



Journal of International Women's Studies

Volume 7 | Issue 2

Article 3

Nov-2005

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Recommended Citation

Mifsud, Mari Lee; Sutton, Jane S.; and Fox, Lindsey (2005). Configurations: Encountering Ancient Athenian Spaces of Rhetoric, Democracy, and Woman. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 7(2), 36-52.

Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol7/iss2/3>

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Configurations: Encountering Ancient Athenian Spaces of Rhetoric, Democracy, and Woman

By Mari Lee Mifsud, Jane S. Sutton, Lindsey Fox

Abstract

This essay encounters configurations of “woman” in the space of rhetoric and democracy. By “configuration” we mean how a woman is postured and positioned in this space. We deal in ancient Athens recognizing that an ancient conceptual space called rhetoric, an art or *techne* of civic discourse, is embedded in the contemporary lived space of American civic discourse always constructing the rhetorical figure of woman and continuously under construction. We explore this conceptual space rhetorically, that is, not to articulate the feelings or meanings the space would have had for the ancient Athenians, but rather to articulate how this conceptual space still figures “woman”. The articulation of conceptual and lived spaces is therefore our framework for seeing power relations and exploring communicative relations in terms of gender, sexuality, and citizenry. Drawing from such diverse fields as philosophy, rhetoric, architecture, classics, archeology, mythology, and women’s studies, we theorize space, experiencing it as active, energetic, and productive, rather than as a backdrop, or a scene, or a place in which things happen(ed). Our lived experience of rhetoric and democracy is shaped by the agora, the civic space of ancient Athens. We are struck by the Temple of Hephaestus, which sits above the *bouleterion*, the place of civic deliberation and persuasion for the ancient Greeks. We experience the domination of “woman,” both in terms of physical space and conceptual space. Our experience of this domination entails an act of seeing (ie. theorizing from the Greek *theorien*, to see) her capture, trade, domestication, commodification, and silencing in the space of rhetoric and democracy. Moreover, we see, hence we theorize, the ways in which this domination of “woman” is considered necessary to create civilization, hence how this domination came to be celebrated, lucrative, virtuous, ideal, and prized. Our act of seeing exposes how the space of rhetoric and democracy has traditionally dominated “woman,” and in our exposé, we become aware of the wares and ware of civic exchange. We experience this awareness as a *limen*, a space of intersection where woman can affirm woman.

Keywords: Rhetoric and Space, Women, Ancient Athens

Introduction

...woman will affirm woman somewhere other than in
silence, the place reserved for her in and through the
Symbolic. May she get out of the booby-trapped silence!
And not have the margin or the harem foisted on her as domain!
Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément [1975] 1986
From The Newly Born Woman

Woman will affirm woman somewhere. But where? In the space of rhetoric? And why not? Would not that site of public speaking so often used for assertion, declaration,

statement, and pronouncement get her out of the booby-trapped silence? But wait! Could not that space be a seine, yet another margin or harem foisted on her as domain?

We think about rhetoric.¹ Drawing from Henri Lefebvre, a French intellectual activist of the twentieth century whose work on space is most noteworthy, we consider rhetoric as a space, a conceptual space and a physical space, a mental space, and a lived space: it is a space conceived and lived through images and symbols whether supplied by the space or denied.² We engage in an act of seeing space as active, energetic, and productive, rather than as a backdrop, or a scene, or a place in which things happen (Lefebvre 190). In this space of rhetoric, we experience the domination of “woman.” Our experience of this domination entails an act of seeing, ie. theorizing from the Greek *theorien*, to see, her capture, trade, domestication, commodification, and silencing. Moreover, we see, hence we theorize, the ways in which this domination of “woman” is considered necessary to create civilization, hence how this domination came to be celebrated, lucrative, virtuous, ideal, and prized. And we ask ourselves, but “where woman”?

We use the word “woman” to signify the body. Our view of the body is congruent with our view of space. This congruence directs our attention from body and space as objects, to body and space as situations. “The body is not a thing, it is a *situation*: it is our grasp on the world and a sketch [*esquisse*] of our projects (Beauvoir, 30).”³ We use the word “where” not as a signification of place but as a figure of situations, of her situation as being aware of being wares of civic exchange.

We orient our gaze towards the birth of rhetoric in the fourth century BCE, classical Athenian agora, the physical and conceptual space of deliberative politics. To the ancient Greeks, rhetoric was born to serve democracy. Democracy depends on successful deliberation and persuasion, and successful deliberation and persuasion depend on the art of the rhetor. Among the classical rhetoricians, whether Isocrates, Aristotle, or Cicero, rhetoric is celebrated. In this great theme song, rhetoric is central in the creation and cultivation of deliberative politics where the contingencies of public life are freely debated and decided upon.⁴ They speak of the space of rhetoric, and enclose it as a rhetoric.

