7

# Femme Fatale

## *Penthesilea and the Last Stand of Chivalry in Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae*

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> Although the happenings of old are covered daily by recent happenings, yet certain deeds of old have stood out for a long time already, which are so worthy of our remembrance, due to the greatness of their longevity, that neither old age with its invisible bites is strong enough to destroy them nor do the old courses of time gone by hold them in sleeping silence.[1]

Some deeds, although distant in time, still fascinate people today, such as the story of the Trojan War. In the Middle Ages, this story not only served to entertain, but was also used for political, cultural, and social purposes. Guido delle Colonne was one of many who wrote about the Trojan War in his *Historia Destructionis Troiae* ("The history of the destruc-

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[1] Guido, *History* f. 1r: "Licet cotidie uetera recentibus obruant, nonnulla tamen iam dudum uetera precesserunt que sic sui magnitudine uiuaci sunt digna memoria ut nec ea cecis morsibus uetustas abolere preualeat nec exacti temporis antiqua curricula sopita taciturnitate concludant." In the annotation of the Latin text I have followed Griffin's (1936) edition. All translations of Latin texts in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated. I have chosen to use my own translations, because I have tried to reflect Guido's writing style, which can be a bit stiff and business-like.

tion of Troy", 1287), a work inspired by Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*. Guido's history was very popular in its own day and throughout the remainder of the Medieval period, even more so than his main source.[2] Nevertheless, even though some modern scholars take a more nuanced approach to Guido's *History*,[3] the general assessment of this work is that it is a dry and bleak story that reduces the *Roman*'s characters to mere shadows of their former selves.[4] Additionally, many scholars interpret the *History* as a misogynistic work of history, more so than the *Roman*.[5] In this article, we will see that this interpretation of the *History* is worth re-assessing, as Wolfram Keller has also attested.[6] However, whereas Keller interprets the *History* as a *Fürstenspiegel*, looking mainly at the political message the work conveys, I will focus on its social, cultural, and specifically gendered aspects.

To understand what moral message the *History* offers, this article will focus on one character in particular: the Amazonian queen Penthesilea. She leads her warrior-maidens to Troy when all seems lost for the Trojans.[7] Penthesilea is an intriguing character, because she is the only wom-

[2] Guido's work was more popular and more widely used than Benoît's mainly because it was written in Latin, at the time a more universal language than Benoît's Old French (Kleinbaum 1983, 60). Keller (2008, 133) remarks that Guido's *History* has been preserved in more than 150 manuscripts, which shows its immense popularity.

[3] Wigginton 1964; Meek (1974, xiv) admits that the *History* might not be the most elegant, but "the *Historia* has a modest but assured place as a work of literature". See especially Keller 2008, who pleads for the inherent merits and value of this work, seeing it as profoundly different from Benoît's work. Bedel (2013, § 1) claims that the *History* has some merits of its own and is worth researching, although it is often ignored in scholarship (see also Bedel 2013a, 76).

[4] Lumiansky 1954, 733 (he concludes that the *History's* characters are mere "wooden figures"); Benson 1980, 4.

[5] Wigginton 1964, v–ix; Kleinbaum 1983, 60–61 (she does not explicitly call Guido an anti-feminist, but does interpret the Amazonian episode in a way that reflects very negatively on women); Jung 1996, 564; Simpson 1998, 416 (note that his analysis is more nuanced than that of Reinle); Reinle 2000, 19; Keller 2008, 192 (who calls Guido's *History* an "anti-feminist epic"); Bedel 2013b, § 29–44.

[6] In his analysis, the Trojans serve as effeminate, changeable, and emotional: they are the example of how one should not govern. The imperial Greek rule model, in which the common good, rationality, and in particular empire go before everything, serves as a more positive example (Keller 2008, 133–263).

[7] Guido, *History* f. 102$^{v}$–105$^{r}$.

an in the *History* who actually fights beside the Trojan warriors in Troy's hour of need. Until then, the women in this history were either catalysts of war (Hesione and Helen) or bystanders, sometimes entangled in relationships with heroes that could affect these heroes' physical and mental state (think here of Briseida and her love for Troilus and Diomedes).[8] The Amazons seem to perform a completely different role in this work of history.

Many scholars have assessed the Amazons and their warrior-queen negatively. Keller, for instance, treats the Amazons together with some more fantastical, even monstrous elements in the *History*. Although he concedes that the Amazons are not as monstrous as, for instance, the centaur fighting with the Trojans, he does relate them "to the effeminate Trojan principle of fickle rule".[9] He calls them "unnatural knights" and "creatures", emphasising that they are contrary to nature and, consequently, that their deviant and feminine behaviour makes their deaths deserved ones.[10] It cannot be denied that there are passages in the *History* that are misogynistic, to say the least. The narrator, for instance, argues that women cannot be trusted and are always looking for men to seduce and have sex with.[11] Nevertheless, this does not mean that the work as a whole – and this passage in particular – should be labelled as merely a misogynistic, second-best translation of the *Roman de Troie*. By focussing solely on such misogynistic readings of the *History*, I think we might overlook the most important moral lesson it would like its readers to learn. I argue that we should see the *History* as part of a larger, literary discourse about 'proper' chivalric conduct and the search for peace.[12] The character Penthesilea provides the reader with a new viewpoint on this larger discourse by playing with both the gendered and chivalric rules as described in thirteenth-century literature.

Firstly, I will analyse the differences between the *History* and the *Roman de Troie*, so that we will be able to understand the main narrative and the

[8] Cf. Bedel 2013b, § 28.

[9] Keller 2008, 133–263.

[10] Keller 2008, 183–4. Wigginton 1964 does not go into the role of the Amazons in his dissertation at all. For other negative interpretations of the Amazons, please refer to footnote 5.

[11] Guido, *History* f. 84r.

[12] Cf. Bedel 2013a, 75–90.

moralistic undertones of the *History*. Secondly, I will analyse the representation of men and women in Guido's work. Thirdly, I will look in more detail at Queen Penthesilea: how does she combine the male and the female within her character? Especially her similarities with Hector prove interesting when trying to understand her warrior-role within the *History*. Through Penthesilea, the narrator is able to discuss what is good (and bad) chivalry, providing the reader with a message of peace and hope at the end of his work.

### 7.1 GUIDO VS. BENOÎT: TRANSLATION, ADAPTATION, REPLACEMENT

Benoît's *Roman de Troie* is a courtly romance written in the twelfth century. The narrator – we shall call him Benoît from now on, by which I do not wish to imply that the narrator and the historical person Benoît are the same – wanted to provide the whole story about the Trojan war, translating the Latin sources of Dares and Dictys that he had used as his main sources,

> so that those who are ignorant of Latin
> can enjoy it **in French**.
> The history is most noble and grand,
> and it treats of a great enterprise and great deeds.
> It has been related in many diverse ways
> how Troy was destroyed,
> but the **truth** of the matter is rarely heard.[13]

Later, he says that he will not alter his material, although he does include "some clever additions of my own".[14] If we compare his text with Dares and

[13] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 38–44 (my emphasis): "Que cil qui n'entendent la letre / Se puissent deduire **el romanz**: / Mout est l'estoire riche e granz. / E de grant uevre et de grant fait. / En maint sen avra l'om retrait, / Saveir com Troie fu perie, / Mais **la verté** est poi oïe." All translations of Benoît's text have been taken from Burgess & Kelly 2017. I have tried to present their prose translation in a way that makes it easier to follow the Old French, which was written in octosyllabic verses. I quote Burgess & Kelly (2017) throughout, albeit acknowledging that the translation of for example vv. 38–39 may be viewed as freely rather than literally translated from the original Old French.

