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Reflecting and Performing Selves: The Fate of Recognition in Kleist's *Penthesilea*

Ellwood Wiggins

ABSTRACT

Critics have rightly read Kleist's *Penthesilea* as prefiguring many modern discourses. This essay argues that the drama is also in dialogue with the past. By underscoring its intertextual play with the mirroring topos in the Platonic *Alcibiades* and anagnorisis in Aristotle's *Poetics*, this reading of the drama shows how a radical critique of the modern subject is already implicit in ancient philosophy, and demonstrates the tragic consequences of taking interiority literally.

In Heinrich von Kleist's drama about the Trojan War, *Penthesilea* (1808), scholars of the past thirty years have discovered a surprising number of new languages and discourses. The drama has been the source of a "rhetorics of feminism" (Jacobs), a "queer notion of language" (Pahl) and an original aesthetics (Chaouli).¹ It has also been read as prefiguring discourses that would not emerge until over a century later, notably French poststructuralist psychology and politics.² Other scholars, in contrast, have admired the play's radical deconstruction of the means of communication.³ For Carol Jacobs, it both destroys conventional language and gives birth to new ways of speaking at the same time. She never spells out what the "Rhetorics of Feminism" announced in title of her eloquent reading consists in, but it is probably connected to *Penthesilea*'s "new poetry," which "is a language that disintegrates the order of metaphor and literality."⁴ These readings of *Penthesilea* convincingly demonstrate the play's powerful creative and destructive potential in many disparate directions.

This essay argues that the play not only demolishes old discourses or presages new ones, but also engages constructively in ancient conversations. The first half of the drama cites the Platonic topos of attaining self-knowledge through reflection in another person, while the second half enlists the tradition of Aristotelian anagnorisis.⁵ These intertextual performances do not merely serve to deconstruct the orders of

meaning in the traditional topoi. Instead, their development and constellation in the dramatic structure of the play invite a productive contribution to the Platonic and drama-theoretical conversations from which they emerge.

The text accomplishes this intervention, moreover, not in an ahistorical universalist vein, but at a very specific juncture in the history of the subject around 1800. The inside/outside dichotomy as a paradigm of selfhood for the phenomena of consciousness and emotion arose in the seventeenth century, yet did not take hold of the popular imagination until the end of the eighteenth with the ascendancy of the Romantic subject. In the case of consciousness, the input-output model of cognition quickly spread with the advent of Cartesian representational epistemology.⁶ In the case of the emotions, passions in antiquity were generally understood as exterior forces or interactive scenes. Descartes's *Passions of the Soul* (1649) for the first time considered them as having hidden sources within the subject.⁷ With Kant's conception of the passions as a basic faculty of the individual, the long process of interiorization in philosophical psychology was complete.⁸ The turning point in this understanding of subjectivity coincided with what Foucault calls the "Cartesian moment," after which the subject is supposed to access truth via direct knowledge rather than through a host of external intermediary practices.⁹ This immediation effectually isolates the subject and renders her ultimately inaccessible to others. Kleist's *Penthesilea*, I contend, is the perfect illustration of the interior Cartesian subject.¹⁰ As Prothoe exclaims about her, "Was in ihr walten mag, das weiß nur sie, / Und jeder Busen ist, der fühlt, ein Rätsel" (9.1285–1286; What force may preside in her, only she can know, / And every breast that feels is an enigma, 59, mod.).¹¹ In the new era of interior subjectivity, every breast must be a riddle.

The play tells the story of the Amazonian warrior queen, Penthesilea, who brings her army to Troy to fight both Trojans and Greeks in order to take captives for ritualistic breeding to propagate her tribe. Against her people's precepts, the queen falls in love with Achilles and wants to conquer him for herself. They take turns hunting each other in a confused and confusing mixture of desire and hostility. In shocking contrast to the Homeric sources, Penthesilea ultimately kills and mutilates Achilles out of a misrecognition of his submissive intent. Upon realizing her mistake, she commits suicide by an act of will.

It is easy to see why this play has rightly been held by critics as staging the difficulties of understanding other genders and cultures. In these readings, which lead to productive interventions in a number of pressing discourses, the Greeks stand in for the male-dominated Western hegemony and the Amazons for the unsublimated Other.¹² The text provides rich material for powerful interpretations that often treat it as a pointed deconstruction of the entire Western tradition from Homer to Goethe and Kant.¹³

But what if, far from being an Other thoroughly alien to Western ways of thought, as many have assumed, the Amazonian Queen represents a way of thinking about consciousness that is constitutive of Western modernity? This essay argues, in fact, that she can be seen as the epitome and limit case of the interiorized subject. The drama thus stages the failures of recognition necessitated by insisting on the possibility of representing and recognizing internal states of knowledge. The language and action in *Penthesilea* move from a series of mirroring scenes that cast light on images of self-understanding to a climax highlighting performance and the capacity for knowing others. The analysis here will concentrate on these two recurrent motifs in the play: the repeated recourse to images of mirroring in the first half of the drama, and the staging of theatrical anagnorisis scenarios in the second half. In this play, self-knowledge and knowledge of others are doomed to fail only in the assumed conditions of the interiorized Cartesian subject. Successful recognitions transpire through a model of intersubjectivity that surprisingly relies on dissimulation and pretense rather than a strict insistence on authenticity.

It is quite fitting for the reading of *Penthesilea* offered here that Foucault characterized the “Cartesian moment” in the introductory remarks to his 1982 lectures on the care of the self in Plato’s *Alcibiades I*. This dialogue closes with the famous image of the soul coming to see itself in the reflection provided by another soul. Foucault’s reading of *Alcibiades* provides a helpful rubric within which to frame the first part of Kleist’s text, but the play also points toward difficulties in Plato’s text that Foucault does not consider. In this way, *Penthesilea* both confirms and challenges Foucault’s archeology of the subject. Similarly, the second part of Kleist’s play, with its metatheatrical recognitions, invites a return to pre-Enlightenment understandings of Aristotelian anagnorisis. This essay will unpack these claims by comparing the two parts of the play with Plato’s *Alcibiades* and Aristotle’s *Poetics* in turn. *Penthesilea* goes through the *motions* of ancient practices under the *conditions* of the modern subject.