This celebration of the relational dynamic between rhetoric and democracy is what we call the face work of freedom--the face of freedom’s discourse. In popular contemporary American rhetoric, for example, we hear of women’s liberation in democracy, her gender equity, and her equal opportunity to speak in deliberative politics. This rhetoric is the face of freedom’s discourse. However, it should come as no surprise that excessive refinements and amplifications of this face distort the situation, thus producing the covert, clandestine, and repressed relations of rhetoric, democracy, and woman. Drawing from Lefebvre, we see in conceptual space, there are excessive refinements and amplifications we can call a façade, like the privileged side of a monument directed toward the observer. Just as there is a privileged side to a physical monument, called a façade, there is a façade of rhetoric. This façade is “frontal, public, and overt,” and the privilege of this façade makes it “brutal” (33). We wish in this essay to expose how this privilege shapes woman’s lived space. In this exposé, we bring to light what once has passed through the agora, of what has deeply touched us, and of what still deeply haunts us. That which deeply haunts us in this space is the configuring, the imagining, the forming, and the shaping of woman. Recognizing the living legacy of the

agora, we ask: How has woman been configured by the space of rhetoric and democracy?⁵ In other words, we are asking how is woman postured and positioned in the space? We are aware she was barred from entering the agora. Yet we are aware of her everywhere in this space, configured as dominated for the sake of Athenian civilization. Moreover, we are aware of her domination configuring the space of rhetoric and democracy. Once configured, this space, in turn, sustains the domination of woman. Our awareness exposes these configurations of domination and space in the relations between rhetoric, democracy, and woman in the Athenian legacy. In our exposé, we become aware of wares and ware of civic exchange. We experience this awareness as a limen, a space where woman can affirm woman.

Being Aware

Standing today in the agora, among the ruins of the bouleterion (meaning the space of the *boule*, the political assembly), we are aware less of the activity of deliberation and debate proper to this space and more the presence of a temple looming directly above us on the crowning hill of the agora. We know, as Lefebvre notes, founding images of Greek space were always ideally placed, well chosen, and well situated (249). For this reason, our awareness is drawn to this temple, called the Hephaestion, after its spiriting god of metallurgy Hephaestus. This temple stands above the ruins of the agora, in most immediate proximity to the bouleterion. Pericles, known by some as the Father of Democracy, had the temple built to spirit the civic space with economic well-being (see figure 1).

Temple of Hephaestus overlooking the Athenian agora

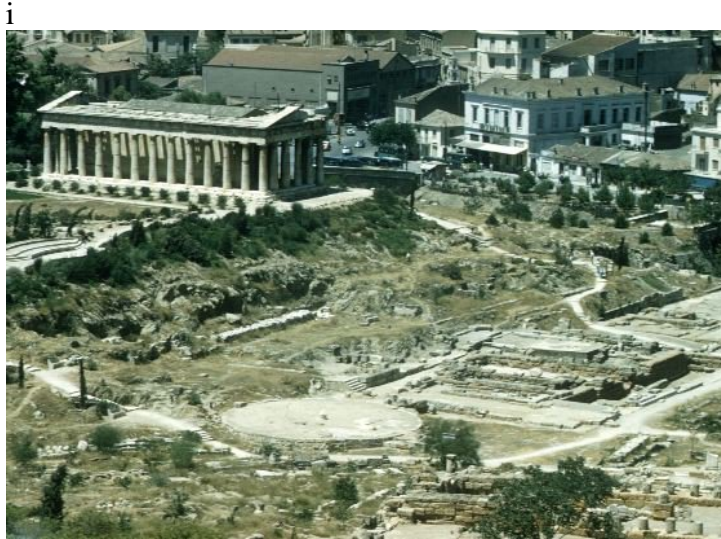


Figure 1.

We climb the hill of the agora to tour the temple, for we accept the traces of supremacy this temple bears upon the agora at large, and the bouleterion in particular. Exploring this supremacy will help us become aware of the wares and ware of civic exchange. We take seriously the dominating presence of this temple. Given how closely it mimics the Parthenon, which dominates the physical space of classical Athens and the

conceptual space of her values, we see how it dominates the smaller physical space of the bouleterion, and the conceptual space of the values therein.

We see the temple mimics the Parthenon, and the two stand prominently enough on their respective hills to create contact, both physical and conceptual (see figures 2-3). We know that situated on the acropolis, the Parthenon spirits all of Athens. As Frieda Brown and William Tyrrell write, “The Parthenon itself bears witness to the resources and power of the Athenian empire while its mythmaking defines the images Athenians would project of themselves” (187). They go on to say that the myths spiriting the Parthenon send messages that admit no ambiguity and would terrify anyone who perceived the fatal certainty that the Athenians were the civilizers of the world (187). The Parthenon’s spiritual influence was so great that other buildings like the temple of Hephaestus were modeled after it in format, subject matter, style, and manner of carving.

The Parthenon



Figure 2.

Sculpted Metopes on the Parthenon



Figure 3.

We see these similarities. Most obviously, both are on the highest hills of their respective spaces. And both are made of marble: the Parthenon entirely, the temple mostly, with the slight exceptions of the lowest step of limestone, a wooden ceiling over the cella, and terracotta tiles (Lawrence 126). But that the temple is made mostly of marble is a striking observation considering that three other buildings of the same type (the temples of Poseidon at Sounion, Nemesis at Rhamnous, and Ares in the agora) are not (133). The marble of the Parthenon and the Hephaestion marks supremacy through the preciousness and strength of the stone. Their height on their respective hills marks their supremacy through a terrifying verticality (see figures 4-5), secreting a brutality of domination.

