For many today, myself included, Amazons represent a positive image of female empowerment (an image, in no small part, due to Wonder Woman’s influence on our culture)

However, the historical record of their myth presents a different status altogether

The Vases… Hercules…

Classist Mary Lefkowitz writes “Whatever the merits of Amazons, the Greeks treated them as a negative illustration of what might happen if warrior women were in control.” The amazons, rather than female empowerment or even as viable alternative, were actually a straw (wo)man by which Greek patriarchy justified itself.

Fellow classicist William Blake Tyrell agrees, writing “When me cease to be men, order ceases to exist and the topsy-turvy world of the Amazon results”

William Marston, Wonder Woman’s creator’s, though he favored the positive, viable alternative of the Amazon, basically agrees as well.

He wanted Wonder Woman to serve role of emotional re-educator in a world dominated by violence.

He wanted wonder woman as a role reversal.—a female warrior. He wanted topsy-turvy

But Marston’s Creation has always exceeded his grasp, as all great creations do. Diana has always opposed this dichotomy. As an ideal, I think of her not as a default setting for what we should be. Rather, I think of the Ideal as a destabilizing force that ensures
multiplicity. Wonder Woman, by embodying male and female destabilizes gender itself, pushing us toward a greater ethical awareness.

[SLIDE]

To UNDERSTAND HOW, Let’s begin with a bit of second wave feminism:

[SLIDE]

Two years after WW debuted, Simone de Beauvoir published her influential The Second SEX

De Beauvoir Confronts the masculine binary system and asks “what is a woman?,” (xix)

Slide:

I describe the dichotomy as masculine because, as de Beauvoir points out, the supposed symmetry of the opposition favors masculinity, defining agency itself as masculine. “A man,” she points, “would never get the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situation of the human male” (xxi).

Because men perceive their condition as, intrinsically, one of agency, men naturally see themselves as “Subject” and woman as “Other” (xxii).

Against this dilemma, de Beauvoir introduces the only available route to real freedom—friendship. “It is possible,” she writes, “to rise above this conflict if each individual feely recognizes the other, each regarding himself and the other simultaneously as object and as subject in a reciprocal manner” (140).

[SLIDE]

TRANS.
As Jacques Derrida would describe it, this conflation of male/female and self/other forms an Aporia—an unanswerable riddle. The point of deconstruction isn’t to reconcile the dilemma, but to keep it perpetually in tension.

Wonder Woman embodies this Aporia containing the contradictions and excesses of those dichotomies within a single myth.

Derrida further describes ethics as a respect for Alterity—or “otherness” as a tactic for making choices respecting Alterity rather than as a moral code that prescribes an action.

In “On Forgiveness,” Derrida describes forgiveness as “a madness of the impossible” (39). We cannot forgive someone, he argues, when we seek proofs of repentance or change—that would be to demand the Other to become something more like the self, or, at least, an attempt to translate otherness into the self, reaffirming its sovereignty.

This background, then, calls forth the contradiction at the heart of wonder woman… Simply, we cannot resolve the dichotomy that separates Self and Other. Princess Diana, respects alterity, becoming in her own way, a “madness of the impossible,” continually destabilizing both halves of the male/female dichotomy.

Suffering Saphho!: Wonder Woman, Bondage, the Sovereignty of Self
For this presentation, I’m going to ask three questions of Woman—1) What is female Identity… what is the female self? 2) What is a female community 3) and What is female nationalism?

[SLIDE]

To kick off our exploration of female identity, deconstructing the sovereignty of the self at the individual level, let’s start with Bondage, shall we?

Depending on the critic, we find varying approaches to Marston’s early motifs on bondage.

Julie O’Reilly suggests the bondage as illustration that Wonder Woman’s power always belongs to another (she uses the word “subservience”) (275).

Molly Rhodes on the other hand, claims the bondage motif suggests a dual psychology of “captivation” and “passion”—the desire both to hold another in thrall and the desire to be held in thrall, respectively.
In Wonder Woman #3, the Amazons play a ritualized game in which several of them dress as deer to be “hunted.” They are caught in ropes by the hunter bound for the duration of the ritual.

In another issue, binding a girl with her Lasso of Truth, Wonder Woman declares, “On Paradise Island where we play many binding games, this is considered the safest method of tying a girl’s arms” (vol. 5 80).