The Mirrored Gaze

The scenes of mirroring in the first half of *Penthesilea* have buttressed the arguments for a series of psychological readings of the play that persuasively show how Kleist’s text prefigures Lacan’s critique of the subject, its construction through language, and the three orders of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real.¹⁴ But these reflecting scenes don’t merely look forward to Lacan’s mirror stage; they also trigger the traditional topos of coming to know oneself in the reflection provided by another’s eye. This scenario is familiar from Plato’s *Alcibiades*, which ends with Socrates telling his ambitious young interlocutor that self-knowledge comes about through interaction with a friend. This dialogue, now considered spurious by some scholars, was the preferred introduction to Plato’s works in antiquity.¹⁵ The image of seeing

oneself in the mirror of a companion's eye became commonplace by the Renaissance, and was a favorite conceit in Shakespeare's poems and plays.¹⁶ The Grecomania and Shakespearephilia that overtook German writers in the late eighteenth century would ensure Kleist's familiarity with this topos of the reflecting gaze.

Foucault lectured on the *Alcibiades* in one of his final seminars on the care of the self in the ancient world. For him, this dialogue is a turning point in the relationship between the "care of the self" and "self-knowledge." For the first time, it makes the Delphic injunction to know thyself (*gnōthi seauton*) logically prior to the already ancient demand to take care of one's self (*epimeleia heauton*). For Foucault, this was the first step on a slippery slope toward the modern predicament of assuming knowledge alone to be the key to truth, in contrast to the ancient attitude that knowledge is inextricable from practices and activities.¹⁷ *Penthesilea* supports this diagnosis in surprising ways. Foucault elaborates on three aspects of the long tradition of *epimeleia heautou* that are already present in the Platonic dialogue: the exercise of power, the question of pedagogy, and the concern with erotics.¹⁸ The play's four scenes of reflection successively illuminate this analysis of practices of self-knowledge and then culminate by opening up an aporia in Plato's *Alcibiades* that Foucault neglected.

The Burning Blush

In the play's first scene, Odysseus describes his initial encounter with Penthesilea. He cannot fathom what is going on when the Amazons attack both Greeks and Trojans. He and Achilles approach the queen with an embassy to offer an alliance. Their mission frames the encounter as an anagnorisis scenario: they hope to change a foe into a friend.¹⁹ Yet she appears to them as devoid of expression, utterly unreadable:

von Ausdruck leer, [. . .]

Hier diese flache Hand, versichr' ich dich,
Ist ausdrucksvoller als ihr Angesicht. (1.63–66)

void of expression, [. . .]

This bare flat palm has more expressive features
Than were displayed upon that woman's face. (7)

Odysseus's narration of his encounter as a desperate struggle to find some interpretable sign culminates in the unusual image he chooses to relate Penthesilea's blush. When her glance falls on Achilles, her face lights up in a flaming glow, then turns red again when she recalls that she owes Odysseus an answer:

Drauf mit der Wangen Rot, wars Wut, wars Scham,
Die Rüstung wieder bis zum Gurt sich färbend,

Verwirrt und stolz und wild zugleich: sie sei
 Penthesilea, kehrt sie sich zu mir,
 Der Amazonen Königin, und werde
 Aus Köchern mir die Antwort übersenden! (1.97–102)

Then with the red of her cheeks, whether from rage or shame,
 Staining her harness again crimson to the waist,
 Confused and wild and proud at the same time: I am
 Penthesilea, she turns to me,
 Queen of the Amazons, and shall
 Send you answer from my quivers! (8, mod.)

The final moment of the recognition encounter, then, is embellished by Odysseus with the implausible image of Penthesilea's blush reflected in her armor. He does not say, "Her cheeks were red"; he says, "Her armor colored with the red of her cheeks." Odysseus thankfully grasps the reddening of her face and its hyperbolic augmentation in the glow of the armor as a sign, but simultaneously admits that he cannot know what it is a signal for. The implied disjunctive, "wrath or shame," drives a syntactic wedge into the grammatical construction between the cheeks' red and the mirroring breastplate. Both options are unverifiable, and there is no reason to rule out other possible signifying emotions. At the same time, a potential symbolic order is introduced and its terms of relation are made undecipherable. Instead of the scene of a passion as described in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, in which the constellation of figures, triggers, and reactions can be clearly mapped out, Odysseus is confronted with the expression of an unknowable emotion whose source is hidden. Penthesilea's blush heralds the entrance of Cartesian interiority on the stage of external Greek selves.

Several important scenarios converge in this rhetorical flourish: the anagnorisis tableau together with the problem of signs and their interpretability are artfully reproduced in a very unlikely mirroring—an act of mimesis collected and refracted by the convex surface of the burnished iron. The illegibility of Penthesilea's face—the impossibility of recognition—seems to resolve itself in the moment when she announces her identity (recognition *of*: "I am Penthesilea") and her intentions toward the Greeks (recognition *as*: "and I will send you my arrows as reply!"—i.e., "I am your enemy."). Yet it will turn out that the answering arrows are not necessarily a sign of enmity after all: they are, in fact, the means whereby the Amazons secure their lovers.

Like Socrates with Alcibiades, the encounter with Achilles brings about a reflection of Penthesilea. The sign of the mirrored blush that is so mysterious to Odysseus, moreover, intimates the erotic desire that drives Penthesilea's attitude toward Achilles. This echoes the eroticism Foucault identifies in the *Alcibiades* as a lasting feature of *epimeleia heautou*. Yet here the reflection is observed not by the blushing lover or

the beautiful beloved, but by a bewildered third party, Odysseus, for whom it figures as a sign in a political calculus alien to the mirrored interlocutor.

Mirrored Conqueror

The play's fifth and Penthesilea's first *Auftritt* presents a triumphant queen who longs to return to battle to confront the fleeing Achilles. She fantasizes seeing him in the dust at her feet, and immediately responds to the reflection of her own image in his imagined armor:

Ist das die Siegerin, die schreckliche,
Der Amazonen stolze Königin,
Die seines Busens erzne Rüstung mir,
Wenn sich mein Fuß ihm naht, zurückspiegelt? (5. 642–645)

Is this the conquering Queen, the fearsome one,
Who's mirrored back, when my foot approaches him,
By the steel harness covering his breast?
This, the proud empress of the Amazons? (31, mod.)