Temple of Hephaestus Mimics the Parthenon



Figure 4.

Temple of Hephaestus Mimics the Parthenon



Figure 5.

Seeing this terrifying verticality, and the implications of domination, we have a heightened awareness of this temple looming above the bouleterion. We notice first what A. W. Lawrence calls “refinements to excess” in the temple of Hephaestus, something controlled by a keener aesthetic sense in the Parthenon (129). These refinements to excess configure the façade of the temple, its frontal, public, overt, and hence brutal face. What are these refinements to excess? They include, for example, all the sculpted

metopes of the temple being concentrated on the front or just around the corners over the two most easterly intercolumniations of each side. We notice that elsewhere the metopes are plain. In addition, we notice the “unprecedented combination of a relatively high entablature . . . with unduly slim columns” (129). Compared to the Parthenon, the Hephaestion is overly decorated on its face, under-decorated on its non-privileged sides, with seemingly faulty proportions in its columns. The architectural excesses of the temple make it seem strange compared to the subtler aesthetic balance of the Parthenon. This strangeness demands further perspective. Therefore, we descend from the crowning hill to look at the temple from the agora. At the bottom of the hill, standing in front of the Hephaestion, we find ourselves in the bouleterion, the principal space of rhetoric and its art of deliberation. From this perspective, and from the study of perspective in Athenian architecture, which we know as an intellectual and artistic preoccupation of ancient Athenians, we see these refinements to excess disappear. As Lawrence puts it, “the Hephaestion lacks vitality when seen from any direction except below, from the agora (the civic meeting place) of ancient Athens . . . there is clear evidence that this viewpoint was regarded as the most important . . .” (129). That this particular building abounds with minor optical corrections makes the view from the agora perfect. The act of seeing is from the agora, and in particular the bouleterion, the space in closest proximity to the temple.

As we look at the face of the temple of Hephaestus we see the sculpted metopes depicting the mythic labors of Heracles.⁶ The act of seeing these metopes brings awareness to woman’s configuration in the civic space as a ware of exchange. We see in the metopes only a part of the mythic whole of Heracles’s labors, as we are aware that a myth set in stone never tells the whole story. Moreover, we see this part as a strategic construction of the mythic labors, designed to spirit the temple and the bouleterion in the agora below. Thus our act of seeing the metopes is metonymical, meaning that we are aware of the metopes as parts of the mythic whole of the labors of Heracles, and that simultaneously we are aware of how the mythic whole transmutes the metopes. Our metonymical act of seeing brings to the metopes an awareness that some mythic parts are left uncarved.

By conventional view, Heracles had twelve labors, and these labors occurred in the following order: 1) Nemean Lion; 2) Lernaean Hydra; 3) Ceryneian Hind; 4) Erymanthian Boar; 5) Stables of Augeias; 6) Stymphalian Birds; 7) Cretan Bull; 8) Mares of Diomedes; 9) Hippolyte’s Girdle; 10) Cattle of Geryon; 11) Apples of the Hesperides; 12) Capture of Cerberus. However, the depiction of these labors on the temple of Hephaestus takes on a new configuration, an arrangement that shapes the space of rhetoric and democracy: 1) Nemean Lion; 2) Lernaean Hydra; 3) Ceryneian Hind; 4) Erymanthian Boar; 5) Cretan Bull; 6) Mares of Diomedes; 7) Capture of Cerberus; 8) Hippolyte’s Girdle; 9) Cattle of Geryon (which is depicted in two metopes); and 10) Apples of the Hesperides (see figures 6-7).

Labors of Heracles by Mythical Arrangement

Nemean Lion
Lernaean Hydra
Ceryneian Hind
Erymanthian Boar
Stables of Augeias
Stymphalian Birds

Cretan Bull
Mares of Diomedes
Hippolyte's Girdle
Cattle of Geryon
Apples of the Hesperides
Capture of Cerberus

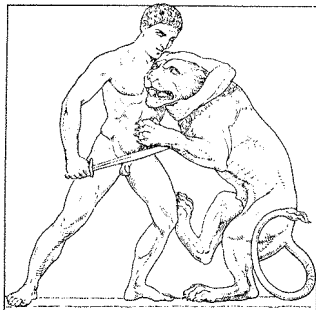
Figure 6.

Labors of Heracles as Arranged on the Temple of Hephaestus

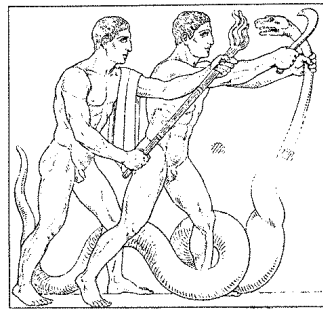
Nemean Lion	
Lernaean Hydra	
Ceryneian Hind	
Erymanthian Boar	
Cretan Bull	
Mares of Diomedes	
Capture of Cerberus	
Hippolyte's Girdle	
Cattle of Geryon	Cattle of Geryon
Apples of the Hesperides	

Figure 7.