[14] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 142: "qu'aucun bon dit".

Dictys, it becomes clear that these clever additions are actually great in number: the love story of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes, for instance, is absent from Benoît's sources.[15] The *Roman*, then, uses its sources freely, so that it will be intelligible and entertaining to its audience. Benoît presents his work as subservient to his historiographical sources, but at the same time he also seems to challenge them by adding passages and by rewriting these pre-texts into another genre and framework (after all, Benoît has created poetry out of two prose narratives). The *Roman* acknowledges the authority of Dares and Dictys,[16] but also shows *itself* to be an authority on the subject matter, presenting itself as the most authoritative end point of a long tradition of stories about the fall of Troy.[17] Indeed, Benoît warns his colleagues in his epilogue not to criticise and certainly not to alter his narrative.[18]

Although Benoît envisaged his *Roman* as the end-point of a long historical tradition on Troy narratives, this did not stop Guido from using the *Roman* to create the *History of the destruction of Troy*. In his prologue, the narrator – I will call him Guido from now on – makes it clear why he felt the need to write another history of Troy:

> For indeed some [writers] of this history, by playing with the poetic art, have transformed with certain fictions the truth of this matter into made up fabrications, so that they were seen to describe to their listeners **not true things**, which they have written down, **but rather fabulous ones**.[19]

[15] Wigginton 1964, 62; Burgess & Kelly 2017, 5; Kelly 1995, 221–41. Kelly explains in his article how Benoît, with the material he had, invented Briseida's story while still staying true to his source material – according to Medieval standards of *inventio.* Keller (2008, 141) says that by adding some romantic aspects to his narrative Benoît fictionalised his material to a certain extent.

[16] Malatrait 2011, 46–48. Indeed, Benoît often explicitly mentions Dares' work, stating that his information came straight from him (and is, consequently, trustworthy). See, for instance, line 726 (where he refers to Dares with the words "li Livres"); lines 5093–8 (Dares began here a description of the main players of the narrative, so Benoît will do the same); lines 10010–12 (Hector slew a thousand men, Dares tells us this).

[17] Blumenfeld-Kosinski 1980, 151–8.

[18] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 30301–16.

[19] Guido, *History* f. 1$^{r}$ (my emphasis): "Nonnulli enim iam eius ystorie poetice alludendo ueritatem ipsius in figurata commenta quibusdam fictionibus transsumpserunt, vt **non uera** que scripserunt uiderentur audientibus perscripsisse **sed pocius fabulosa**."

Guido is not happy with all the poets who have used the Trojan war as their subject matter. He explicitly criticises Homer in particular, but also Ovid and Virgil are not spared.[20] Although Benoît is not mentioned, it is clear that Guido targets his work as well.[21] Even though the *Roman* provided the fullest and most complete account of the Trojan war, it made a grave mistake – according to Guido – by presenting its material in a fabulous manner. Guido creates a new and more truthful Trojan history than his predecessor by using the right kind of material (the accounts of Dares and Dictys via the *Roman*) and the (in his eyes) correct narrative form of *historia* and not *fabula*, as poets before him had done.[22]

This view on poetry and the *Roman* in particular explains the many alterations that were made in the *History*: Guido has greatly reduced the number of more fantastical passages – the famous *Chambre de Beautés*, for instance, gets hardly any attention at all – and he lessens the importance of love to give a more trustworthy account of his material.[23] Additionally, Guido says in his prologue that he wrote his work "especially for the use of those who study grammar".[24] He remarks that his work was originally written at the request of the archbishop of Salerno, Matheus de Porta.[25] This provides proof for placing the work in more spiritual, learned circles in comparison to the *Roman*, which was most likely orally performed at court.[26] This is probably one of the reasons why the *History* has been seen as a continuation of misogynistic, clerical texts in opposition to the courtly *Roman*.

Because the *History* was meant for an educated audience, this account of the war is full of learned digressions and moral messages that the read-

[20] Guido, *History* f. 1r. Cf. Mueller 2013, 50–52.

[21] Cf. Keller 2008, 144.

[22] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* I.44.5; cf, Mehtonen 1996, 19–61.

[23] See, for instance, Wigginton 1964, 64–65; Benson 1980, 4. Just as in Benoît's *Roman*, to give a factual, trustworthy account of what had happened does not mean that Guido depicts the Greek and Trojan heroes in what would nowadays be considered a historically accurate manner. Guido's heroes and damsels are still typical knights and ladies. See Simpson 1998, 421–2.

[24] Guido, *History* f. 1v: "in vtilitatem eorum precipue qui gramaticam legunt".

[25] Guido, *History* f. 129v.

[26] Burgess & Kelly 2017, 7; Keller 2008, 196; Wigginton 1964 makes a solid case for reading the *History* as a clerical piece of literature in his dissertation.

er should take to heart. The moral explanation of the quest of the Golden Fleece forms a case in point, in which the work warns its reader of greed that will lead to one's own destruction.[27] Apparently, the *History* does want to convey a particular moral message. I agree with W.B. Wigginton, who reads the work as a moral and allegorical history, and with Keller, who also underlines the allegorical value of it – although his allegorical interpretation differs from mine in many ways.[28] If we take all these differences into consideration, it becomes clear that the *History* and the character of Penthesilea within it must be assessed in their own right: the *History* has made several fundamental adaptations in regard to its main text, which should not be explained away by any lack of poetical ability.

### 7.2 LICENTIOUS WOMEN AND VIOLENT KNIGHTS

Just as other medieval works of history the *History* asserts it tells the truth, the "uera scripta", to its readers: "so that they know how to separate the true from the false concerning the things that are written down/transcribed about said history in grammar books".[29] Simultaneously, its aim is to instruct its readers on how to live their lives well. But what kind of moral message does the work convey overall? I argue that the intriguing character of Penthesilea can provide us with information to better understand the *History* as a whole. However, before we can understand her position and the moral messages her character offers, we have to take a closer look at the portrayal of other men and women in the *History* first. Only then we can appreciate the special role that has been assigned to Penthesilea, standing between the male and the female, the real and the fantastical.

In clerical manuals of the thirteenth century, there was a strongly dichotomous way of thinking about men and women. In Thomasin von Zerk-

[27] Guido, *History* f. 2$^{v}$–3$^{r}$. Other passages with a moralistic undertone include f. 8v (where Guido criticises the nobility for dressing up with such refinement, as Medea does); f. 50$^{v}$–f. 52$^{v}$ (where the origin of idolatry is explained); and f. 100$^{v}$ (where Guido distances himself from Homer: Achilles was not a hero, but a villain).

