**“O flower of chivalry”: Christine de Pizan and the Christianization of Amazons**

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In its efforts to build a defense against contemporary misogynist rhetoric, Christine de Pizan’s famous *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* takes on the ambitious task of cataloguing exemplary women from a wide variety of cultures and historical settings. From women of the bible to French queens to pagan goddesses, de Pizan’s work is extraordinary in its efforts to create a global, inclusive defense of womankind. However, de Pizan’s allegorical city is described as only housing “worthy” ladies and is ruled by the Virgin Mary, making clear de Pizan’s overarching desire to conform to fifteenth century Christian morality. Thus, de Pizan’s entries on figures from antiquity are caught between her desire to defend their virtue as women and her moral prerogative as a Christian writer to condemn them as pagans. Nowhere is this contrast in purpose more apparent than in her accounts of the Amazons and of Penthesilea specifically. Rather than blood-thirsty warriors who kill or violently expel men from their lands and are fathered by the god of war, her Amazons are depicted as mortal, courtly ladies forced into an all-female society through circumstance who take on the mantle of vengeful widows. Likewise, her telling of the story of Penthesilea portrays her as a mournful lover who joins the Trojans in order to avenge Hector, the heroic Trojan warrior with whom she had fallen in love from afar. This interpretation is a culmination of a medieval inclination to portray Penthesilea and Hector as exemplars of chivalry, seen also in Boccacio’s *De Mulieribus Claris* and Lydgate’s *Troy Book*. By incorporating these romantic elements and omitting the supernatural influence of the classical gods, de Pizan’s telling of the story of Penthesilea attempts to recast the pagan Amazon queen into something more palatable to her fifteenth century Christian audience, which in turn would strengthen her overall argument defending the virtue of women.