tried in turns to eliminate one of them: either they isolated the mother on a mountain (maybe accepting her transformation into a lioness or her late dedication to Artemis—a convenient form of separation from the world of her son\textsuperscript{88}) or they made her abandon the child immediately after his birth. Still, a slight memory, in a form of oral report, subsists about their blood relationship: the child is also predisposed to look like her, to be bashful and even a little bit wild and unconventional, obsessed with hunting (echoing in a strange way Hippolytos\textsuperscript{89}).

Penthesilea is in this case at the extreme of this scheme. She does not have any child she does not need any progeny to speak about her. She dies young and virginal, dedicating her entire life to war and glory and to the Trojan experience. Glamorous, kinetic and wild this model lives in only one realm: that of a dynamic, continuous present. Prospective and retrospective sights are only pale version of what she was and what she could have been. Consumed like a flame and beautiful within this form of quick self-combustion she does not need a form of return. "Now" and "here" are the defined coordinates for her, no matter how ephemeral they are. Maybe this is why she is perceived by scholars as being closer to the status of a prototype within the mythical tradition. Her story is short, luminescent, concentrated around a major event. She acts like a main character and she encourages no mythical production of "co-agents" in her epic moment, unless they are in an inferior position. She does not take parts in side-plots and does not constitute an extra in other heroes' stories (as Atalante's in Meleager's epic). Short, concentrated and non-ambiguous, her adventure makes career as prototypical for the Amazonian "race".\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{88} See the notes about Hyginus and Apollodorus from the previous chapter.

\textsuperscript{89} A very bashful form of Parthenopeus appears I Aristophanes' Lysistrata, see notes from the previous chapters dedicated to her.

\textsuperscript{90} She also benefits of the generous retrospection of Quintus Smyrnaeus who concentrates over one millennium of tradition in one singular image.
There is no pure memory or pure visual over these forms, even if we try to reconstruct them. All these forms of perception (report, *retrospectio*, *prospectio*, introspection, sight or meta-sight) are interchangeable and difficult to be separated from one another. They help and they hinder each other at the same time, but they all serve the structure of the text within the realm of epic.

Whatever the texts do not bear, is what the visual arts undertake. A huge number of vase paintings and mosaic proves that even lost from the written memory, fragments of the three heroines’ myth survived in spite of the poets’ ignorance or creative mutagen fever. Painting and visual arts have a different responsibility. They do not need all the visual/mnemonic function the text implies, although in their realm, the visual is total and the other senses are nothing. The weakest function observed in the texts, the prospective view (anticipation) is here one of the strongest: painters cut the motion in pieces and freeze one of the moments, totally obliterating the others. Under the sword of Achilles Pnethesileia is dying continuously; levitating on a vase Atalante is still running or hunting the boar, deep inside of a golden cup Hippolyte submits her girdle. The rest is the prospective projection of the viewer, as there is no memory or eye like that born from imagination.
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