[28] Bedel (2013a, 87) also acknowledges that the *History* is full of *exempla* of vices and virtues that the reader must learn from. It is a moralistic work and not shallow at all.

[29] Guido, *History* f. 1$^{v}$ : "ut separare sciant uerum a falso de hiis que de dicta ystoria in libris gramaticalibus sunt descripta."

laere's *Der Welsche Gast* (1215–1216), for instance, the narrator addresses men and women separately, bestowing each sex with different virtues (and vices).[30] It was believed that women were susceptible to sins of the flesh, which is why virginity and chastity were so commendable. Vincent de Beauvais tells his reader in his *On the erudition of the sons of nobility* that the vice of "licentiousness" ("lasciuia") would lead innocent maidens to "unclean thoughts" ("noxias cogitaciones") and "desires of the flesh" ("carnis uoluptates"), ruining their virtue. That is why women should be kept at home, strictly under guard.[31] Many of the female characters in the *History* seem to fit this more negative clerical stance on the female sex.[32] One such character is Medea, whose indirect role in the first destruction of Troy is also part of this history. She does all the things an ideal lady should not do: she takes the initiative in her relationship with Jason, seducing him with her alluring appearance. She even sleeps with him before they are married.[33] She appears to fit perfectly in Guido's description of (most) ladies in general, who always try to quench their sexual thirst by actively searching for men.[34] However, the *History* shows that there are also women who are morally praiseworthy. Polyxena is a virginal princess who guards her virginity and does not show any initiative in her almost-marriage with Achilles. When she is sentenced to death after the war, she accepts her fate and dies worthily, making all those who witness her death shed bitter tears.[35] Polyxena is praiseworthy because she protects her virginity at all costs, and thus confirms the clerical view on the most important female virtue.

Like women, men also have certain vices to beware of and virtues to uphold, which are described in clerical manuals of the thirteenth century, as, for instance, in *le Roman des Eles* and *l'Ordene de Chevalerie*. According to these manuals, to be a true knight one was required not only to show proper and admirable conduct on the field of battle, but also at court and towards

[30] Cf. Etienne de Fougères' *Livre de Manières* st. 244–313.

[31] Vincent de Beauvais, *On the Erudition* XLII.6 + XLIII.1–9.

[32] Bedel 2013b, § 30–34.

[33] Guido, *History* f. 8$^{v}$.

[34] Guido, *History* f. 84$^{r}$.

[35] Guido, *History* f. 47$^{v}$ + 112$^{v}$–113$^{r}$. She even says that she prefers death over the loss of her chastity.

the ladies.[36] Knights' often violent behaviour on the battlefield was something that worried the clergy very much, which is why they tried to steer this side of chivalry into calmer waters by emphasising the importance of other qualities within the good knight.[37] Men in the *History* seem to have an inclination to excessive violence. The call of war and, with it, fame, entices many characters to start a war without ever considering the misery that it will bring. Indeed, war will not only bring the ruin of cities and complete livelihoods, but also of good chivalry; although chivalry is what attracts many knights to war in the first place. This becomes most clear in the famous council meeting of the Trojans before the start of the second Trojan war. King Priam and his sons decide whether to take action against the Greeks for the abduction of his sister Hesione. Helenus, one of Priam's sons and a priest, advises the assembly to maintain peace: after all, war will only bring sadness and sorrow. When Troilus hears these words, he lashes out against his brother with harsh words, accusing him of "faintheartedness" ("pusillanimitas") and an excessive love of luxury.[38] This argument can be typified as a typical clash between the clergy, who embody the voice of peace (both in literature and society) and the chivalric class, who symbolise the cry for war.[39] The knightly class sees war and courtly chivalry as two sides of the same coin, whereas the clergy show in their manuals that they are two different things altogether that cannot co-exist. The *History* tries to pry

[36] Kaeuper 1999, 4.

[37] Kaeuper 1999, 64–87. See, for instance, Raoul de Hodenc, *le Roman des Eles* 135–45, 274–508; Anonymous, *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* 263–300; Etienne de Fougères, *Le Livre des Manières*, st. 135–68.

[38] Guido, *History* f. 33$^{v}$.

[39] Malatrait (2011, 132–33) has analysed the confrontation between Helenus and Troilus in the *Roman* along similar lines. She argues that this scene reflects the tensions between the knightly and clerical classes of Benoît's own time. I have largely taken my analysis from her and applied (and adapted it) to the *History*. Cf. Simpson (1998, 419–20) argues that Helenus and other priests represent failed clerical voices. The clerical voice of the narrator is successful in warning his readers for the (political) mistakes his characters have made. Bedel (2013a, 75–90) has analysed the continuing quest for peace in Guido's work. She also argues that the priestly voices are those of peace and that, through human failure, the leaders of both the Greeks and the Trojans cannot achieve a peaceful solution (Bedel 2013a, 79, 88).

apart violence from chivalry as well, leading the way to a new, peaceful kind of chivalric conduct.

### 7.3 PENTHESILEA: LADY, LOVER, KNIGHT

It has become clear that more traditional, clerical ideas about proper behaviour of the sexes (as written down in literature of that time) are incorporated in the *History*. Nevertheless, this work does not solely consist of these rather strict, paradigmatic ways of thinking about the right kind of gender behaviour; there is also room to play with the gendered rules through the character of Penthesilea. In order to understand the role and function of this Amazonian queen and the kind of discussions she generates, Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity and distinction in *Gender Trouble* and *Undoing Gender* will prove helpful. Butler has written that one's anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance do not have to conform with one another. Although common cultural ideas about sex and gender intricately bind these three components together, Butler argues that these links are not pre-existing facts, but constructs formed by the cultural and political society we live in that are reinforced as the norm by repetitive performances.[40] The *History*'s battling Amazons show this clearly. Anatomically, Penthesilea and her warrior-maidens are female: Penthesilea is called "virgin" ("uirgo"), her maiden-followers "girls" ("puellae").[41] Their gender identity and gender performance, however, are much more complex. Penthesilea herself already attests that she is a 'femme extraordinaire' when she speaks to Pyrrhus on the field of battle:

> And when she had come nearer to Pyrrhus so that Pyrrhus could clearly understand her words, Penthesilea reproached him greatly in her own words for the death of Hector, which was treacherously brought about by his father, "for whose vengeance not only skilful women but truly the whole world ought to arise to fight, **and we who they say are women** – soon the Greeks will take notice of our deadly blows".[42]

[40] Butler 1999, especially page 175; Butler 2004.

[41] Guido, *History* f. 103r.

[42] Guido, *History* f. 104r (my emphasis): "Et dum ad Pirrum propinquius accessisset ita quod Pirrus liquide poterat intelligere uerba eius, Penthesilea mortem Hectoris

She is a virgin, but also one who fights with men and is their match. She shows both masculine and feminine virtues and characteristics.[43] Her virginity shows clearly that she is neither woman nor man, but both and neither. Both her abstinence from sexual intercourse and her amorous conduct towards the opposite sex prove interesting in this regard, as we will see.

