

Penrose, Jr., Walter D. (2016), *Postcolonial Amazons: female masculinity and courage in Ancient Greek and Sanskrit literature*, Oxford.

This novel work was the first monograph to employ postcolonial theory to analyze gender roles in ancient Greek history and Greek writings on non-Greeks, as well as to explore Greek understandings of masculinity in women. Penrose asserts that the Amazons were an Orientalized, Greek understanding of more historical non-Greek warrior women. He also problematizes the theory of the “other” that has been so prevalent in Classical scholarship, noting that there were many Greeks and many others. He attempts to look at non-Greek warrior women using the postcolonial precept of “Provincializing Athens” (borrowed from Chakrabarty’s “Provincializing Europe”) as a method of rethinking analyses of Amazons and other warrior women. Warrior women are documented archaeologically in many of the same places where the Greeks located the Amazons, in ancient Scythia, Sauromatia, and Thrace. This book is unique in that it seeks to unravel the mystery of the Amazons using not just Greek literature and iconography in comparison to non-Greek material culture, but also because Penrose explores the question from an Indian perspective. In ancient, medieval, and early modern India, women were imported from Central Asia and the Caucasus region, the same places where the Greeks located the Amazons and other societies, such as the Sauromatians, where women fought. Because they could not understand a social context where women had some level of equality with men, the Greeks tended to understand any society where a woman held power as a matriarchy where women ruled over men. The Greeks applied this mode of thinking, Penrose argues, not only to the Sauromatians, but also to other non-Greek societies, such as ancient Caria. He also explores the bravery of Greek women in a number of historical contexts, arguing that while the Greeks all too often theorized that courage was a male trait, they simultaneously recorded a number of historical accounts where women acted with tremendous courage, from mainland Greece to the Hellenistic realms.