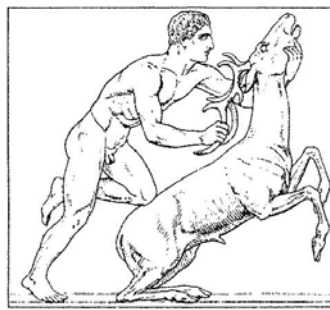
Metopes of The Labors of Heracles on the Temple of Hephaestus



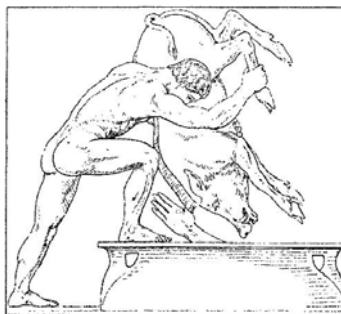
The Nemean Lion



The Lernaean Hydra



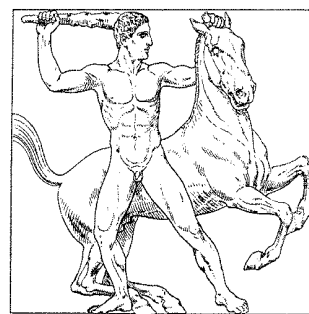
The Ceryneian Hind



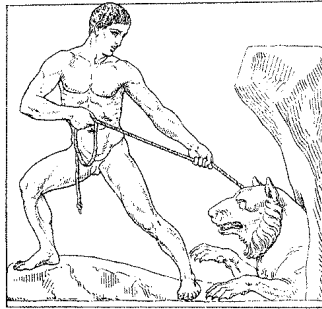
The Erymanthian Boar



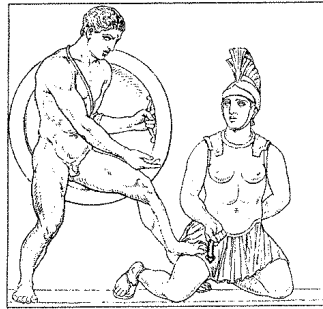
The Cretan Bull



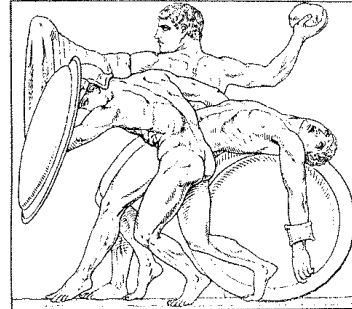
The Mares of Diomedes



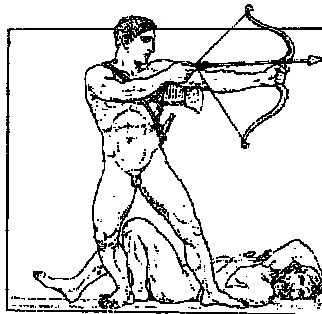
The Capture of Cerberus



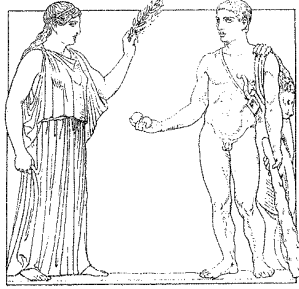
Hippolyte's Girdle



The Cattle of Geryon



The Cattle of Geryon



The Apples of The Hesperides

Figure 8

Three changes must be noted in this configuration, namely the disposition of the labors, with the Capture of Cerberus being disposed from the 12th labor to the 6th labor, the exclusion of particular labors, namely the Stables of Augeias and the Stymphalian Birds, and the amplification of the Cattle of Geryon in two metopes. This configurational pattern informs the civic space of the bouleterion in particular and strategic ways. Engaging a metonymical act of seeing, we take a closer look at each labor, as well as the complete configurational pattern on the temple. This will help us see the space of rhetoric and democracy in the Athenian agora, and the configuration of woman as wares of civic exchange.

Being Wares

The Lion: In the first metope, Heracles dominates the lion by gripping it around the neck, choking, and killing it. Although we see a sword on the metope, the myth tells that this is a bloodless domination in and through the grip. The myth also tells that Heracles in the end uses the claws of the lion to flay it, steal its impenetrable pelt, and wear it to prevent his own vulnerability. Thus we become aware of the bloodless domination, slaughter, and trade of the powers of the other.

The Hydra: In the second metope, Heracles dominates the Hydra. We see him depicted in two stances, the first carrying a flame, and the second preparing to sever her head. The myth tells that Heracles uses the flame to sear the roots of the monster's head to prevent the blood flow, and then severs the immortal head, killing the Hydra. The myth tells that Heracles steals the poisonous gall of the Hydra to use for his own protection in the future. Domination. Bloodlessness. Slaughter. Trade.