It is clear that an important part of Penthesilea's identity is that she is a virgin queen: she is called "uirgo" and her attire is white, the colour of virginity and purity.[44] Nevertheless, Penthesilea is a virgin who does have amorous feelings towards the opposite sex. Already during the second battle of Troy, when Penthesilea has not yet entered the scene, we know that she sometimes gets involved in amorous relationships, although from a distance. One of the Greek knights, Celidis by name, is killed quickly during this round of fighting, but not before he is described as follows:

> that no one could describe his [Celidis'] appearance, whom the queen of Feminea[45] loved ardently with such a great burning of love that she cared more for him than for herself (...).[46]

This fierce burning ("ardour") can only refer to one kind of love: the amorous love between men and women. In the *Roman de Troie*, Penthesilea's love is more clearly identified as such:[47]

in uerbis suis sibi multum inproperat proditorie ab eius patre commissam, "ad cuius uindictam non solum mulieres habiles ad pugnandum uerum totus mundus deberet assurgere, **et nos quas mulieres asserunt esse**, - Greci subito sencient letaliter ictus nostros.""

[43] See Partner 1993, 442.

[44] Harwood 2017, 66; Guido, *History* f. 104r.

[45] This is another name for the land of Amazonia. Benoît refers to Penthesilea's country as either *Amazoine* or *Feminie:* Kleinbaum 1983, 51.

[46] Guido, *History* f. 71v: "quod eius formam nullus describere potuisset, quem regina de Feminea tanti amoris ardore precordialiter diligebat quod magis eum carum habebat quam seipsam (...)".

[47] This reading goes against Kleinbaum (1983, 52–53), who calls Penthesilea in her analysis of the *Roman* Celidis' patron, not his lover.

> The queen of Femenie
> had been his lover for a long time.
> For her sake he was highly honoured,
> well known and highly esteemed.
> she had sent him his arms and his valuable steed
> out of affection and **pure love**,
> with which he equipped himself:
> for that reason he was often the object of close attention.[48]

Penthesilea had felt "fine amor" for Celidis, a term which is translated here as "pure love", but which is also the term for courtly love.[49] Guido upholds this element of Penthesilea's courtly love for the Greek by using the words "with such a great burning of love" ("tanti amoris ardore").

Indeed, if we look closer, it becomes clear that there is another knight who seems to be the object of Penthesilea's "amor" in both the *History* and the *Roman*: Hector. The *History* says that Penthesilea was bound in friendship to Hector. This could mean that their relationship was one of respected and friendly colleagues alone. However, Penthesilea's sole reason for aiding the Trojans is explained by the terms "because of her love for Hector"("ob amorem Hectoris"):[50]

> At that time the queen of this province [Amazonia, a land in the East] was a certain noble and very warlike maiden, Penthesilea by name, who was much bound in friendship to Hector because of the great worth of his chivalry.[51] And, after she

[48] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 8831–8 (my emphasis): "La reïne de Femenie / Aveit esté lonc tens s'amie: / Por li esteit mout essasuciez, / Mout coneüz e mout preisiez / Ses armes e son milsoudor, / De chierté e de **fine amor** / Li ot tramis, s'en ert armez: / Por ço ert sovent remirez."

[49] Kay 2000, 84

[50] Guido, *History* f. 103$^{r}$. Note that not all authors portrayed Penthesilea thus. See, for instance, Albert von Stade, who does not mention Penthesilea's connection to Hector as the reason for her to come to Troy. He merely says that the queen went to Troy "because the king [Priam] asked it" ("rege petente"): *Troilus* IV.805–6.

[51] "Strennuitas" means something like "vivacity, activity". Meek 1974 translates it as "valor". I have chosen to translate the word as "chivalry", since I think Guido here means a specific kind of activity and liveliness on the field of battle. This is not mere

had heard that the Greeks had come with a great army against king Priam, she herself came to Troy to king Priam's aid with one thousand maidens, who fought with great chivalry, to fight because of her love for Hector.[52]

"Amor" can have multiple meanings, ranging from the love between friends to love between lovers.[53] I argue that both meanings of the word "amor" are present here.[54] When Penthesilea hears upon her arrival that Hector has passed away, she weeps for him for many days.[55] These tears are not just the tears of a friend, but also the tears of a lover, which can be deduced from the *Roman de Troie*, in which it is said that "it was common knowledge that she would have loved Hector, / if she had found him alive".[56]

Although there could be some doubt as to whether Penthesilea's feelings for Hector were based more on love or friendship, Penthesilea's relationship with Celidis can only be interpreted in both the *History* and the *Roman* as one between two lovers. Both Hector and Celidis die and it seems that Penthesilea never had the chance to consolidate her love (in the physical sense of the word), but it seems that she did desire to do so – although the *History* seems to be more indirect about Penthesilea's true, amorous feel-

prowess, but a way of fighting that is civilised and commendable (although reform is also necessary). Niermeyer 1976 and Arnaldi 1970 say it is an honorary title, although they do not go into detail as to what this honorary title entails exactly. Chivalry can also be seen, in a way, as a claim to commendable behaviour and, consequently, as an honorary title.

[52] Guido, *History* f. 103r: "Huius autem prouincie erat tunc regina quedam uirgo nobilis et nimium bellicosa Penthesilea nomine, que Hectorem sibi nimium astrinxerat in amicum propter sue strennuitatis nimiam probitatem. Sed audito quod Greci contra regem Priamum in magno exercitu ueniebant, ipsa in auxilio regis Priami cum mille puellis in multa strennuitate pugnantibus apud Troyam ob amorem Hectoris se contulit pugnaturam."

[53] Schnell 1985, 19.

[54] Warren Carl (1998, 113–4) also remarks on the dubiousness of Hector's and Penthesilea's relationship, but then in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*. In her opinion, this unclarity represents the two themes of Benoît's work: love and war.

[55] Guido, *History* f. 103r.

[56] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 23389–90: "Bien ert seü qu'ele l'amast, / se fust qu'en vie le trovast." The order of Burgess' and Kelly's translation has been slightly altered here.

ings than the *Roman*.[57] Even so, the fact that Penthesilea chooses to be physically present in Troy, combined with her "amor" for Hector, her grief upon hearing about Hector's death, and her anger against the son of Hector's killer are all signs that Penthesilea probably harboured more than just platonic feelings for Hector. Does this mean, then, that Penthesilea could no longer serve as a positive example? After all, many authors argue that (sexual) lust is the worst of all female vices. Is it true that, because Penthesilea was a 'sinful' virgin (at least in thought), she had to die? In regard to the *Roman* the answer seems relatively clear: Penthesilea is an example of a good lady and a good knight.[58] She is even called "the most valiant woman who had ever been born. No woman on earth was more worthy than she or enjoyed higher honour".[59] As has been shown, the *History* does not merely copy the *Roman*, but it is a story of its own with its own moral messages and undertones. Has Guido, then, not only greatly shortened the passages about the Amazons and love in general, but has he also followed the clerical literary tradition and, consequently, portrayed Penthesilea negatively? Is C. Reinle right when she claims that Guido has transformed Benoît's positive portrayal of the Amazons into a passage that reeks of misogyny?[60]

We have to keep in mind that the Amazons are not like ordinary women, as Penthesilea herself attests. Indeed, the Amazons break open conventional gender roles to show that women can do things culturally defined as male – which makes them the perfect candidates to question other pillars of medieval society as well.[61] If Penthesilea had been a maiden like all others, her active stance would have caused disapproval. However, Penthesilea is also a warrior who follows the codes of chivalry. After all, she stays loyal to her comrades-in-arms, fights honourably without deceiving her opponents and gives them a fair chance in the duel at hand, and, maybe most importantly, she does not fight for glory or monetary gain, but for love and loyalty only,

[57] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 23383–416. Penthesilea and the narrator say multiple times that Penthesilea loved Hector above anyone else.