“Amazon philosophy,” writes Lewis Call in BDSM in American Science Fiction and Fantasy, “Preaches the physical, spiritual, and moral benefits of bondage” (37). He argues that this form of bondage, particularly since Wonder Woman frequently submits willingly to that bondage, emphasizes a playful, moral bondage that Marston contrasts with the immoral and cruel forms of enslavement endorsed by her foes (39).

Bondage, then, is a destabilizing motif. The kinkiness of it all, ultimately, over-signifies itself, disallowing any easy category. Sure, she’s literally placing others in her thrall, but it’s a thrall into which she too is willing to submit, and the emphasis of Amazon culture is not to enthrall but to submit to thralldom.

In Dangerous Curves: Action Heroines, Gender, Fetishism, and Popular Culture, Jeffrey Brown argues that Wonder Woman is multiple, both “strong role model” and “erotic fantasy for older male consumers” (240). If we tend to focus on the erotic elements and their regrettably sexist implications, it is because culture has “so thoroughly fetishized” women in general, we overlook the actions of the heroine and the context in which she acts (241).
Sure, it’s kinky, but the judgment belongs to the reader alone. Wonder Woman embraces both the erotic and the progressive functions of her character, symbolized by the “binding games” played on Paradise Island. If we fix her to one interpretation of sexuality, we disrespect alterity in an attempt to homogenize the world under a single narrative.

**Reversing Roles**

Trans.

As Mitra C. Emad remarks, “Marston explicitly got involved in the new medium of comic books in order to create an alternative to what he called the ‘bloodcurdling masculinity’ of contemporary comics” (957).

Marston’s early comics lacked the excessive violence of other comics. Later Wonder Woman writers elevate the levels of violence, but certainly not to the same degree to which violence has increased in comics starring Superman, Batman, or Marvel anti-heroes such as Wolverine, Punisher, and Deadpool (their names alone give it away).

> [SLIDE] Woman taking control  [Slide]  the kiss  [SLIDE] Of course, we still get this….

> [Slide] But wonder woman fans sometimes fight back too…

> [SLIDE]

The real destabilizer is collective action.

Wonder Woman emphasizes the humanity of others and teamwork, surrendering individual power, preferring the collective—in opposition to her enemies who insist upon individual sovereignty (namely their own).
In Marston’s early comics, Wonder Woman is frequently saved by Etta Candy and the Holliday Girls.

Etta, a comic relief character, is short, over-weight, and has an obsession with confection. She is, in short, non-heroic.

Despite the comedy at the expense of Etta’s weight, Marston manages to emphasize a different kind of hero, one who does not conform to the sexual fetish proportions of comic heroines, an ordinary girl capable of extraordinary things.

Perez, in the 80’s toughens up the role a bit.

TV: The television show, again, emphasizes the same things. the series tends to emphasize Diana’s gift of connecting with others. In “The Pied Piper” episode, for example Diana Prince stops her boss in the hallway to ask him, a second time, about his life, allowing him to discuss his fatherly concerns for his daughter and the growing emotional rift between them as she begins college. These hallway moments abound throughout the series.

Wonder Woman, more often than not throughout her 70 years, dismisses the emphasis on individualism, preferring collectivity.

In issue 14 of the 2011 relaunch of Wonder Woman, “Just Deserts,” writer Brian Azzarello takes Wonder Woman to Libya in search of her sister, a fellow demi-god, fathered by Zeus. This sister, now a violent wraith, watched Hera wreak vengeance upon her family.... (more)
In their stand-off, Siracca insists upon her own suffering to justify her violence and Wonder Woman repeatedly offers her own suffering, resulting in a selfish tête-à-tête, one grief upstaging another.

Wonder Woman replies, “Our father didn’t give me a thing. Except… a new family. Lennox, others… you. I came here looking for your help, so I could find a child… one of us. The baby was stolen from its mother… not by hera… but by Hermes. I mean to find that child. Even if you can’t help me… let me help you. Let me ease your loneliness. Siracca… this is no way for sisters to act” (9-10).

Wonder Woman stops combating Siracca’s pain with her own and refocuses purely on the Other. In doing so, she bridges the gap between the two and violence ends in loving embrace.

The self submits to the other.

[SLIDE]

As I said earlier, the real destabilizing element in any system that relies upon sovereignty is the inclusion of collectivity. Multiple perspectives disrupt homogeny.