Once again, a moment of recognition is heralded by warlike armor casting a reflection of Penthesilea. If the mirrored glow of her flush face in the first scene accompanied the announcement of her name and hostile intentions to others, this vision of her features reflected in the armor of a vanquished foe presents a crisis of self-recognition in Penthesilea herself. Achilles should be her present foe and future lover by the law of her tribe, and this ambiguity alone might be enough to confuse most, but for Penthesilea, against the express injunction of her people's law, Achilles is also at once her chosen beloved and enemy in the individuality of his narrated (textual) and physical (beheld) self. Thus the imagined encounter with his defeated body is deflected to a question of self-knowledge: "Is that me?"

This tableau brings aspects of eroticism in Foucault's analysis of *epimeleia heautou* to bear on that of power: "The care of the self . . . always has to go through the relationship to someone else who is the master."²⁰ *Penthesilea* takes to the extreme the agonistic hierarchies implicit in Platonic love. The relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades is never equal. Before the dialogue, the older man waits patiently while richer and more attractive lovers lavish their gifts on Alcibiades for scraps of his attention. Now that Socrates sees his chance, he maneuvers the younger man into a position of acknowledging ignorance and begging for Socrates's guidance. The beautiful vision of a soul coming to know itself in the reflection provided by another soul is necessarily one of lopsided dominance. Penthesilea's fantasy of seeing herself in the mirror of the vanquished Achilles at her feet reveals the power dynamics implicit in every act of self-revelatory love.

Mirrors Do Lie

In the ninth scene, meanwhile, after Penthesilea has been rescued from a disastrous battle with Achilles, in which she ended up in the dust at his feet rather than the other way around, she refuses to be persuaded to flee with her companions, and in fact curses them all.

—Die Hand verwünsch ich, die zur Schlacht mich heut
Geschmückt, und das verräterische Wort,
Das mir gesagt, es sei zum Sieg, dazu.
Wie sie mit Spiegeln mich, die Gleisnerinnen,
Umstanden, rechts und links, der schlanken Glieder
In Erz gepreßte Götterbildung preisend. (9. 1259–1264)

—I curse the hand that for the fight today
Adorned me, and the deceiving tongue that said
It was for victory, I curse them all.
How they stood round with mirrors right and left,
The hypocrites, praising my slender limbs'
Divine proportions cast in shining bronze.—(58)

The mirrors here are not only the ones held in the hands of her servants, but also the ones formed in the language of their descriptive and encouraging utterances. Even the word for “flatterers” or “hypocrites” Penthesilea chooses carries with it a sense of reflecting shine: Gleisnerinnen.²¹ This scene evokes Foucault’s third aspect of self-care: pedagogy. The syntax invites multivalent readings that play with contradictory meanings of *Bildung*: the physical shape of a body part and visual image of gods. First, the reflecting servants stand around her with mirrors and praise the divine form (*Götter-Bildung*) of her slender limbs. But like Cassius for Brutus, the Amazons also act as their queen’s “glass” in which she apprehends—and comprehends—herself in the “divine image” (*Götter-Bild-ung*) they form in speech. What’s more, this godlike image is either imprinted on the bronze armor—rather like the mirroring breastplates of the previous two scenes—or this selfsame image is itself being pressed into the queen’s arm- and shinguards along with the slender limbs it reflects. Together, these conflicting interpretations conjure the ideal of German education and self-cultivation, *Bildung*, which is mired in contradiction as soon as it is thought.

This passage’s implicit critique of the scene of self-care and its pedagogical guise is even more pointed than Foucault’s. Penthesilea curses the inadequate education that necessitates renewed care for the self in the first place by attacking her flatterers. In Plato’s dialogue, too, the education of Alcibiades proceeds by way of flattery. Socrates wishes to seduce Alcibiades to philosophy, to the love of a wisdom that should itself

PENTHESILEA. Imbeciles!

I'd take him by his flaming hair of gold

And pull him down to me—

PROTHOE. Whom?

PENTHESILEA. Helios,

As he comes soaring close above my head!

.....

PENTHESILEA *looks down into the river.*

I must be mad!

Why, there he lies, right at my feet! Take me—

She tries to jump in the river, Prothoe and Meroe hold her back.

(64)

It is no wonder that a concerned Prothoe has to ask her queen whom she means to pull down to her by his golden flaming hair, since there has been no masculine noun that might serve as antecedent to the possessive “sein” in Penthesilea’s speeches. The identity of the image Penthesilea sees reflected in the river in this scene is thrice ambiguous: it could simply be a reflection of the sun—the very Helios who soars overhead. On the other hand, Penthesilea may also be seeing Achilles, who has been repeatedly compared to the sun throughout the play, and whom the queen, as seen, has often enough envisioned at her feet: “Da liegt er mir zu Füßen ja!” This might explain her command to the image, “Nimm mich—,” and her desire to sink down to it: the self-subjugating erotics of domination. A third possibility, however, is that Penthesilea is ready to drown in the mirrored reflection of her own image. It may seem absurd that she should be suffering from narcissism at this low point in her self-esteem, but what other image is she likely to see when she looks down from a bridge into the water below than her own, crowned perhaps with the glittering sun’s, which she mistakes for Achilles, or Helios, or both?

The ambiguity of the image perceived in this sole instance of Penthesilea seeing a reflection in a nonarmored, nonlinguistic surface points toward the unknowability of the modern interior self. Its juxtaposition with self-reflection in *Alcibiades* also highlights an aspect of that dialogue, unremarked by Foucault, that nevertheless lends support to his diagnosis of a “paradox of Platonism.”²² It is surprising that Foucault never mentions a glaring logical gap in the dialogue’s elenchus. Socrates’s aforementioned manipulative cajolery eventually leads to the key question that is the “only possible way . . . to find out what we ourselves might be”: they must ask what itself is in itself (*auto to auto*, 129b).²³ This question, however, marked though it is with the “*ti estin*” formulation that introduces all of Socrates’s great investigations (“What is justice?” “What is virtue?”), and expressly denoted as vital to finding out who

we are, is immediately lost and never investigated at all. Instead, it is subsumed into a different question: “What is a man?” (*ti pot’ oun ho anthrōpos*;—a more emphatic and less scientific way of framing the “what is” question, 129e). This avoidance of the key query is too blatant to miss, and must cause readers to view any result achieved without it with suspicion.