[58] Kleinbaum 1983, 51–58: she calls her "the female equivalent of the ideal chivalrous knight" (Warren-Carl 1998, 107–128).

[59] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 23979–83.

[60] Reinle 2000, 19.

[61] Kleinbaum 1983, 51; Petit 1983, 83–84.

as she has explicitly said to Pyrrhus.[62] Indeed, nowhere in the text does Penthesilea express a desire for money and fame. This is interesting, since Penthesilea does say that she and her maidens 'have come here to help by bearing arms in order to achieve renown' in the *Roman*.[63] The *History* informs the reader that fame/greed was usually the main drive for the Amazons to fight, but this was apparently not the case for Penthesilea.[64] This alteration in her character is noteworthy, since the desire for fame is something that is frowned upon in the *History*. The fact that she goes to Troy "ob amorem Hectoris" is not problematic either: within the chivalric code it was not disapproved of for knights to have lovers (from afar). This could even lead them to great deeds of valour. It was the knight who would most often take the initiative in his relationship with his paramour, fighting for his lover and showing his worth.[65] In her relationship with Hector, Penthesilea takes the initiative: she decides to go to Troy of her own volition out of loyalty and out of love. Her deeds on the field of battle are fuelled by her love (not her lust) for Hector and her desire for revenge for his death.[66] Her lover, though already deceased, can still inspire her to greatness. In courtly love the woman was usually the commander, the man the follower. He chased the lady and tried to woe her, doing whatever she desired.[67] Here, Penthesilea, although a woman, is the follower, her lover Hector the commander.

This means that we cannot simply place Penthesilea's virginity and her amorous feelings into the realm of the male or the female. Warren-Carl also remarks upon the dubiousness of the Amazons' gender (performativity), arguing that the Amazons' celibacy is a typical female virtue, but that it also enables them to fight well on the field of battle: it was believed that men's powers were drained when having sex. Because the Amazons abstain from

[62] For a more detailed account of her conduct on the field of battle, see the next section.

[63] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 24100–101.

[64] Guido, *History* f. 103$^{r}$.

[65] Adler 1963, 14; Schnell 1985, 88.

[66] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 23410–16; Guido, *History* f. 104$^{r}$.

[67] Diomedes' love for Briseida forms a case in point: he loves her at first sight, but her love is not easily won. He must live in torment for a long time before Briseida finally returns his love: Guido, *History* f. 84$^{r}$–$^{v}$.

sexual intercourse, they can fight like men.[68] The female virtue of virginity is what harbours the Amazons' male strength and prowess. It is interesting to note here that the female virtue of virginity is expressed through Penthesilea's armour, a typically male attribute, in both the *Roman* and the *History*.[69] This shows how intricately the male and female sides are intertwined with each other within the Amazons with regard to their behaviour and physique. Penthesilea's virginity makes her a good maiden *and* a good knight. By abstaining from love but at the same time craving it, she becomes the perfect courtly knight.

### 7.4 HECTOR *REDIVIVUS*

Once we have established that Penthesilea's actions must be understood in the context of the codes of courtly love *and* knighthood, we can go a step further and argue that Hector and the love Penthesilea harbours for him are essential for her role in the narrative. Without Hector, there would be no Penthesilea. Only because of Hector does she get involved in the war. Even more interestingly, because of Hector's death, Penthesilea has to take his place. The only man who was fit to take Hector's place, Troilus,[70] has been killed already by the same man who has Hector's blood on his hands: Achilles. Penthesilea tries to finish what Hector and Troilus could not. If we have a closer look at 1) her motivations for getting involved in the war, 2) the battle scenes in which Penthesilea takes part, and 3) her death, it becomes clear that there are many parallels between her and Hector. Hector's spiri-

[68] Warren Carl 1998, 117–18: even anatomically, then, the Amazons' bodies function to a certain extent as male bodies. After all, it was believed that men grew weaker by having sex, but women stronger.

[69] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* lines 23429–46; Guido, *History* 104r: "with the devices of their armour glittering like snow" ("intersignis armorum candidis sicut niue"); see Burns 1997, 118–19.

[70] In the catalogue of Trojans the *History* says that Troilus was "either another Hector or second to him" ("uel fuit alius Hector uel secundus ab ipso") in regard to strength and "strennuitas" ("chivalry") in warfare: *History* f. 47r. Hector and Troilus are also referred to as "the two Hectors" ("duos Hectores"): Guido, *History* f. 99v.

tual presence and his qualities are visible in Penthesilea: to a certain extent, she becomes his alter ego, a *Hector redivivus*.[71]

Firstly, Hector's and Penthesilea's respective motivations to get involved in the war are in some ways similar. Hector was not keen to start a war with the Greeks; during the important council meeting with king Priam, he was the first to sue for peace, although unsuccessfully. However, once the war has started, Hector does not back away from his duty and leads the Trojan forces into battle. This is what makes Hector a commendable knight, an *exemplum* of good chivalry in the *History*: a good knight tries to avoid war at all costs,[72] but serves his king and country when there is no other way, staying faithful and loyal to the ones he loves. In the same way, as we have already asserted, Penthesilea is driven by loyalty and love to fight on the Trojan side. She does not show as much reservation about waging war as Hector did, but what is most important here is that she does not get involved in the war because of her desire for fame and/or greed. Penthesilea shows here the same knightly codes of conduct as her male alter ego. I would like to draw attention to this fact, since not all authors have portrayed Penthesilea's motivations so positively. The *History* could also have followed the accounts of Dares and Dictys, which show her as greedy. After all, Dictys claims that Penthesilea,

> who, after she had learned that Hector had been slain, disheartened by his death and desirous to return home, had on the spot decided to stay, since she had been seduced in the end by Alexander with much gold and silver.[73]

In Dictys' version, Penthesilea appears to be some kind of mercenary. The *History* does not follow this portrayal, but anchors Penthesilea's reason for

[71] For more analysis on this topic, please refer to Van den Bergen-Pantens (1982, 219–30), who analyses the portraits of both Hector and Penthesilea in several medieval works.