So, we turn to feminism and community in Wonder Woman

Quick summation of MS MAG

Remarking on Wonder Woman’s effect on her childhood, Gloria Steinem admires “Wonder Woman’s ability to unleash the power of self-respect within the women around her; to help them work together and support each other” (14). This
empowerment, she writes, "may not seem revolutionary to male readers accustomed to stories that depict men working together, but for females who are usually seen as competing for the favors of men [...] this discovery of sisterhood can be exhilarating indeed" (14).

Whether First, Second, or Third Wave, Feminism has left no more visible mark than sisterhood—the mobilization of women in collectives to accomplish social and political equality. In Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Judith Butler argues for:

An open coalition, [that], will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand; it will be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure. (22)

The most effective use of this "open assemblage" becomes the heterogeneity of Wonder Woman’s communities. Again, Amazon like in her threat to the traditional order, Wonder Woman’s communities cross gender, racial, and cultural lines. What begins with Wonder Woman inverting the gendered social order, becomes a legacy that continually challenges community as a fixed identity.

Our question, then, what does a female community look like?

[SLIDE]

Let’s return, briefly to the question of sexuality.

Kelli Stanley asserts that “Wonder Woman’s adventures have been aimed at a demographic more interested in the character as a sexual fantasy, unmixed with any
feminist agenda. Her straight male target audience is not expected to identify with a woman, only sexually objectify her” (166).

I’m a bit queasy making those assumptions, especially being one of those straight male readers in the target audience—There are a couple problems with this assertion

1) it assumes that there is a wrong expression of sexuality based merely on her appearance
2) it assumes that wonder woman’s writers either ignore character or that an audience will ignore character in the face of a scantily clad woman
3) it denies a shifting fandom that has a say in how it reads wonder woman and how the publisher produces the text—ignoring, for example, a rather devout gay readership that reads queer themes into the text.

[SLIDE]
Quick look at the images.

[SLIDE]
I won’t deny there is sexual fetishism at play—but I will quibble with the notion that sexual fantasies are intrinsically objectifying.

in Sensation Comics #1, Wonder Woman’s debut. On the streets, Wonder Woman goes “window shopping” and comments “There’s so much material to their dresses... but they are cute” meanwhile one older woman comments “The hussy! She has no
clothes on." A man replies "Ha! Sour grapes sister, don’t you wish you looked like that!"
Other men follow suit “Boy! Whatta honey!”

dress is always a concern and a means by which we attempt to essentialize femaleness
Whether the shorter skirts or the bobbed hair of the flapper era or miniskirts in the 60’s or
any of the other various styles of dress that make women too masculine, or too sexual,
or too “frumpy” or too whatever——

This conversation certainly sums up those points—just as Marston’s response sums up his
creations reply. A robbery breaks out and wonder woman intervenes, playing “bullets
and bracelets.” Her clothes no longer matter, only her actions. dressing sexually in itself
isn’t an act of empowerment—sorry Paris and Christina and Kim... its just not. There
must be character development in order to avoid objectifying women—placing the
audience in the sovereign position.

Likewise, we must not fall trap to the notion that dressing sexually, in itself, surrenders to
patriarchal sovereignty. By cultural standards, perhaps wonder woman’s outfit is hyper-
sexualized in its emphasis on secondary sex characteristics, but to see only the clothes
when artists and writers also emphasize character and deeds, falls prey to closing off
possibility, refusing Butler’s insistence that we open borders to admit contradiction.

[SLIDE] Brief intro to wonder woman origin story

[SLIDE]
In “The Wonder Woman Precedent: Female (super) heroism on Trial,” Julie O’Reilly,
worries that Wonder Woman remains inferior to her male counterparts—pointing out
that “Diana must compete in and win a series of physical challenges that culminate in a frightening and potentially deadly game of ‘bullets and bracelets’ [...] to prove to the amazon queen that she is a ‘wonder woman’ worthy to venture into man’s world”

After All, Superman decides to don a cape based on “a decision that is neither questioned nor challenged. He becomes a hero simply because he chooses to be” (273).

O’Reilly sees this moment as an insistence that females must “prove their merit” establishing a tradition that extends down the lineage of female superheroes all the way to Xena and to Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

we can understand O’Reilly’s concern—to a male audience, there is a question of proving a woman can perform but perhaps we can undermine this reading a bit.

O’Reilly validates, to a certain extent, the structure she means to criticize. By comparing Wonder Woman’s origin to Superman’s, she must privilege Superman’s origin in order to criticize Wonder Woman’s.