The Hind: In this metope, we see Heracles force the Hind onto its haunches by pulling its horns back, exposing its throat. The myth tells that Heracles dominates but does not kill the Hind. He pins her forelegs together with an arrow, which passes between bone and sinew, drawing no blood. The metope does not show the weapon. The capture of the Hind represents in the myth the hunt for wisdom. The Hind, hence wisdom, is then kept alive as a captive. Domination. Bloodlessness. Capture. Trade.

The Boar: Heracles dominates but does not kill the Boar in the next metope. He turns it upside down, and the myth tells that he delivers it to the marketplace where another hand takes it over. Domination. Bloodlessness. Capture. Trade. One caveat emerges in this trade. Different from the trade of the powers of the Lion, Hydra, and Hind, the trade of the boar is an economic trade, a marketplace exchange.

The Cretan Bull: In the fifth metope, Heracles captures the Cretan Bull. The myth tells that after a long struggle, and despite the fact that the Bull belches scorching flames, Heracles captures it. Not depicted in the metope, but part of the myth of the Cretan Bull, is the story following the capture. Heracles brings the monster to Erytheus who dedicates it to Hera. Hera loathes the gift because it redounds Heracles' glory. Domination. Bloodlessness. Capture. Trade. And a refusal by a woman to accept any of it.

So far we have seen that in the labors of the Lion and the Hydra, the Other is dominated and killed, and in the kill the powers of the Other are captured and traded for the protection of the dominator, Heracles. From the Lion and the Hydra, our eye goes to the Hind, the Boar, and the Bull. None are killed, but all are captured and traded. The common threads through all five are bloodlessness and trade, so regardless of whether Heracles kills the Other, he has no blood on his hands, and the Other, whether dead or alive, is dominated and traded. We become aware of the Other as a ware of exchange. In two labors, the Other is overtly gendered female, configuring woman as a vulnerable population to domination, akin to beasts.

The Mares: Now we see Heracles, with club in hand, upstaging one of the Mares, gripping its mane, appearing to dominate it. However, the myth tells that the object of Heracles' club is not the Mare, but the Mare's owner, Diomedes. Heracles kills Diomedes, and captures all his Mares. Upon capture, as the myth explains, the Mares come to know bit and bridle for the first time, hence their powers are harnessed. Domination. Bloodlessness. Capture. Trade. Domestication.

The Capture of Cerberus: Heracles, with only the assistance of a chain, leads the Cerberus dog out of Hades, as he is directed to do so without club or arrow. The leading of the dog follows from the leading of the Mares of Diomedes, marking a domination characterized more by leading and disciplining than by overpowering and killing.

Note that in the metope the body of Heracles in relation to the Mare and the Dog stands in sharp contrast to the body of Heracles in relation to the Lion, Hydra, Hind, Bull, and Boar. In the latter group, Heracles leans into and on the Other, whereas he leans away from the Mare and the Dog. This shifts our gaze from violent, albeit bloodless, domination to moderate domination in the form of leading. Domination. Bloodlessness. Capture. Trade. Through leadership.

Hippolyte's Girdle: Amplifying the visual shift from violent to moderate domination, we see in this metope Heracles pinning the leg of Hippolyte, Queen of the Amazons, with his foot. Hippolyte is reaching for her girdle as she gazes up at Heracles.

The myth tells that she is prepared to hand over the girdle on account of her attraction to Heracles. Whereas in previous metopes, we see beasts gendered female, in this metope, we see an actual woman. The significance of the Amazon Queen's girdle arises from the reversal of gender roles. The girdle symbolizes woman as warrior and governor and man as household keeper (Graves 131). According to Graves, "The victories over the Amazons secured by Heracles...record, in fact, setbacks to the matriarchal system in Greece...." (134). While we do not invest in Graves "record, in fact," we invest in the configuration of woman as giving over her power in the creation of a patriarchal civilization. This gift of the girdle undermines having such a thing as matriarchy. Domination. Bloodlessness. Capture. Trade. Undermining matriarchy.

The Cattle of Geryon: This mythic labor is anomalous, depicted in two metopes. The first metope, the only one not depicting Heracles, shows only the image of Geryon, as a three-bodied man, linked at the waist. In the first metope, Geryon is attacking, defending and relinquishing. In the second metope, we see Geryon lying on the ground, with Heracles standing above him bending his bow, the weapon that brought Geryon's death. The anomaly here is the doubling of this labor, and the masking of the actual labor, the driving away of Geryon's cattle. These metopes depict only Geryon and his murder. How do we make sense of this? If we follow the overall procession of the labors, we can compare this to the procession of the metopes of the Parthenon. On the Parthenon we see a gradual separation of man from various uncivilized others, symbolized as non-human monsters and beasts. The same is true for the Temple of Hephaestus, as Heracles gradually separates himself from the uncivilized others of beasts and monsters, including a Queen of the Amazons. The killing of Geryon is doubled and emphasized in its depiction because it marks the final separation of the hero from the uncivil, from the monstrous. With this final separation, civilization can proceed. We know from the myth that the bent bow Heracles holds symbolizes ruling and governing. With this power of governance, Heracles drives away Geryon's cattle. And this cattle drive becomes symbolic of the creation of civilization. As Heracles drives the cattle he civilizes all he encounters, abolishing barbarous customs, slaughtering wild beasts, and creating roads. That the cattle drive is not carved on the metope, and the domination of Geryon is, marks the significance of portraying domination of the Other as a requisite condition for the development of civilization. Domination. Capture. Governance. Civilization.