[72] Cf. Bedel (2013a, 75–90), where she shows that the heroes in this work have to choose between their inner desires (often based on love or the longing for revenge), which lead to war, and the common good of the community, i.e. peace and stability.

[73] Dictys, *Journal of the Trojan War* IV.2.5–9: "quae postquam interemptum Hectorem cognovit, perculsa morte eius regredì domum cupiens ad postremum multo auro atque argento ab Alexandro inlecta ibidem opperiri decreverat."

staying in the narrative of courtly love and loyalty. Penthesilea's love must not be confused with lust here. If it was only lust she had felt for him, we cannot explain her decision to stay after she had discovered that Hector was already dead. This portrayal of Penthesilea shows that the *History* was not so misogynistic as Reinle argues. One could even say that she is more positively described in the *History* in regard to her motivations to join the war than in the *Roman*, since her desire for fame has been completely deleted in the *History*. I also do not see a reason here for interpreting Guido's portrayal of Penthesilea's love for Hector as negative, although the clergy was often wary of courtly love.[74]

Secondly, Hector's and Penthesilea's behaviour on the battlefield merits our closer attention: both are the leaders of their people and do not back away from a fight. Nevertheless, they do not show excessive violence or a breach of the knightly codes of honour in their mode of conduct. Hector saves his family and friends on many occasions, who respect him greatly and follow him everywhere.[75] It is clear that Hector carries Troy's weight on his shoulders, which is why Achilles is so keen on killing him.[76] Penthesilea appears to play the same role: she leads her warrior-maidens and shows no fear. This does not mean she becomes battle-crazed and loses sight of what is important. She fights honourably, which is also recognised by the Greeks: "That is why the Greeks recognised in a short time Penthesilea's power and courage".[77] Furthermore, she also saves her allies during battle:

> She, after she had learned that Philemenis was captured by the Myrmidons, immediately hastened with her maidens in a bold manner against the Myrmidons. And she wounded and killed them with the blade of her sword, so that because of her the Myrmidons were forced to retreat. (...) King Philemenis, freed from Pyrrhus'

[74] Bumke 1989, 493.

[75] Guido, *History* f. 88$^{v}$: Hector joins the battle when he hears of his brother Margariton's death. He also saves Polydamas from the Greeks.

[76] Guido, *History* f. 78$^{r}$. Keller (2008, 211) thinks it problematic from a political/imperial perspective that, when Hector falls, all hope is lost. For the Greeks, though, the death of one hero does not mean the end of the Greek empire. However, I contend that this does not reflect badly on Hector's character: he cannot be held personally responsible for the fact that he has to carry Troy's weight on his shoulders.

[77] Guido, *History* f. 103$^{v}$: "Quare Greci breui hora cognoscunt Penthesilee potenciam et uirtutem."

> hands, gave many thanks to Penthesilea, assuring her that his life had been saved because of her goodness.[78]

Everyone around her knows that she is the only hope for Troy: "for through her, king Priam believed to be relieved from his own sorrows".[79] She now bears Hector's burden.

Thirdly, it is striking how similarly the deaths of Penthesilea and the two Hectors that went before her are described: all three fights end in an unfair and gruesome manner. When Achilles wants to kill Hector, he at first does not stand a chance, since Hector is a more skilful warrior. Only when Hector carries his shield on his back and does not see Achilles coming, Achilles strikes:

> When Achilles noticed that Hector did not have before his chest the protection of his shield, he picked up a certain very fierce lance, and, while Hector did not notice, he made an attack upon him and wounded him fatally in the stomach so that he threw him from his horse, dead.[80]

Apparently, Achilles can achieve his goal through trickery alone. The same applies to the killing of Troilus. Achilles orders his men to surround Troilus and only then, when Troilus is heavily outnumbered and weakened, does Achilles dare to deal the final blow:

> Then Achilles arrived, who, after he had seen that Troilus' head was unprotected and destitute from all help of defence, made an attack on him, furious, and, after he had unsheathed his sword, heaping blow upon blow, he cruelly hacked off his head, throwing the head itself between the feet of the horses. Yet his body, which

[78] Guido, *History* f. 104$^{r-v}$: "Que, sibi postquam innotuit quod Philimenis a Mirmidonibus captus erat, statim cum puellis suis contra Mirmidones properat animose. Quos in ore gladii uulnerat et occidit, sic quod per eam Mirmidones retrocedere sunt coacti. (...) Rex Philimenis uero a Pirri manibus liberatus Penthesilee multiplices grates exhibuit, asserens sibi uitam eius beneficio conseruatam."

[79] Guido, *History* f. 103$^{v}$: "cum per eam rex Priamus credat a suis doloribus respirare."

[80] Guido, *History* f. 88$^{r}$: "Achilles dum persensit Hectorem ante pectus scuti sui subsidium non habere, accepta quadam lancea ualde forti, non aduertente Hectore, in ipsum irruit et letaliter uulnerauit in ventre sic quod eum mortuum deiecit ab equo."

> he had intercepted with his own hands, he bound firmly to the tale of his horse, and he dragged it shamelessly and cruelly behind his horse through the whole army.[81]

After reporting this, Guido flies into a rage. He wonders how Homer could have praised Achilles. Achilles only overcame both Hector and Troilus through trickery.[82] It is clear that Achilles is the opposite of a good knight here. He is the embodiment of violent warfare and kills the two men who embody many qualities of the good knight. Penthesilea is killed not by Achilles, but by his son Pyrrhus, who takes after his father in many ways and becomes an *Achilles redivivus*.[83] Pyrrhus is also infuriated by his adversary and has fought with her on many occasions without ever being able to get the upper hand.[84] When Penthesilea wounds him, the Greeks surround her and break the straps of her helmet, which reminds the reader of Troilus' death. Then Pyrrhus attacks Penthesilea by surprise and cuts off her arm. This is still not enough, though, and Pyrrhus cuts her body into pieces:

> Then Pyrrhus in fury of his own animosity attacked Penthesilea, carrying the whole shaft within his body, not considering what might then befall him, while Penthesilea at that point did not have her helmet, because it had been completely shattered by the strength of those who had risen up against her. Yet Penthesilea, while she saw Pyrrhus coming quickly towards her, believed that she could strike

[81] Guido, *History* f. 99$^{v}$: "Tunc superuenit Achilles, qui postquam uidit Troilum habentem caput inerme et omni defensionis auxilio destitutum, in eum irruit furibundus, et nudato ense ictus ictibus cumulando caput eius crudeliter amputauit, caput ipsum proiciendo inter pedes equorum. Corpus autem eius suis manibus interceptum ad caudam equi sui firmiter alligauit, et per totum exercitum inuerecunde post equum suum crudeliter ipsum traxit."

[82] Guido, *History* f. 99$^{v}$–100$^{r}$. Further on in his work, the *History* says that Achilles killed Troilus through "proditorie": "treachery" (*History*, f. 126$^{v}$).