Socrates sleekly reaches the conclusion that “If [man] *is* something, he’s nothing other than his soul” (130c). While celebrating this heady conclusion, however, he still pauses to remind Alcibiades that they have cheated a bit:

We skipped over, because it would have taken quite a lot of study . . . what we mentioned just now, that we should first consider what “itself” is, in itself. But in fact, we’ve been considering what an individual self is [*auton hekaston*], instead of what “itself” is. Perhaps that was enough for us, for surely nothing about us has more authority than the soul, wouldn’t you agree? (130d)

It is almost as if Socrates is so nervous that Alcibiades’s new aporetic willingness to philosophize may dissipate at any moment that he speeds to his high-blown conclusions with all the haste he can muster before his promising young friend loses interest. If being sure of what self-cultivation and self-knowledge entail is so vitally important, then one cannot help but distrust any conclusions reached by shirking the most essential inquiries only because they “would have taken quite a lot of study.” In essence, Socrates’s beautiful concluding image of two souls gazing into one another in mutual recognition is comprised—and compromised—by this glaring lack: a refusal to ascertain what the self is in the first place. The two souls admiring one another in reflection are necessarily empty at core until this work is done (if in fact such a thing could ever be discovered in the first place). Socrates’s failure to complete the investigation with Alcibiades means that at the end of the dialogue, neither of the two men, lost in an exchange of flattering, erotic glances, can truly recognize himself or the other. Ancient readers were acutely aware that Alcibiades would go on to lead a life of self-aggrandizement, treachery, and double-dealing, and the apparent happy ending is already loaded with irony from this prior biographical knowledge. In calling our attention to this inadequacy, Plato builds Alcibiades’s inevitable corruption into the construction of the very dialogue meant to represent Socrates’s high hopes for the young man’s future.

Foucault does not remark on this feature of *Alcibiades*, even though it could have lent support to his suspicion that the seed for the future Cartesian self was already planted in this dialogue, which turns the question of *epimeleia heautou* into the imperative of *gnōthi seauton*.²⁴ As soon as the practices of self-care are subordinated to the desire to know the self, an inaccessible space is hollowed out at the center of the self. This empty core is the *auto to auto* that Socrates avoids exploring, and that prefigures the impervious interiority of the modern subject.

The reflecting sheen of Achilles's face echoes in the luster of the crowning roses and in the shimmer of his countenance. When Penthesilea remarks on the gleam of his eye, we are well primed for the mirroring gaze to unfold. Instead, she follows up by questioning Achilles's identity: "Fürwahr! Man mögte, wenn er so erscheint, fast zweifeln, / Daß er es sei." What comes next is a bizarre recognition scene between two characters who know full well who the other is. This remarkable exchange comes out of nowhere. Penthesilea has been addressing Achilles as Achilles throughout this and the previous scenes. The incipient anagnorisis thus begins with a *potential* scene of the reflective gaze. The possible intersubjective mirroring scenario of learning about herself, however, is immediately deflected to a question of the identity of the other.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle calls recognition one of the two most moving elements of tragic plots. He defines it as a "change from ignorance to knowledge leading to friendship or enmity among people bound for good or bad fortune."²⁵ Though today's readers might imagine recognition to be an internal operation of the mind, for Aristotle it was part of the external events of a story—recognition was an action between people in the world rather than a cognitive function within the confines of the brain.

The stage history of dramatic anagnorisis parallels the transition in locating consciousness to within an interior subject. In Ancient Greek and Renaissance plays, characters make surprising discoveries about one another through a wide stockpile of contrivances, signs, and actions. In Euripides's *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, for instance, Aristotle praises the device of the letter Iphigenia wants to send to her brother as the plausible but striking means for her discovery to Orestes. By the time Goethe adapts this play for a post-Enlightenment audience, he dispenses with such theatrical gimmicks. Iphigenie and Orest come to know each other and their own true natures by introspection. Kleist's Penthesilea is often read as an anti-Iphigenie,²⁶ and the unexpected anagnorisis scenario that she engineers here is remarkable for colliding ancient plot-driven recognition with a modern character-based model.

Prior to the play-within-a-play, Penthesilea has been injured and taken prisoner by Achilles. While she is unconscious, her companion Prothoe speaks with Achilles, who reveals that he is in love with the queen. Prothoe beseeches him to hide in the bushes before Penthesilea wakes up so that she can prepare her gently for the news that the queen has been defeated and is a captive to the Greeks. What follows is pure pageantry: Prothoe pretends to Penthesilea that the queen has, in fact, beaten Achilles, who is now her prisoner. Convinced by watching the two women speak that Penthesilea will never accept any lover who has not been conquered by her sword, Achilles emerges from the bushes and plays along, gamely taking on the role of her captive. This bit of metatheater is marked as a recognition drama on multiple levels. In the first place, the whole charade revolves around the problem of how a change in knowledge can lead from enmity to love, which is at the core of Aristotle's definition of anagnorisis. Prothoe also signals the nature of the act she is playing from

its very beginning, when Penthesilea first regains consciousness. The queen asks, “Wo bin ich?” and Prothoe answers with another question: “Kennst du die Stimme deiner Schwester nicht?” (14.1549). By deflecting a simple and natural query about her location into an unsolicited assurance of personal identity, Prothoe heralds the opening of a recognition play in which two actors play fake roles in order to help a nonactor cope with reality.