But What if the criticism were changed? What if we criticized Superman’s autonomy rather than Wonder Woman’s lack thereof?

There is never any doubt about the fitness of Amazon’s to partake in this action. The only question is which shall serve as champion, indicating no special qualification is necessarily needed to prove a woman’s viability. Every woman on the island is
capable—and, by extension, perhaps any woman is capable in this Rosie The Riveter Era.

Moreover, the decision is made by the group. Diana decides herself worthy to compete and then wins her right to be champion, acting both autonomously and in accordance with the will of the group. And it is this will that is most on display. Rather than a sovereign act of autonomy, the self willing itself to heroism, Wonder Woman departs not in that she must prove herself but in that she must negotiate with the larger group—something rare among male heros in comics and in film, who often act against the will of the group.

[SLIDE]
Conversion is another motif throughout Wonder Woman’s incarnations. Whether through conversation or, more coercively, via the Lasso of Truth, Wonder Woman connects with others and rescues not only victims but villains themselves.

Typically, she accomplishes the task by bringing to light the full complexity of the truth, blurring the distinction between one group and another.

[SLIDE]

Early in Marston’s Wonder Woman comics, we meet the Baroness von Gunther, a Nazi spy eventually charged with espionage and murder. Bound in the Lasso of Truth, Baroness von Gunther’s confesses that the Nazi’s have kidnapped her daughter to compel the Baroness to do their will. Again, the bondage theme works by
juxtaposition—loving bondage versus malicious bondage. Wonder Woman rescues the child and speaks on von Gunther’s behalf at the trial.

[SLIDE]

The television series also featured a long list of villains become allies, including Chinese and Russian spies in the episode “The Man Who Made Volcanoes.”

[SLIDE]

George Perez gives us perhaps the most compelling instance of respecting alterity and sacrificing the sovereignty of self as a way toward community building. In Challenge of the Gods, Perez revisits the story of Heracles and Hippolyte. At the conclusion of a long series of trials posed her by the Gods, Diana discovers Heracles, made stone. To remedy the torment of both Heracles and Hippolyte (who alone can hear the demigod’s terrible screams), Diana ties her mother to the stone prisoner, using her Lasso of Truth. According to the narration,

[...] flames of revelation envelop them both, so that each may see and know what the other has always known... new knowledge, new insights, suddenly surge through Hippolyte’s mind, and she suffers for the son of Zeus—as he now suffers for her—and by this intimate union, for the first time in too many centuries, two tormented souls abruptly find release! (142)

The bondage, again, implies a double submission and the former sexual union, based on sovereignty, is corrected by this second incarnation, based on a recognition of the Other as Other and not as gateway to establishing power for the Self.
Neither enjoys a position of sovereignty. Perez didn’t often make explicit use of sexual bondage in his narrative or his illustration, but here, for this union, man and woman are bound together, and in the agony of “intimate union,” they “abruptly find release!”

If feminism has a final task, it resides in this moment between Hippolyte and Heracles. Perez secures a utopian ending for men and women. After being carried to safety by Diana, this man, who had enslaved the Amazons, becomes the first of his gender to set foot on Paradise Island, delivering an admittedly contrived apology;

SLIDE

“I could not admit that the Amazons were not preaching domination over man but rather equal merit! […]. I betrayed ye, and that is unforgivable! Nonetheless, I do now beg your forgiveness” (158). Of course, the Amazons forgive him and all embrace.

If the point of sisterhood is to embrace full humanity, as Steinem argues, then Perez delivers the coup de grace of feminism… making a sister of masculinity’s worst offender.

[SLIDE]
I Defy Mars!: Wonder Woman, National Sovereignty, and War

The opening page of Wonder Woman #2 declares: “Today the Spirit of War rules supreme over the entire earth. […] Mars and Aphrodite, Goddess of love and beauty, have been rivals for control of this earth ever since life began. At present, Mars is far ahead in the struggle against his beautiful opponent. More than four-fifths of the entire world is at war!”