The Apples of the Hesperides: This metope, like the previous two, does not feature the actual labor. Whereas the metopes of Geryon feature the preparation for the labor of driving the cattle, namely the killing of Geryon, the depiction of the Apples of the Hesperides features the outcome of the labor, namely the delivery of the golden apples cunningly stolen from Atlas and delivered to Athena. In this depiction, we see Heracles adorned with symbols of the captured powers of the Other, namely the pelt of the Nemean Lion. In the metope, the golden apples symbolize the exchange of the commodities secured by Heracles in his labors for the olive branch, a symbol of peace and civilization for Athens.

The myth tells a different story about Heracles's exchange of the apples. In the myth, he gives the apples to Athena to secure his immortality, not Athen's peace and prosperity. We are told as well in the myth that Athena is offended, for Heracles is the

not the right giver of the apples. The apples belong to Hera's orchard; the only rightful givers then are Hera and her nymphs, the Hesperides, who guard the orchard.

In this myth, Athena protects the fruits of woman's labor. Yet, when she is configured on the final metope, she is not protective of woman, and her labors. This configuration draws from other mythic associations of Athena as male associated and protective of man's labors. She is the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, born from her father Zeus's head, rather than her mother's womb. Her genesis configures her powers and her spiritual governance from a man's head. That she has a woman's body does not overrule her genesis. We see her male association performed most fully in the story Aeschylus tells of her in the Eumenides. Her wisdom tells her to free Orestes from death for having killed his mother on the grounds that he did not kill his true parent. Athena's wisdom holds that a mother's body is irrelevant when determining parentage and the allegiance of a child. Her judgment in Orestes trial sides with Apollo's order of justice, and against the Eumenides. This, too, is a noteworthy performance of her male association, considering that the Eumenides are women. We are aware, then, that Athena, as configured on the metope accepts Heracles' gifts, hence despite having the body of a woman, she is male associated, sanctioning with reward, the domination of the Other.

This metope is significant as the final metope. We see in this metope Heracles' arrival as the ideal citizen, after having dominated, captured, and traded the Other for the sake of civilization. We see in this metope, as well, the configuration of Athena as sanctioning and rewarding with civilization the masculine labors of domination. But more than these sights, we see a configuration of gift-exchange masking the labors of domination. We see this configuration as a façade of citizenry. This façade is productive of space. This final metope is a productive moment. It produces the covert, clandestine, and repressed relations between rhetoric, democracy, and woman.

Having seen these labors individually for their unique representation of space, we now take a more general look. We see the posturing of Heracles on the face of the temple of Hephaestus mirror the distinct posturing of the statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, who were given credit for being the first to give their lives in an attempt to free Athens from tyranny in 514 BCE (Woodford 150).⁷ As Susan Woodford points out, these men were "glorious representatives of the Athenian love of freedom and of the Athenian democracy, and it must have been with this glamorous aura that they were adapted for use in representations of Theseus" (151). Theseus and his model Heracles are characterized as Athenian heros and models for the Athenian citizen. The depicted ease of Heracles's labors is also significant. Most other depictions of Heracles's labors--mainly in vase paintings--show "obvious exhaustion" (19). This puts Heracles "in a very human light, tired out by his seemingly endless labours" (19). On the metopes of the temple of Hephaestus, Heracles's effortless and indefatigable postures of domination mark what Lefebvre calls a gesture: The "'gestural' takes in the gestures of labor" (212). The gestural body articulates space, stipulates an affiliation to that society through labor. Using the example of the agora, Lefebvre notes that laboring bodies themselves generate spaces, spaces that are produced by and for their gestures (216). Heracles' gestural labor depicted in the sculpted metopes on the face of the Hephaestion articulate effortless and indefatigable domination, and this articulation generates a space where that labor can be activated, mobilized, energized. We see that this space is the space of the agora in

general and the bouleterion in particular, designed for, appropriate to, and supportive of domination.

All of this we see from below, from the bouleterion, looking westward up the steep verge at the eastern face of the temple of Hephaestus. The question arises in us of what the face faces beyond the bouleterion. So our act of seeing must turn to the east. We allow the bouleterion, which extends fully to the south of where we stand, to guide our turn. Slowly, we turn south to face eventually the east. In the immediate point in the east, directly across the street from the bouleterion, we see the space where the temple of Ares once stood. Whereas this space has only meager stones remaining, the temple insinuates itself in space (Lefebvre 251). This temple becomes a focal point in our act of seeing. We know this temple on the face as nearly identical in form and structure to the Temple of Hephaestus (Lawrence 133). The architectural congruence signals for us a mythic congruence. Ares and Hephaestus face off in their desire for Aphrodite, for completing the circle of our vision, glancing towards the north, we see the space where the temple of Aphrodite once stood. The resulting configuration is that of a triangle, with the Temple of Hephaestus in the West, the Temple of Ares in the East, and the Temple of Aphrodite in the North. This triangle sits atop the bouleterion. As the temple of Hephaestus sits atop the bouleterion on a westward hill, this triangle sits atop the bouleterion, on the same plane, to the north. Both spaces dominate the bouleterion, one physically, and one conceptually. The conceptual space of the triangle can be seen through the myth.