This *mise-en-abyme* comes to a climax several pages later, after Penthesilea has adorned Achilles with the garlands of flowers that male prisoners of the Amazons wear in the traditional *Rosenfest* before they can be paraded to the women’s beds. She speaks the lines quoted above that should trigger a Platonic mirroring scene but then shifts to doubt whether the beautiful man is really Achilles. He protests:

ACHILLES. Ich bin’s.
 PENTHESILEA. *nachdem sie ihn scharf angesehen:*
 Er sagt, er sei’s.
 PROTHOE. Er ist es, Königin;
 An diesem Schmuck hier kannst du ihn erkennen.
 PENTHESILEA. Woher?
 PROTHOE. Es ist die Rüstung, sieh nur her,
 Die Thetis ihm, die hohe Göttermutter,
 Bei dem Hephäst, des Feuers Gott, erschmeichelt.
 (15.1791–1804)

ACHILLES. I am the one.
 PENTHESILEA. *after scrutinizing him.*
 He says it’s he.
 PROTHOE. It is he, Queen;
 You can recognize him by this ornament.
 PENTHESILEA. How so?
 PROTHOE. Because, see here, this is the armor
 That Thetis, his immortal mother, won
 By flattery from the god of fire, Hephaestos.
 (88, mod.)

Prothoe points out a token—his famous armor—as proof of who Achilles is. This is a scene straight out of ancient or baroque recognition drama, in which tokens or marks are produced in order to corroborate the discovered identity of characters.²⁷ But what is it doing here, where there has been no separation and no disguise? The scene continues in its almost comical imitation of romance recognitions:

- PENTHESILEA. Nun denn, so grüß ich dich mit diesem Kuß,
 Unbändigster der Menschen, mein! Ich bin's,
 Du junger Kriegsgott, der du angehörst;
 Wenn man im Volk dich fragt, so nennst du mich.
- ACHILLES. O du, die eine Glanzerscheinung mir,
 Als hätte sich das Ätherreich eröffnet,
 Herabsteigst, Unbegreifliche, wer bist du?
 Wie nenn ich dich, wenn meine eigne Seele
 Sich, die entzückte, fragt, wem sie gehört?
- PENTHESILEA. Wenn sie dich fragt, so nenne diese Züge,
 Das sei der Nam', in welchem du mich denkst.—
 Zwar diesen goldnen Ring hier schenk' ich dir,
 Mit jedem Merkmal, das dich sicher stellt;
 Und zeigst du ihn, so weis't man dich zu mir.
 Jedoch ein Ring vermiss't sich, Namen schwinden;
 Wenn dir der Nam' entschwänd, der Ring sich mißte:
 Fändst du mein Bild in dir wohl wieder aus?
 Kannst du's wohl mit geschloßnen Augen denken?
- ACHILLES. Es steht so fest, wie Züg' in Diamanten.
- PENTHESILEA. Ich bin die Königin der Amazonen [. . .]
 Und mich begrüßt das Volk: Penthesilea.
- (15.1805–1824)
- PENTHESILEA. Then I salute you with this kiss, of human
 Beings the most unbridled nature, mine! It is I,
 Young god of war, to whom you now belong!
 And when the people ask, you shall name *me*.
- ACHILLES. Oh you who come to me, a dazzling vision
 Descended from above as from the realms
 Of ether, unfathomable being, who are you?
 How shall I name you when my own soul asks
 In ravishment to whom she now belongs?
- PENTHESILEA. When your soul asks you that, name her these features
 [Züge]:
 These be the name by which you think me.—
 For though I give to you this golden ring,
 Whose every mark can lend you full assurance,
 And people will, if you but show it, lead you to me,
 Yet a ring goes missing, names fade away;
 If you forgot the name, or lost the ring:

Would you still find my image in yourself?
 Can you still think it when you shut your eyes?
 ACHILLES. Engraved as firm as facets [Züg] in diamonds.
 PENTHESILEA. I am the Queen of Amazons [. . .]
 Myself the people call: Penthesilea.

(88–89, mod.)

In short order, Penthesilea provides an evaluation of the various methods of recognition. After Prothoe provides the token to prove Achilles's identity, Penthesilea quizzes him about her own. He begs her to tell him what she is—"Incomprehensible one, who are you?" In response, she suggests three different means by which he can recognize her in the future. She gives him a ring—perhaps the most common cliché of all anagnorisis tokens. She recounts to him her titles and her name. And she demands that he emblazon an image of her physical features in his memory. Object, word, and image, these three, but the greatest of these, for Penthesilea, is the mental image—which most people would consider the most transient and incommunicable of them all. She does not mention a fourth possibility suggested by her own deeds: namely the kiss she bestows on him in salute. In addition to things, names, and images, she could have listed performative *actions*.

The passage deserves a closer reading. After the kiss, the action that significantly does not rate consideration by Penthesilea as a locus of recognition, she declares, "Ich bin's." This is a direct echo of Achilles's own answer to her initial question of his identity ten lines earlier. But whereas Achilles's self-assertion was self-sufficient, Penthesilea's proves to require a subordinate clause in the next line. Achilles answers, "It's me." Penthesilea declares, "It's me . . . to whom you belong. When someone among the people asks you, then name me." As culmination to her interrogation of Achilles's identity, Penthesilea here is giving Achilles the means to be recognized among others: her own name. Her acknowledgment of his recognition will be witnessed among the populace by Achilles's invocation of Penthesilea as his owner: i.e., "Who are you?"—"I belong to Penthesilea." At its outset, therefore, Penthesilea frames the recognition of Achilles in terms of a master/slave relationship. At no point does she express distress at the resulting unfree nature of Achilles's acknowledgement of herself—in fact, when she discovers that he is *willingly* acting the part of her captive (a potential resolution of the master/slave paradox), she is mortified. Penthesilea thus seems quite at home in the subject-object relation between subjects. In Hegelian terms, she remains firmly entrenched in the Cartesian subject's necessary regard of others as objects.²⁸

Just as Penthesilea's "Ich bin's" was a reverberation of Achilles's words with unexpected overtones, Achilles's answer echoes Penthesilea's: "O you, a shining vision [*Glanzerschienung*] to me." Both see a potentially reflective "Glanz" in the other. And indeed Achilles frames his question in a way that is responsive to the fiction he

is playing and that opens up a playful space for intersubjective coming-to-know, as suggested by the gleaming eye: “How do I name you when my own *soul* asks *itself* [sich] to whom it belongs?” Penthesilea’s answer, however, subtly misconstrues and reframes the question: “When *it* asks *you* [dich]” (emphasis added). Her replacement of the reflexive pronoun with the second person is very revealing: For Achilles, the soul and the self are identical; for Penthesilea, the self is separate from the soul.

