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## **Reinterpretation of the Myth of the Amazons in Renaissance Literature**

### **Abstract**

Since ancient times, the Amazons have piqued curiosity: explorers sought their kingdom, while storytellers recounted their extraordinary customs. This interest remained undiminished during the Renaissance, an era whose literature reveals various attempts to reinterpret and update the myth of this tribe of warrior women. For instance, the Amazon queen, Penthesilea, is the eponymous character of a Latin tragedy by the Polish author Szymon Szymonowic (1558–1629). Szymonowic's primary source of inspiration was Quintus of Smyrna's epic, *Posthomerica*. In his tragedy, the Polish author reshaped the figure of Penthesilea, transforming her from an epic heroine into a dramatic protagonist.

Similarly, a famous warrior woman – often referred to as an Amazon – appears in the legendary prehistory of Poland: Wanda, daughter of King Krak. Among the Renaissance authors writing about Wanda was Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584), who dedicated a Latin elegy to her in his collection *Elegiarum libri IV*. This is an aetiological elegy, explaining the origins of the Wanda Mound – a monument located by the Vistula River in the village of Mogiła.

These two examples, Szymonowic's Penthesilea and Kochanowski's Wanda, show that the Amazons, who belong to the 'collective memory of the Greeks', have also been famous in other cultures. They have inspired, and continue to inspire, subsequent authors who create literary images of valiant and extraordinary women.