[83] Although there are differences between father and son: for instance, Achilles' "amor" for Polyxena is the direct cause for his undoing, whereas Pyrrhus is not led by "amor" during the war. Only afterwards does his "amor" for Hermione lead to his death: *History* f. 126$^{r}$–$^{v}$. "Amor" means Pyrrhus' death in the end, but it operates differently than in his father's case. This reading goes against Adler (1963, 27), who says that Pyrrhus is not affected by love at all.

[84] Guido, *History* f. 104$^{r}$–105$^{r}$.

> him first. But Pyrrhus came more quickly to her in order to pierce her, and with the strength of his arms he hit her so gravely with his sword between the shoulder and the strap of her shield that through the violence of his blow he amputated her arm and severed it from the natural binding of her shoulder. In such a way Penthesilea fell headlong to the earth, dead. And Pyrrhus cut her whole body into pieces in satisfaction for his revenge.[85]

To add insult to injury, the Greeks initially refuse to return the queen's body to her people, throwing it into a pond with the intention of letting it rot.[86] Achilles maimed Troilus' body in a similar way, dragging it behind his horse's tail.[87] Thus, in all three cases, a good knight is attacked while at a clear disadvantage by an opponent who does everything a respectable knight should not do.

A.W. Kleinbaum also notes that Achilles' son Pyrrhus does not conform to the rules of chivalry when killing Penthesilea. However, Kleinbaum says that it was not necessary for Pyrrhus to behave chivalrous in this instant, because Penthesilea was not his social equal: "[w]ar is a man's game that women, even Amazons, are not permitted to play, and any female who stumbles into this masculine sphere may be exterminated without the slightest regard to justice and fairness".[88] However, I do not think that the *History* envisions Penthesilea's death a deserved one, as Kleinbaum argues. It is clear she is envisioned as a second (or actually third) Hector. Therefore, it is hard to argue that Penthesilea's death is a deserved punishment for gender transgression. Indeed, as has been shown, Penthesilea does not transgress any gender norms,

[85] Guido, *History* f. 104$^{v}$–105$^{r}$: "Pirrus uero in sue animositatis furore cum toto trunco quem gestabat in corpore, non considerans quid sibi inde contingeret, Penthesileam aggreditur, cum tunc Penthesilea casside sua careret, ex uiribus contra eam insurgencium tota quassata. Penthesilea autem cum uidit Pirrum contra se uelociter uenientem, prius credidit illum percutere. Sed Pirrus in percuciendo eam uelocius peruenit, et in uirtute brachiorum suorum cum ense suo sic grauiter eam percussit inter humerum et pennam scuti quod per uiolenciam ictus sui sibi brachium amputauit et ab eius humeri naturali iunctura disiunxit. Penthesilea itaque mortua preceps peruenit in terram. Et Pirrus in sue uindicte satisfaccionem totum corpus eius per frustra truncauit."

[86] Guido, *History* f. 105$^{v}$.

[87] Guido, *History* f. 99$^{v}$.

[88] Kleinbaum 1983, 60.

since she is never firmly planted in the realm of either the male or the female.[89]

The passage about her death follows Benoît's version for the most part.[90] What is noteworthy, though, is that the *Roman* says that Penthesilea forgot to strap on her helmet, which made her vulnerable for the Greeks' attack, whereas the *History* states that the straps of her helmet were broken by the great number of her adversaries.[91] In the *Roman*, Penthesilea made an error before meeting Pyrrhus on the battlefield; in the *History*, her chivalric conduct was without fault, but the odds were against her. The *History* portrays Penthesilea more positively than the *Roman* in this regard. Consequently, I assert that this episode does not portray Penthesilea, but her opponent, in a negative light.[92]

### 7.5 BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD CHIVALRY

The confrontation between Penthesilea and Pyrrhus with its gruesome outcome underlines that war means the destruction of courtly chivalry, which is embodied here by a woman. In this regard, it is telling that Hector's death is not as savage as that of Troilus and Penthesilea. This, I think, is a clear indication that the Trojan war becomes more gruesome the longer it lasts, with many heroes falling into savagery. The fact that the Greeks desecrate Penthesilea's corpse and only return it after lengthy negotiations shows the Greeks' anger at being almost defeated by this extraordinary woman, but

[89] Contrast the *History's* description of her death with Dictys, *Journal of the Trojan War* IV.3: "In this manner the queen of the Amazons, having lost her troops with which she had come to Priam's aid, finally provided a sight worthy of her own morals" ("hoc modo Amazonum regina deletis copiis, quibuscum auxiliatum Priamo venerat, ad postremum ipsa spectaculum dignum moribus suis praebuit"). Dictys says here that she deserved to die gruesomely. He probably agreed with the Greeks, who want to desecrate Penthesilea's corpse "because she had dared to transgress the place of her nature and sex" ("quoniam naturae sexusque condicionem superare ausa esset": *Journal of the Trojan War* IV.3).

[90] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 24304–47.

[91] Benoît, *Roman de Troie* 24305: "Penthesilea had not laced on her helmet" ("El n'aveit pas l'eaume lacié"); Guido, *History* f. 104$^{v}$.

[92] It is interesting, though, that Pyrrhus actually pleads for a decent burial for his adversary in the end: Guido, *History* f. 105$^{v}$. Although Pyrrhus at first sees Penthesilea's actions as a gender transgression, even he stands corrected in the end and manages to do the right thing when he is off the battlefield.

even more so their growing despair and frustration that the war is still not over. The Greeks seem to project their anger and violent behaviour on the corpse of someone who embodies their fears. Achilles' maiming of Troilus' body is clear proof as well that war, the longer it lasts, corrupts all and fuels excessive violence and rage. C.D. Benson sees Hector's death as a turning point. In his opinion, chivalry dies a quick death after Hector is gone.[93] Nonetheless, not all chivalry and hope are lost: the presence of a character like Penthesilea proves the opposite. It is interesting in this regard that Guido bestows the quality of "strennuitas", which I have translated as "chivalry", upon both Hector and the Amazons (Penthesilea included).

What we see here is not a battle of the sexes, but a battle between a right and wrong form of chivalry. This becomes all the more clear when comparing Penthesilea's death in Guido's *History* with Joseph of Exeter's *Ylias*, written around 1190. In the *Ylias*, Penthesilea does not look or act like a woman: she is a toughened warrior who does not care for her looks at all.[94] Although she acts and looks like a man, the *Ylias* takes care to underline that she actually belongs to the realm of the female (in regard to her anatomical body, but also her gender identity). When the narrator describes the confrontation between Pyrrhus and Penthesilea, he says that Mars supported Pyrrhus, Enyo Penthesilea: men support men and women support women.[95] The warriors then ride towards each other on horseback. Penthesilea misses, but Pyrrhus strikes the queen in her breast:

> (...) In such a way this powerful virago
> fell without her sword. And with so great a chastity of her sex
> she gathered her purple gowns and curved fabric around her legs
> and, much angered at fate, she grew weak [i.e. she died].[96]

[93] Cf. Benson 1980, 29–30.

[94] Joseph of Exeter, *Ylias* VI.589–94.

[95] Joseph of Exeter, *Ylias* VI.635–6.