The elaboration of her answer takes three steps to move from the knowledge of the soul (15.1814–1815) to that of others (15.1816–1818) to that of the self (15.1819–1822). In the first instance, the queen commands: “When [the soul] asks you, then name these features [presumably indicating her own face or body]; that’s the name in which you think me.” Already it is a mental image that provides the grounding of representational thought. It’s not the *word* but the *image* of the facial features that the self thinks in representing other people. In her reframing of Achilles’s question, Penthesilea elides care for the soul into concern for a representational structure of knowledge that bestows extraordinary power to thought. She does not say “think about me,” with a prepositional phrase, but rather makes herself the direct object of thought: “think me.” Moreover, this thinking replaces language with mental pictures. One is reminded of the extraordinary power ascribed to thought in Descartes’s second *Meditation*. “But what then am I? A thing that thinks.”²⁹ This thinking thing never perceives objects directly: “What I thought I had seen with my eyes, I actually grasped solely with . . . my mind.”³⁰ In these two lines, Penthesilea takes Descartes’s representationalism to its logical conclusion in interpersonal relations.

Penthesilea’s next remarks avoid the point of Achilles’s question entirely. He had asked how he should identify her to his soul. Penthesilea now tells him how to identify himself to other people: “I give you this golden ring . . . guaranteeing your safety.” Achilles’s identity here consists again in her mastery over him. The scene of recognition is displaced away from any interaction between Penthesilea and Achilles. Instead, it would be the deictic action of other people who validate and construct the relational subjecthood of the two parties. With the introduction of the physical token of the ring, Penthesilea turns Achilles’s desire for personal recognition (*anagnorisis*) into a question of social identity (*Anerkennung*). She would seem to be turning from Cartesian interiority to Hegelian intersubjectivity. Yet this outward sign was introduced with a caveat “zwar” that qualifies and limits its validity.

The third step in Penthesilea’s analysis of recognition returns to the mental image as the only reliable mode of knowledge. “But rings go missing; names fade away.” Penthesilea rejects both linguistic signs and physical signs. She now asks: “If the name slipped away from you and the ring got lost, would you find out my picture [Bild] within you again?” The formulation of this question emphasizes a complex interiority: “fändst du mein Bild in dir wohl wieder aus?” It is as if the image of Penthesilea were a relic that had to be unearthed from an archeological site.

In place of language and objects, Penthesilea places all her trust in interiorized imagination. This fetishization of the mental picture here amounts to a radical version of Foucault's Cartesian subject, for whom ethical practices have been replaced by internal knowledge. Penthesilea's exoticism and unknowability (as Achilles wonderingly addresses her: "Unbegreifliche") derive from not from her foreign upbringing, alien socialization, or unconventional gendering, but rather from her uncompromising commitment to "the idea" at the heart of classical representation in the Western philosophical tradition.³¹

This entire sequence of cognitivist analysis announces itself blatantly as a theatrical anagnorisis scenario, and it occurs despite the lack of any dramatic need or plot motivation for recognitions at this point in the story. We might call it a case of gratuitous recognition. The very presence of the scene, which comes at the center of the play that Achilles and Prothoe stage for Penthesilea—it is, in effect, a play within a play within a play—serves to underscore the true character of the action of recognition: it is *performance*. This is what happens when people come to know each other: they play roles and act as spectators to the roles of others; the response they give as audience is then in turn calibrated into the others' performances, and vice versa. This constant feedback loop of role-play and gauged reaction makes up the action of recognition: the changes in knowledge manifesting in deeds of friendship or enmity. Recognition is not a flash of insight revealing the secret inner core of one person to another; recognition consists in the entire *system* of interactions that constitute a performative scene between people.

The brilliance of the scene in *Penthesilea* in revealing the performative dynamic of recognition lies only partly in the self-referentiality of the sequence as a gratuitous theatrical device at the center of a *mise en abyme*. The nature of recognition as performance is also displayed by the complete failure of Penthesilea to play along. Even the most honest and truthful recognition scenarios take place through role-play and pretense. One need not be an Odysseus or a Penelope to test loved ones by a bit of—perhaps even unconscious—play-acting. This fact becomes clear in Kleist's drama precisely because of Penthesilea's inability to pretend or to understand when others are "just" pretending. Toward the end of the play, an Amazon describes the final encounter between Penthesilea and Achilles, who had decided to allow the Amazon queen to vanquish him in single combat so that she could lead him away in triumph.

MEROE: Doch jetzt, da sie mit solchen Greulnissen
Auf ihn herangrollt, ihn, der *nur zum Schein*
Mit einem Spieß sich arglos ausgerüstet

(23.2626–2628)

MEROE. But now that with such terror-breathing menace
 She thunders in on him, who, *just for show*
 Came armed, unsuspectingly, but with a spear

(126–127, mod.)

Penthesilea fails to register the *Schein* of pretense.³² Instead of playing along and winning the love of the man she desires—instead, alternatively, of berating him for his insincerity out of insulted pride—Penthesilea descends upon him with her dogs and rends his flesh from his limbs with her teeth. Perhaps the most famous line of the entire play is Penthesilea’s lament, after realizing what she has done, that “kisses” and “bites” (Küsse und Bisse) rhyme, so that “wer recht von Herzen liebt, / Kann schon das eine für das andre greifen” (24.2982–2983; whoever truly loves from the heart can easily grasp one for the other; 145, mod.). The mistake is not simply a neural flaw or a cognitive deficiency within Penthesilea’s brain. The problem instead lies very much in the action of recognition in the world, between people, as they necessarily play act and imaginatively spectate the play-acting of others. Love-bites, as most will probably agree, can be incredibly moving and delicious: because they are *pretend*, and do not result in actual cannibalism. Feigned violence can be tender caresses; deeds of love, play-acts.

