



Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance (Series Q)

Kathryn Schwarz

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In *Tough Love* Kathryn Schwarz takes up a range of literary, historical, and theoretical texts in order to examine the relationship between Amazon myth and the social conventions that governed gender and sexuality during the early modern period. Imagined as embodiments of female masculinity, amazonian figures stimulated both homoerotic and heteroerotic response, and Schwarz shows that their appearance in narratives disrupted assumptions concerning identity, gender, domesticity, and desire.

Despite seeming to function as signs for what is outside the social—the alien, the exotic, the other—Amazons in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts were often represented in conventionally domestic roles, as mothers and lovers, wives and queens, Schwarz demonstrates. She traces this pattern in works by Shakespeare, Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh, and Jonson, as well as in such materials as conduct manuals, explorers' accounts, court spectacles, and political tracts. Through readings of these texts, Schwarz shows that the Amazon myth provided a language both for setting forth and for challenging the terms of social logic. In representations of Amazon encounters, she argues, homosocial bonds became indistinguishable from heterosexual desires, masculine agency attached itself as logically to women as it did to men, and sexual difference was made nearly impossible to sustain or define. Schwarz's analysis unveils the Amazon as a theoretical term, one that illuminates the tensions and paradoxes through which ideologies of the domestic take shape.

Tough Love contributes to the ongoing discussion of gendered identity and sexual desire in the early modern period. It will interest students of queer theory, cultural studies, early modern history, feminism, and literature.

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