In the myth made famous in Homer's *Odyssey*, Hephaestus learns from the sun that Aphrodite, his wife, is having an affair with Ares. So Hephaestus fashions, through his *techne*, which is also his labor, an invisible net made out of gold with strength unbreakable by even the gods, and he covers the bed of the lovers. When Aphrodite and Ares attempt to lie together, they become trapped in the net, and frozen in place by the strength of its bonds. All the gods gather around and laugh at the two imprisoned lovers, except Poseidon, who doesn't laugh. Instead, he gazes upon Aphrodite smitten with desire for her, and he offers to pay Hephaestus the cost of the marriage-gifts for her freedom. The economic exchange takes place, and Aphrodite is released to Poseidon. Aphrodite then goes on to repay her debt to Poseidon by pleasing him along with his friends and bearing their children. This exchange whores her.

Being Ware

Facing the temple of Aphrodite, the pinnacle of the triangle to the north, with the temples of Hephaestus and Ares at our sides, and the bouleterion at our back, we are now in an act of seeing the conceptual capture and trade of woman activating, motivating, and energizing the space of deliberation. The capture and trade of Aphrodite signals a particular kind of exchange. This exchange is generated by abstraction, namely the abstraction between givers and things given. As anthropologist Marcel Mauss' groundbreaking study of archaic gift cultures shows, the abstraction between persons and things in an act of exchange signals a state economy at work, and not a gift economy (Mauss 71 ff.). A state economy figures exchange in such a way as to benefit the interests of the state. In the case of the ancient Greeks, the state is the polis, the civic space of deliberation and a civic marketplace not just of things but of ideas. Givers are no longer giving of themselves something personal, intimate, and relational. Givers are

now giving things that are separate from the persons giving. Hence, we are aware of givers not just as traders but traitors. And we are aware that things given are no longer gifts but commodities: passive, inert, silenced. We see this in Aphrodite, a piece of goods, insofar as the exchange between Hephaestus and Poseidon foists the harem, hence silence, upon her.

Recalling the final metope, we see as well how exchange is configured in and through a fundamental abstraction between persons and things. In a proper gift, the thing given is intimately *remarkable* for its connection to the giver; hence the gift always bears traces (marks) of the giver. Gifts bear traces of others. But we see no signs of a gift economy in the space of the bouleterion. What we see here is trade that bears not the traces of others, but of operations, technical procedures well employed to secure commodities. And these commodities are re-invested in the means of production.⁸ Our memories in this exchange are confined and reduced to the operations of *techne*—whether Hephaestus’s *techne* in trapping and trading Aphrodite, or Heracles’s *techne* in dominating the Other. This *techne* constructs exchange in the bouleterion. The space of deliberation is now activated, motivated, and energized by a *techne* of exchange that bears no traces of others, only operations to secure commodities. It should come as no surprise then that rhetoric was theorized by Aristotle and others as a *techne* of civic discourse.

Whereas notions of communication derived from this Athenian legacy attend to the “*communis*” of communication—the communion, commonness, oneness, community—we see the “*munis*” of communication, the exchange.⁹ Our space-work exposes the operation of a communicative space called rhetoric which shapes speech in a democracy. Our labor exposes the traces of others, their domination, capture, trade, and their general sacrifice to the production of civilization.¹⁰ We can see now in the space of rhetoric and democracy the successful operations of a *techne* to secure the necessary commodities or wares of a civilization. We can see now the legacy of the ancient Athenian configuration of woman in the space of rhetoric and democracy. In this space she is dominated, captured, and traded in the labor of civilization. Our act of seeing makes us aware of the wares and the ware of civilization.

Where Woman?

Where woman? Where? In the space of rhetoric? It does not seem possible. Yet rhetoric, associated as it is with public deliberation, is our situation. What logic shall we invoke if we are to be released from the space reserved for us? Aware of the ware of civic exchange, we know that to express our appeal through logical forms of assertion, declaration, statement, and pronouncement invests our speech with authority to be sure, but this appeal risks proliferating a legacy of domination.

In an effort to grasp our situation, the work by French polymath and cultural critic Michel Serres opens up a possibility, a way out, a *sortie*, by supposing a randomness to logic.¹¹ A paradox of random logic opens up a trip to an unfamiliar liminal space away from the legacy of the ancient Athenian agora. What’s more, Serres goes too, to the labors of Heracles, to illustrate the random logic of virtue and vice, a randomness that paradoxically produces necessary space, seemingly permanent and unchanging. So,

Serres supposes, we should “rewrite the twelve labors having supposed that the hero chose the path of vice....” (19).