[96] Joseph of Exeter, *Ylias* VI.648–51: "(...) Sic imperiosa virago / degladiata ruit. Tanta et reverentia sexus, / sidonias in crura togas sinuosaque texta / colligit et multum fatis irata fatiscit."

Penthesilea does not die as a knight, but as a woman:[97] the last thing she does is making sure that she will not lie on the battlefield in an unseemly manner, as befits "the chastity of her sex". Penthesilea's final act on earth is a typically feminine one. Through this final action, the narrator places Penthesilea in her 'proper' place. In this light, Pyrrhus' act can be seen as a restoration of the gendered order. Indeed, as soon as Penthesilea dies, the Amazons become terrified, a terror which the narrator of the *Ylias* defines as typical for the female sex.[98] After Penthesilea's death, women start to act like women again. Furthermore, the fight that was Penthesilea's last is not an unfair one here. Penthesilea simply is no match for Pyrrhus, by which the *Ylias* probably means to say: a woman is no match for a man. That is why Pyrrhus kills Penthesilea upon their first encounter on the battlefield. If Penthesilea would have fought Pyrrhus more often, she would probably be assigned too much power and glory, which would be a troublesome thing for a woman. Everything has been done to ensure that Penthesilea's final combat is portrayed as a fair combat between the sexes, underlining that the Amazons were women both inside and out and actually no match for men.[99]

This 'rectification' of the gendered order is not visible in Guido's *History*. The *History* describes many encounters between Penthesilea and Pyrrhus, with the latter often having the worst of it. In doing so, the work grants Penthesilea glory for being able to hold out against Pyrrhus for so long: there is no sense of female weakness here. When she is eventually killed, it is not for her lack of fighting skills, but for Pyrrhus' lack of (good) chivalry: she does not get the chance to fight him fairly, being surrounded by many and taken by surprise. It is also interesting that Guido's Penthesilea does not change her behaviour at the moment of her death, showing feminine concern for her appearance. She fights and dies a true knight. When Penthesilea's followers see that she has died, they are much grieved, but they do not become frightened. Instead, their battle fury awakens and they slaughter many of the

[97] In my opinion, it is also significant that Pyrrhus strikes her in her breast: he targets her on a typically feminine part of her body, thereby showing that there is no place for women on the battlefield.

[98] Joseph of Exeter, *Ylias* VI.652–4.

[99] Kleinbaum (1983, 58–60) describes this passage as misogynistic. Indeed, the *Ylias* portrays women in general and the Amazons in particular negatively.

Myrmidons.[100] If it is true that Penthesilea's death incites them to show their true nature, as in the *Ylias*, then that nature is not a frightened, female one.

The *History* does not actively try to contain Penthesilea and her followers within the bounds of either the male or the female. That is why Penthesilea can go beyond the categories of gender, because of which she is able to address another (maybe more vital) issue: that of the right kind of chivalry and the impossibility of its survival amidst the chaos and ruin that war brings. Reading Penthesilea (and Hector) in such an allegorical manner fits the *History*'s broader aims: distancing chivalry from war and underlining the importance of peace.

### 7.6 Walking through the ruins to start anew

We have seen that the *History* plays with literary and clerical conventions, cracking open the conventional ideas about (gendered) chivalry with the help of the allegorical character of Penthesilea. The Amazonian queen does not serve as an example of gender transgression or as an(other) instance of a woman's bad behaviour. How could she, when she is neither wholly a man nor wholly a woman, but a character that walks in between the (conventional) realms of the knight and the lady? Penthesilea can even be seen in many ways as a *Hector redivivus*, thereby embodying many of the good sides of chivalry. She brings to the fore the virtues of virginity, bravery, love, and loyalty; virtues that constitute the right kind of chivalry. She dies – or even has to die – because the battlefield is not a place for a lady or for a knight, however virtuous they may be.

Penthesilea's death must not be interpreted, then, as a final reckoning for faulty gender behaviour, but as the tragedy that befalls all knights when they get sucked into the violence of war, where their good qualities can no longer flourish. By incorporating Penthesilea in the narrative, the *History* points the way to a new courtly kind of chivalry. Penthesilea and her women show that the traditional, violent side of chivalry is what makes chivalry as a whole so problematic. Hector also problematises this aspect of chivalric conduct, making clear that it is better to piously side with the clergy and sue for peace. The *History* does not disapprove of chivalry as a whole, but it does

[100] Guido, *History* f. 105$^{r}$.

show that chivalry as it was then practiced is self-destructive and wrong.

Does this mean that Guido's work ends with the gloomy message that chivalry is dead, at least after Penthesilea? On the contrary: almost at the end of the *History*, there is a message of hope. The Trojan war is over and Guido describes how many of the main players fared afterwards. Andromache, whom Pyrrhus has taken with him after the war (together with her son Laomedon), bears Pyrrhus a child after his death. This child is named Achilleides and the *History* says the following about him:

> This Achilleides grew up, and he crowned his own brother Laomedon king of Thessaly, disregarding himself, to whom this kingdom reasonably belonged, and nonetheless out of love for his own brother he wanted and ordered that all the Trojans, who were held captive in Greece, received complete freedom.[101]

Benson describes this scene as a mockery of the wars that have been fought: "Looked at in this way, the *History* becomes the blackest of comedies, a story of total absurdity".[102] In my opinion, there is no reason to read this passage and, in extension, the whole work as negatively as Benson does. Instead, Achilleides and Laomedon represent the peaceful solution. Achilleides sets aside his pride and chooses to bury the enmities of the past. The two half-brothers represent all the good sides of chivalry (love, loyalty, etc.) and show that one can obtain glory and honour in a different, non-violent way.[103] The *History* itself is proof of this: Achilleides and Laomedon will now be remembered forever. They create a situation in which chivalry and other virtues can thrive, whereas Hector and Penthesilea, who also repre-

[101] Guido, *History* f. 126$^{v}$: "Hic Achilleides creuit, et Laumedontam fratrem suum Thesallie coronauit in regem, seipso postposito, ad quem regnum ipsum racionabiliter pertinebat, et nichilominus ipsius sui fratris amore uoluit et mandauit quod omnes Troiani qui capti erant in Grecia libertate plenaria potirentur."

[102] Benson 1980, 31.

[103] Adler (1963, 27–28) in his analysis of the *Roman* he reads the passage similar to this one also positively. He says that "militia" and "amor" are dissolved through "amicitia". I think the *History* was not so much focussed on "amicitia", but on reforming the common concepts of "militia" and "amor" as ingrained in chivalry to create a new kind of chivalry (where there is, indeed, practically no place anymore for "militia"). Keller (2008, 178 + 224) states that this solution can be reached, because the two

sented the good sides of chivalry, could not continue to live in the destructive environment they found themselves in. All in all, there is hope for a happy ending in which peace can be maintained. The *History* does not portend a gruesome end, but a new beginning.

brothers embrace the right kind of rulership. I agree, but I think that this right decision and good rule come forth from the right kind of chivalry that the two brothers practice here.

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