Children of the second world war, superheroes suffer a healthy dose of jingoism—Superman, Wonder Woman, and Captain America literally wear the flag. Each of those three have been depicted taking swings at Hitler—Captain America landing the
punch on the cover of his first issue. They each sold War Bonds—“Thus I broke Mars’s chain! So must the whole earth break the shackles of its vicious warlords! Do your part—buy war bonds and stamps and help America lead the world to freedom,” Wonder Woman declared, without a hint of irony, at the end of her second issue. There were enemies within as well as without, and an American identity, within her pages, has always been up for grabs. As an outsider—in culture, in gender, in politics—she destabilizes notions of Nationalism and National Sovereignty, even as she reinforces it, favoring an open assemblage always negotiating how best to empower all of its citizens.

[SLIDE] Because it respects otherness, it cannot control it, cannot clearly draw boundary lines. Without that ability, we cannot clearly define a self—and so we cannot clearly define a nation—a sovereign identity whose self-contradictions logically lead us to ARES.

[SLIDE] The era into which she was born, the Rosie-the-Riveter era in which America needed its women to violate rules, it should be no surprise that wonder woman pushes the envelop of a woman’s role at the national level. Traditionally, women are assigned to the private sphere—domestic life and men are assigned to the public sphere—work and politics. Certainly, a woman warrior defies the traditional notion of nation and the defense of that nation.

[SLIDE] Moreover: As Marc DiPaolo points out, Diana is something of a New Deal Democrat with “Marxist-feminist leanings [that] hep inspire improvements in the American standard of living” (75). In Sensation Comics #7, in which “Diana encounters
a grieving mother whose son, Danny died of undernourishment after she could no longer afford to buy milk” (75). Not only does Diana send milk to Danny’s sister, she also launches a campaign against the Milk Company, who’s chief justified his company’s policies with a refrain still popular in big business, “Everything we do is absolutely legal!” Looking outward at the world, Wonder Woman’s legacy takes the same progressive spirit in defining American Sovereignty in foreign affairs.

[SLIDE] Wonder Woman and the Gorillas—Conversion, again—the desire to not harm the enemy.

[SLIDE] CONTRADICTIONS OF A WARRIOR.

In Gail Simone, Wonder Woman must confront a creature called Genocide, born of a future dominated by Ares. The creature, Simone reveals, is Wonder Woman herself, or at least the re-animated corpse of a fallen Wonder Woman from that war dominated future. Of her confrontation with that creature, Wonder Woman admits, “All I wanted was to kill that monster. To let it drown, alone, in the dark. To have my revenge. And yet I find I am not that person. Thank Hera. Thank all the Gods” (179-180).

[SLIDE]

Wonder Woman as ambassador:

Given the arms race in the 80’s and the increasing terrorist violence that culminated in 9/11 Wonder Woman’s message runs counter to national sovereignty. Rather than more firmly establish boundaries, Wonder Woman effaces the boundaries drawn by the Self at the expense of the Other. Instead of insisting upon national sovereignty, Wonder
Woman insists upon intelligent discussion, diligent critique of your superiors, and fluid boundaries between opposed identities. [SLIDE] When Wonder Woman arrives in man’s world, sent to defeat the War God, Ares, her first ally is not a martial but academic. Julia Kapatelis, a professor at Harvard, quickly becomes a friend, almost a second mother, teaching Wonder Woman English and the recent history of “man’s world.”

[SLIDE] Into this group, Wonder Woman accepts Steve Trevor, an Air Force Pilot who had dared speak truth to power, warning the military and the government about the dangers of the arms race.

[SLIDE] In the 2000’s, writer Greg Rucka remade Princess Diana as Ambassador Diana, residing in a Themysciran Embassy in New York. Moreover, Dina published a book collecting her thoughts, “Reflections: A Collection of Essays and Speeches, further disseminating her politics of love and peace. Rucka’s Amazon Ambassador challenges the President of the United States when Themyscira, a little too close to US Borders for the President’s taste, suffers the indignity of a naval blockade.

Rucka also introduces a multi-racial, multi-gendered, multi-species embassy, most rememberably Ferdinand the Minotaur.

From Marston’s comics, to the television series, to Perez in the 80’s and Rucka in the 00’s, Diana responds by building coalitions, of scholars and warriors, citizens, and diplomats. She is an American hero wearing the red, white, and blue, but she is also a woman and a warrior from another nation—a figure of two places and two times, effacing the boundaries upon which we traditionally rely.
Not surprisingly, faced with acts of war, most nations act as many individuals act when threatened—they close ranks, redefine borders, and prepare for battle. For most, war re-affirms the Self/Other dichotomy and promotes strategies that see war as a zero sum game.

