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## Putting Ancient History in a Medieval Text: the Second Part of Honoré Bonet's Chivalric Manual *L'arbre des batailles*

for Włodek,  
my younger (and best) cousin

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As the title of the renowned book by the French churchman Honoré Bonet (Bouvet<sup>1</sup>) suggests,<sup>2</sup> the work belongs to a group of military

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\* A very useful tool is the internet site ARLIMA (Les Archives de littérature du Moyen Âge: [https://www.arlima.net/eh/honorat\\_bovet.html](https://www.arlima.net/eh/honorat_bovet.html)), where one can consult an excellent entry 'Honorat Bovet' (by L. Brun, with addenda by B. Ribémont), helpful, *inter alia*, for bibliographical references. The last updating of the entry was made in September 15, 2017.

<sup>1</sup> See W.G. Coopland, *The Tree of Battles of Honore Bonet*, Liverpool 1949, p. 218 (henceforth: Coopland, *Tree*); also H. Millet and M. Hanly, 'Les batailles d'Honorat Bovet. Essai de biographie,' *Romania*, 114, 1996, p. 138, on 'L'irritant problème des noms.' Alternatively: Honorat Bovet, since this way of recording his name is preferred by H. Biu, 'Les traductions en occitan et en catalan de L'Arbre des batailles d'Honorat Bovet,' in: *Nouvelle recherche en domaine occitan*, eds. H. Lieutard et M.-J. VERNY, Montpellier 2003, accessible at: <http://books.openedition.org/pulm/1034#text> [accessed: 11.05.2017]. Unfortunately, I was unable to consult a comprehensive doctoral dissertation by the same author: *L'Arbre des batailles d'Honorat Bovet. Etude de l'œuvre et édition critique des textes français et occitan* [Université Paris IV–Sorbonne thèse 2004].

<sup>2</sup> The quotations of the edition by E. Nys: *L'arbre des batailles d'Honoré Bonet*, Brussels–Leipzig 1883 (the basis of it was one of the MSS in the Belgian Bibliothèque Royale). The English translation used here is that of Coopland, *Tree*. Both Nys as Coopland relied on a MS containing a shorter version of the treatise, while the latter scholar added to his translation the text of a long interpolation to *L'arbre* that appears in three MSS (according to him, *Tree*, p. 217), or five, as F. Duval, *Lectures françaises de la fin du Moyen Âge. Petite anthologie commentée de succès littéraires*, Paris 2007, p. 260,

handbooks of knighthood which was popular in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> However, the Reverend Bonet gives neither any detailed instructions nor overview of battlefield tactics, as they are traditionally understood in terms of arrangements of infantry troops or dispositions of cavalry; the author is equally uninterested in giving technical details of what war strategy should look like.<sup>4</sup> For a long time all these military issues were the traditional subject matter of many manuals written in antiquity (especially in the Hellenistic epoch and the times of the Roman Empire) and later, and also in the medieval Eastern Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Bonet's treatise, composed at the end of the fourteenth century, has little in common with Flavius Vegetius Renatus' *De re militari*, the famous Late Roman treatise on war and an 'archetype' of medieval chivalric military handbooks

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claims; cf. H. Bui, 'Prolégomènes à une édition critique de *L'arbre des batailles* et des ses traductions en langues romans (occitan, catalan, castillan),' *Revue d'Histoire des Textes*, 2, 2007, pp. 213 and 224–228.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Contamine, 'Les traités e guerre, de chasse, de blazon et de chivalerie,' in: *La littérature française aux XIVe et XVe siècles* I, ed. D. Poirion, Heidelberg 1988, pp. 346–367, and (more briefly) in his *War in the Middle Ages*, Oxford–Cambridge (Mass.) 1990, pp. 119–121 and 210–218; see also N. Saul, *Chivalry in the Medieval England*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2001, pp. 305–332; and A. Curry, 'Sources (1328–1483),' in: *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology* I, ed. C. J. Rogers, Oxford 2010, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Naturally, as always, there are exceptions to this rule, e.g. 4. 7 ('Quelles choses sont necessaire a bien ordonner une guerre ou une bataille'), where tactics is briefly treated (cf. Legnano, *De bello*, §17); 4. 8 ('Quelles choses appartient de faire à tous bons chevaliers'; also 3. 6); 4. 9 ('Quelles choses appartient au duc de la bataille'). These chapters touch on, more or less, the problems discussed already by the ancients, to recall only two 'classical' military manuals: Onesander's manual *On Strategy* (Στρατηγικός, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) that was highly influential in Byzantium (it was known to the Emperor Leo VI, the author of the *Tactics*), the later Middle Ages, and in the Renaissance; and *On Strategy* (Στρατηγικόν) that was composed (or commissioned to be written) by the Roman Emperor Maurice (582–602).