Through this sortie, we suppose the possibility of perverting the familiar space by positing randomness to its logic. In rewriting the labors as such, we see the virtue of the Other played out over and over in the mythic struggles of Heracles’ labors. We see the Other forging a way through, turning and twisting, resisting the space of domination, capture, and trade. The lion’s leg pushing. The Hinds’ legs rearing. The Hydra’s body wrapping. A hand slapping. The Bull writhing. The Mare launching. The dog swiping. Geryon grabbing. And Hippolyte reaching. All this and more signifies a change in the position of the figures resulting from a change of disposition in which the labors are viewed. Yet in this rewriting, the figures are developed from within a legacy of domination: the dominating power of Heracles—his labors all the more impressive to any audience—now or then—given the resistance. This rewriting does not make space for radical transformation, just for impressive domination. Is this not a façade?

We see another sortie —“rewrite the twelve labors”—to leave the legacy and to limn. To limn is to paint/speak/write with the shadows. To limn entails crossing a threshold. Traversing thresholds “has always been a topos of the commencement speaker” and thus of the space of rhetoric, but seldom “are the requisite invitations to cross the threshold crafted with the vision and imagination of dreamers” (Morris 207). Dreamers that we are, we limn the limen. The limen according to Victor Turner (1974, 1992) is “neither here nor there.”(1974, 232). It is, loosely speaking, a place of discovery of finding or of inventing. Following the forms of “limn” in the Oxford English Dictionary, we get to “limb”, as in “life and limb.” We suppose from this that to limn is to live. We suppose, also, that to limn is to live as woman. It comes as no surprise to us then, that Limenia is an epithet of Aphrodite (Pausanias, 2.34.11). Aphrodite as the figure of woman is a liminal figure. As the limen, she is a space that intermingles the proportional and twisted, the contained and liberated. She, as the figure of “woman,” grasps the space of radical transformation.¹²

Having seen what we have of the space of rhetoric—the agora, that place of deliberation, and the aura of the temple—we now limn. We cross the threshold. We see our sortie open between the fourth and seventh metopes, an opening made possible by the exclusion of the fifth and sixth mythic labors on the Hephaestion. The crossing, therefore, will go through the excluded middle. By crossing over the threshold betwixt and between labors included and excluded we can enact a transformation. Going in between the excluded middle changes our position, our posture, how we see, how we *configure*. We italicize *figure*, now, to draw attention to the figural possibilities of theorizing rhetoric, democracy, and woman in the limen. This is our plan: to shift attention away from what is seen on the temple to what can give sight to the eyes. What can give sight to the eyes entails figuring, limning, “limbing to life”, a new performance practice. Such is where.

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Endnotes

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25, 2001, and through Lindsey Fox's undergraduate honors thesis in Rhetoric and Communication Studies, "Illuminating a Space for Women in Democracy."

² We wish to distinguish our approach from Lorraine Code, Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations (New York and London: Routledge, 1995). Unlike Code who looks at spaces AS rhetorical, we treat rhetoric, the site of deliberation and persuasion as a space.

³ Our discussion of the body from de Beauvoir is informed by Toril Moi, *What is Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 59-250.

⁴ We also see these celebrations in dominant histories of rhetoric. See for example, Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim. ed., Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publisher, 2004), George A. Kennedy, A New History of Classical Rhetoric (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁵ We cannot be blind to the fact that we write as white American women of a certain socio-economic privilege. We say "we" recognizing our locality as women, and also recognizing, as Beauvoir, The Second Sex. does, a "we" that expresses a collective, political, activist group, a "we" necessarily expressed in the face of the globalization of democracy. We recognize our use of "we" as necessary, but not sufficient. "Proletariats say 'We'; Negroes also." But women rarely say "we," except "at some congress of feminists or similar formal demonstration" (xviii-xix).

⁶ On the frontal sides of the front face, we see the labors of Theseus. Theseus who was called "this other Heracles" was one of the most prominent figures defining the ideal Athenian citizen. Leaders of the time portrayed him in a favorable light as "the Athenian national character" causing Athenians to dub him "a champion of freedom and benefactor of their democracy" Susan Woodford, Images of Myths in Classical Antiquity (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 171. The myths of Theseus played an obvious role in how Athenians perceived the ideal citizen. Our project focuses on Heracles since he is the principle figure depicted on the front face, and the figure of Theseus on the sides is an amplification of Heracles.

⁷ Woodford (149-150) explains that after 510 B.C.E. Harmodios and Aristogeiton were honored as tyrannicides for having fought of tyranny, and their statues were erected in the agora. The Persian King Xerxes looted the originals, but replicas are thought to be similar.

⁸ For a critique of the restricted economy of the reinvestment of commodities into the means of productions, see Georges Bataille, The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

⁹ On the significance of "munis as the etymological root of communication," see also John Durham Peters, Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹⁰ On the ill effects of the sacrifice of the other in the restricted economy of rhetoric, see Michelle Ballif, Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001).

¹¹ See Cixous, "Sorties".

¹² We are indebted to Paul Friedrich's The Meaning of Aphrodite for inviting us to suppose as such. For additional comment on epithets of Aphrodite, see Sutton and Mifsud.