In George Perez’s *Gods and Mortals*, Ares inspires this destructive demand on strict borders that declare an Other one’s enemy. When General Gerard Kohler, influenced by Ares, summons Colonel Stephen Trevor to his office, he denigrates the Colonel's recent attempts to warn the government about the dangers of nuclear proliferation, “Bleeding hearts don’t belong in the service of this country” (44). Trevor’s attempt to renegotiate the narrative of what it means to be a soldier and a patriot loses to a chain of command that insists upon the narrative that War prefers—aggressive, violent defense of National borders and identity.

Later, rogue US and Soviet soldiers occupy missile silos, preparing to launch the kind of full-scale nuclear holocaust feared throughout the Cold War until its conclusion, a few years subsequent to Perez’s story. “This insanity,” Ares declares, is of mankind’s own devising.” (141).

Pitted against Ares, whose physical form dominates each panel (emphasizing the totalizing effect of war over and against the smaller, particular individual who opposes him), Diana encircles Ares with her Lasso of Truth, exposing him to the truth of War. In the lasso, Ares sees himself alone, “master of the world,” ruling a “charred and smoking cinder, devoid of life, and thus devoid of purpose” (156).
In an admittedly (and perhaps naïve) idealistic panel, “for the first time in his immortal existence, the War God weeps” (156).

**Lastly,** In *Rise of the Olympian*, Gail Simone’s Wonder Woman defies Zeus, whom she forsakes because he “and Ares treat our lives as sport” pitting peoples against each other in a theater of “needless death” (202). While Perez, Rucka, and Simone tend to make that love less necessarily “female,” surrounding Wonder Woman with men and women who fight by her side, those feminine ideals continue to re-evaluate sovereignty. War’s insistence on pitting Self against Other leads only to the destruction of both Self and Other.

**Remember Your Power Little Sister: Refusing Reconciliation**

**SLIDE:** transition

**[SLIDE]** My title invokes Athena’s aid. The Goddess of wisdom is also a goddess of war, and a favorite of the pantheon among women. Simultaneously, Athena also represents an attempt to control women—emphasizing her virginity—especially in the Medusa myth. According to Ovid, Medusa had formerly been a ravishing beauty, raped by Poseidon in Athena’s temple. The Goddess, incensed, punishes not the violator but the violated, making the Virgin Goddess complicit in the domination of women. Still, I turn to Athena for her contradictions. She is neither one thing nor the other.

Empowerment…. Sovereignty… Oppression… objectification…. Male and female reside in her… the tension enough to keep her from ever being essentialized.

In their introduction to Derrida’s *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney describe Derrida’s philosophy as a “negotiation
between the unconditional and the conditional, between the absolute and the relative, between the universal and the particular” (xi). We can find here, room for interpreting the Self’s relationship to itself as Other. Before we can cross the boundaries of gender, of community, and of nation, we must first trouble the boundaries we’ve drawn within ourselves. “What I dream of,” Derrida writes of forgiveness, “would be a forgiveness without power: unconditional but without sovereignty” (59). This thought reminds us of de Beauvoir’s question, What is Woman?, regretting personal identity that establishes sovereignty at the expense of Otherness. To be Self and universal and to be Other and local simultaneously, to be Wonder Woman the hero as well as Diana, a sister among sisters, demands Self without sovereignty.

[SLIDE] As with her mythological sisters depicted, upon attic vases, locked in battle with Heracles, Wonder Woman represents a world without its traditional borders, boundaries too often drawn to serve patriarchal ends.

though prone to fits and stumbles and some old-fashioned and hokey sexism, Wonder Woman does manage to inspire as Gloria Steinem claims she inspires, filling “not only a child’s need for a lost independence, but an adult’s need for a lost balance between women and men” (19). Steinem recalls a moment in George Perez’s Wonder Woman, in which Diana says to a young girl, “Remember your power little sister,” Sister and brother alike, that is her message. Remember your power—to cross gender lines, to blur our understanding of sexuality, to renegotiate nation, to be a multiple version of ourselves, preferring an open assemblage instead of an “identity”—a power that, like her quirky roots in bondage metaphor suggests, resides in our ability to submit rather than dominate.
What is woman? She is such madness... A feminist wants us to embrace the entirety of the person... both male and female... an open assemblage. Any human being who embraces this tension and refuses to be reconciled to singular sovereignty is a woman. **We are all women.**