In fact it is not the case that communication never succeeds in the play: Achilles and Prothoe understand each other very well, despite the culture and gender gap that divides them. Achilles, the Greek *andros*, and Prothoe, the Amazonian warriorress, *play* together: they manage to interact and coordinate a complex and sustained fiction for the sake of Penthesilea. Achilles even acts in Prothoe’s proposed performance with a minimum of explicit (linguistic) stage directions from her: they live and communicate in an enactive continuum, not in the hermetically sealed, inscrutable interiority of Penthesilea. It is her fellow female, Amazonian Prothoe—and not the male, Greek Odysseus—who decries Penthesilea’s inscrutability. Prothoe’s universalizing follow-up attribution of the queen’s indecipherability to all humans (“jeder Busen . . . ein Rätsel”) is precipitous. Instead of deploring *every* feeling breast as a riddle, she might have confined her conclusion to the unique phenomenon of Penthesilea. Not only is the queen a conundrum to all those around her, Greeks and Amazons alike, but she is even an enigma to herself, as observed through all the skewed instances of reflection above. As long as Penthesilea lacks the capacities required to perform in intersubjective role-play, she will no more achieve self-knowledge through the mirroring actions and words of others than she will come to know and be known by those others.

The theatrics through which Prothoe and Achilles engage with each other illustrate the ongoing construction of their identities through performative acts, whether conscious or not. This recognition work takes place through a back-and-forth of performance and its acknowledged acceptance, consisting in further performances.

Judith Butler provides an excellent model for this performativity as an alternative to Penthesilea's essential selfhood.³³ The superfluous recognition scene in Kleist's play shows how this model is already implicit in Aristotle's claim that anagnorisis is part of the action (*praxis*) imitated by the plot. The action of recognition is necessarily histrionic. *Verstellung*—i.e., disguise and dissimulation—is often treated as if it were the antithesis of recognition and discovery. Characters must overcome role-play in order to reach the authentic self beneath the performance. In fact, *Verstellung* is the inescapable medium and element of knowledge between people in this play. It is because she cannot dissimulate, *sie kann sich nicht verstellen*, that Penthesilea fails to participate in a felicitous recognition scene.³⁴

The danger in this reading of recognition in *Penthesilea* is that it should take the moment of Enlightenment optimism for knowability of self and other implicit in the negative example of the queen's exceptionalism too far. Of course even "successful" recognitions are always fraught with unexpected barriers, inevitable misdirections, and perilous opacities. The performance of anagnorisis is always displacing itself, spilling over onto *andere Schauplätze*, to speak with Freud. In Kleist's play more than elsewhere, the intractable distortions of language and bodies become manifest as the ineluctable medium of any communicative endeavor. There is no way to read away these material barriers to recognition between people. At the same time, however, the character of Penthesilea does embody a special type of incomprehensibility that arises directly from a radical, Cartesian dichotomy between mind and world, and more specifically between mind and mind. She lacks a specific capacity for interacting with others: a facility of play-acting, of engaging in mutual performance.

None of this is to suggest that the tragedy of *Penthesilea* can be reduced to her incapacity to pretend or recognize pretending.³⁵ But this particular feature of the drama—Penthesilea's blindness in interpreting and participating in role-play—does help to identify the action of recognition as dissimulating performance. This conclusion is tied to the claim that Penthesilea herself *becomes* the impossibility of a post-Cartesian model of consciousness rooted in a strict division between mind and world. When Descartes reaches the worst case scenario in his method of radical doubt, he imagines an evil demon, "supremely powerful and clever, who has directed his entire effort to deceiving me." He fancies "all external things" to be "bedeviling hoaxes" and "snares for my credulity."³⁶ This vision of omnipotent dissimulation is the extremity out of which Descartes gives birth to the *cogito*. Only by limiting its self-awareness to the fact of being a "thinking thing" can it wall itself off from the vulnerability to deception. Hence Descartes's strict dualism finds its source in a fear of illusion, the description of which is reminiscent of antitheatrical diatribes common in the seventeenth century. Penthesilea's anathema to play-acting is thus the flipside of her inaccessible interiority. The figure of Penthesilea is a *Sinnbild* of the tragedy that results from taking the inward subject literally rather than figuratively or playfully.

In this trajectory from a series of deflected mirror scenes to a farcical anagnorisis scenario, *Penthesilea* is the ultimate modern subject trying to carry through ancient practices of recognizing herself and others. Her drama does not merely illustrate contemporary discourses, but in fact shows how some of their root concerns are already implicit in Plato and Aristotle. The play performs a *reductio ad absurdum* of classical representation and the interior subject. Positively, it suggests that playful dissimulation is the inescapable medium for the action of recognition. It may seem that Socrates's image of the reflecting eyes, leading as it does to a bright vision of interpersonal edification and the promise of attainable virtue and wisdom, is diametrically opposed to the linguistic and epistemological collapse that the same trope points toward in *Penthesilea*. Yet Kleist's text makes visible the fundamental gap cobbled over in Plato's dialogue, which in turn throws into relief the inadequacy of *Penthesilea*'s Cartesian subjectivity.

Notes

1. See Carol Jacobs, *Uncontainable Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 85–114; Katrin Pahl, "Forgetting Feeling: Kleist's Theatrical Theory of Re-layed Emotionality," *MLN* 124, no. 3 (2009): 680; Michael Chaouli, "Devouring Metaphor: Disgust and Taste in Kleist's *Penthesilea*," *The German Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (1996): 126.
2. More on Lacanian readings of the play below, but for incisive political readings relating to Foucault and Legendre, see Rüdiger Campe, "Zweierlei Gesetz in Kleists *Penthesilea*: Naturrecht und Biopolitik," in *Penthesileas Versprechen: Exemplarische Studien über die literarische Referenz*, ed. Rüdiger Campe (Freiburg: Rombach, 2008), 313–342; Gerard Raulet, "Der opake Punkt des Politischen," also in Campe, *Penthesileas Versprechen*, 343–374.
3. See Bianca Theisen, *Bogenschluss: Kleists Formalisierung des Lesens* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1996), 155; Bettina Menke, "Penthesilea: das Bild des Körpers und seine Zerfällung" in *Erotik und Sexualität im Werk Heinrich von Kleists. Internationales Kolloquium des Kleist-Archivs Sembdner*, ed. Günther Emig and Anton Philipp Knittel (Heilbronn: Stadtbücherei, 2000), 127.
4. Jacobs, *Uncontainable*, 126.
5. Much of interest has been teased out from *Penthesilea* in the context of recognition, yet not in the Aristotelian vein pursued here. Walter Müller-Seidel explores the recurrent theme of *Versehen*—which he combines with a host of revealing imagery about the interdependence of sight and knowledge—in Kleist's work (*Versehen und Erkennen: eine Studie über Heinrich von Kleist* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1961).) Helmut Schneider carries further this analysis of visibility into the realm of theatricality by showing how *Penthesilea*'s staging of recognition is in direct dialogue with earlier German plays of the Enlightenment and Classicism ("Entzug der Sichtbarkeit: Kleist's *Penthesilea* und die klassische Humanitätsdramaturgie" in Campe, *Penthesileas Versprechen* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2008), 127–152.
6. Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2004), 39–48.
7. Rüdiger Campe, "Presenting the Affect: The Scene of *Pathos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and its Revision in Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*," in *Rethinking Emotion: Interiority in Premodern, Modern, and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Rüdiger Campe and Julia Weber (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 49–54.
8. Catherine Newmark, *Passion—Affekt—Gefühl: Philosophische Theorien der Emotionen zwischen Aristoteles und Kant* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2008), 204–221.

9. Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (New York: Picador, 2005), 14–19.
10. Pahl persuasively shows how Kleist’s play offers a model for conceiving of feeling beyond “the antagonism of (body-bound) emotionality and (language-bound) rationality” (668). By arguing that Penthesilea figures as an emblem of Cartesian interiority, my essay may seem at odds with her conclusions. In fact, my reading complements her claims. Penthesilea’s inability to engage in classical practices of intersubjectivity is the tragedy of the modern subject at its extreme of inaccessible interiority. Other figures and passages in the drama open up alternative ways of understanding consciousness.
11. Quotations from Kleist are cited parenthetically by act and line number from *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1993). English is from the translation by Joel Agee and cited by page number. I often modify this metrical translation for greater accuracy, to the unfortunate detriment of Agee’s elegant iambs, and indicate this with “mod.” after the page number. Kleist, *Penthesilea: A Tragic Drama* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).
12. E.g., Gerhard Neumann, “Erkennungsszene und Opferritual in Goethes *Iphigenie* und in Kleists *Penthesilea*” in *Kätchen und seine Schwestern. Frauenfiguren im Drama um 1800*, ed. Günther Emig and Anton Philipp Knittel (Heilbronn: Stadtbücherei, 2000), 38–80.
13. James Phillips offers a suggestive reading of *Penthesilea* through the lens of Kleist’s engagement with Kant’s critical philosophy. My reading of the play takes up Phillips’s early but unpursued suggestion that Kleist’s *Kantkrise* “is not so much Kantian as Cartesian.” *The Equivocation of Reason: Kleist Reading Kant* (Stanford, CA: Stanford U. Press, 2007), 30.
14. See Helga Gallas, *Kleist. Gesetz, Begehren, Sexualität* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2005), 181–183; Evelyn Moore, “The Deadly Gaze: Penthesilea and Achilles in Love,” *(Re-)turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies* 3/4 (2008): 41; and Anthony Stephens, “Verzerrungen im Spiegel. Das Narziß-Motiv bei Heinrich von Kleist,” in *Heinrich von Kleist: Kriegsfall—Rechtsfall—Sündenfall*, ed. Gerhard Neumann (Freiburg im Briesgau: Rombach, 1994), 292. Each of these scholars mention one or two of the mirroring scenes as incidental support for their readings. Chris Cullens and Dorothea von Mücke, in contrast, make all four mirror scenes central to their Lacanian analysis of love: “Love in Kleist’s *Penthesilea* and *Kätchen von Heilbronn*,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 63, no. 3 (1989): 164–177.
15. In fact, the first scholar to question the authenticity and to lament the pervasive high opinion of *Alcibiades* was Kleist’s Berlin contemporary, Friedrich Schleiermacher.
16. E.g., Cassius’s flattering seduction of Brutus to the conspiracy against Caesar: “And since you know you cannot see yourself / So well as by reflection, I, your glass, / Will modestly discover to yourself / That of yourself which you yet know not of” (*Julius Caesar*, 1/2.69–72). Other notable examples occur in *Troilus and Cressida* (act 3, 95–111) and the sonnets.
17. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 65–71; 77–78.
18. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 36–38; 74–76.
19. For Neumann, this is a recognition scene because of its initial encounter between different cultures, genders, and individuals (“Erkennungsszene,” 55). In Aristotle’s terms, it is a recognition scene because it opens up the possibility for “a change in knowledge leading to friendship or enmity.” Aristotle, *Poetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1452a23, my trans.
20. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 58.
21. Although etymologists derive “Gleisner” from older versions of “gleich” (same), they admit that it “im heutigen Sprachgefühl auf ‚gleißen‘ bezogen wird.” Paul Grebe, ed. *Der Große Duden*, vol. 7: *Etymologie. Herkunftswörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1963), 225. “Gleißen” means to glisten, glitter, or gleam.
22. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 77.
23. Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), cited here and below by Stephanos number.

24. Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 68.
25. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452a30, my trans.
26. Gallas, *Kleist*, 209–216.
27. See Terence Cave, *Recognitions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 242–255.
28. Though Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* was published one year earlier than *Penthesilea*, it is highly unlikely that Kleist would have read it. Nonetheless, the *Anerkennung* narrative of the master/slave dialectic is strikingly apt here. The struggle for recognition between subjects as a question of lordship and bondage (as an inevitable objectification of the other subject) is dramatized in many of Kleist's works. Though Campe convincingly shows how Penthesilea later proves herself to be an anti-Hegelian constructivist in contrast to Achilles's essentialist political assumptions (15.1902–1911; Campe, "Zweierlei," 321–324), in this recognition scene Penthesilea is committed to the first steps of Hegel's dialectic, without, however, ever achieving any *Aufhebung* of the subject/object divide.
29. René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 66.
30. Descartes, *Discourse*, 68.
31. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 58–70.
32. Though for the sake of literalness I have rendered "nur zum Schein" as "just for show," Agee translated it as "playfully," which captures the spirit of my reading perfectly.
33. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 524–528.
34. Penthesilea might thus be seen to embody the Kantian duty not to lie, though in her case truth-telling is not a free choice but an ineluctable feature of her character.
35. Nor in any way to downplay the very real difficulties and often insurmountable obstacles of communication between cultures, genders, or individuals.
36. Descartes, *Discourse*, 62.