<sup>5</sup> Suffice it to compare the table of contents in *L'arbre* the with the πίνακες (*pinakes*) in Byzantine military manuals like Emperor Leo VI's *Tactica*, Nicephorus Phocas' Περὶ παραδρομῆς πολέμου (*De velitatione bellica*), an anonymous Συλλογὴ Τακτικῶν (*Sylloge tactorum*), or the treatise of Nicephorus Uranus Τακτικά ἡγουν Στρατηγικά (*Tactica*); see on this especially E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth. Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*, Washington, DC 1995, pp.79f.; also J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565-1204*, London–New York 1999, pp. 231–232, and G. Chatzelis and J. Harris, *A Tenth-Century Byzantine military Manual: The Sylloge Tacticorum*, London–New York 2017, pp. 1–5; cf. R. C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare 1097–1193*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 121–122.

in the West.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, *L'arbre des batailles* hardly resembles other works of the chivalric genre. Despite the poetic title,<sup>7</sup> it is far

<sup>6</sup> C.T. Allmand in his *The De Re Militari of Vegetius. The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2011, does not note any direct influence of Vegetius on Bonet. Nevertheless, one must note that Bonet knew this classical Roman treatise, cf. *L'arbre*, 4. 9: 'monseigneur Vegece au livre de chevalerie;' see further H. Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte. Dritter Teil: Das Mittelalter*, Berlin 1907, p. 672; also B.S. Bachrach, 'The Practical Use of Vegetius' *De re militari* in the Early Middle Ages,' *The Historian*, 47, 1985, pp. 239f., and J. Gillingham, 'Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages,' in: *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, ed. M. Strickland, Woodbridge 1992, p. 198.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the title of Ramon Llull's acclaimed work *Arbor scientiae/Arbre de la ciència* (the end of the thirteenth century). Bonet explains the title in the solemn Prologue to the *L'arbre* as follows:

Et se nommera cestui livre l'Arbre des batailles. Mais puisque j'ay fait jusques ci, ile me convient querre la matiere de laquelle je fasse mon ouvrage, veu que j'ay demonstre les raisons qui me meuvent a compiler cestui livre. Si m'est venue une telle imagination, que je fasse un arbre de dueil au commencement de mon livre, sur lequel vous pourrez au dessus tout premierement veoir les regens de sainte Eglise estre en si tres fiere tribulation que onques plus fiere ne fut, et bien le cognoistront ceux qui parfaitement entendront en cestui livre. Apres vous pourrez veoir la grant dissension qui est aujord'huy entre les roys et princes chrestiens. Vous pourrez veoir la grant angoisse et discort qui est entre les coomunautez. Et selon cet arbre j'ordonneray mon livre en quatre parties' (And this book is to be called the Tree of Battles. But since I have gone so far, it is fitting that I should explain the matter of which I make my book, seeing that I have shown the reasons moving me to compose it. I have imagined the thing in such wise that I make a Tree of Mourning at the beginning of my book, on which you may see, first, at the head, the governors of Holy Church in such a sharp tribulation as never was before; and this will be well recognized by those who shall clearly understand this book. Next, you may see the great dissension which is to-day among Christian princes and kings, and afterwards you may see grief and discord which exists among the communities. And in accordance with this Tree, I shall arrange my book in four parts).

Let us note that the passage proves that the author posted a drawing of such *arbre* which otherwise is in accord with the then common practice of illustrating books; cf. Coopland, *Tree*, p. 63, and M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge 2008, p. 328, stressing the ubiquity of diagrams in the medieval learning. Indeed, as J. Stevenson, *Gilbert of the Heye's Prose Manuscript (A.D. 1456). Volume I. The Buke of the Law and Armys, or Buke of Bataillis*, Edinburgh-London 1901, p. lxxii, reminds us, several manuscripts of *L'arbre* are decorated with an allegorical picture of trees, 'among whose branches fight popes, emperors, kings, lords, and commons.' Such representations of trees are, e.g. in the Paris MS 2695 of *L'arbre* from 1450 (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal), and MS Lat. 1561 (the end of the fifteenth century) from Musée Conde, Chantilly (both illustrations appear in M. Vale's *War and Chivalry. Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages*, London 1981, p. 11, pl. 2 and 13, pl. 3). A good introduction to the motif of the tree

from a chivalry romance such as *La Chanson de Roland* or Chretien de Troyes's *Perceval ou le conte du Graal*.<sup>8</sup> It also cannot be compared with typical medieval manuals of chivalry such as Ramon Llull's *Ordene de chevalerie*,<sup>9</sup> the poem *Le Roman des Eles* by Raul de Hodenc,<sup>10</sup> the anonymous *Ordene de Chevalerie*,<sup>11</sup> Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*,<sup>12</sup> Geoffroi de Charny's *Livre de chevalerie*,<sup>13</sup> or the later knightly biography *Le Jouvenel* by Jean de Bueil (c.1460).<sup>14</sup>

This may seem a bit strange, if not confusing, as it is clear that one of the groups that must have been considered as an intended audience of *L'arbre* was obviously constituted by representatives of the then *ordo equester* or, generally, men-at-arms. Just for these reasons it is still justified to retain the traditional attribution of Bonet's work as a 'chivalric' manual, granted that one takes it broadly, in generic terms, including it into a larger category of works, prosaic and poetic alike, the subject matter of which is war or men destined to deal with war, that is, rulers,<sup>15</sup> *potentes, comites, and bellatores*.<sup>16</sup> What is, then,

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is provided by P. Saloni and A. Worm in *The Tree. Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, eds. eadem, Turnhout 2014, pp. 1–12.

<sup>8</sup> See R. W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, Cambridge 2106, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. N. Fallows, *Ramon Llull, The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, Woodbridge–Rochester 2013, pp. 2–3.

<sup>10</sup> Written at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

<sup>11</sup> The work has been edited in one volume, together with de Hodenc's poem, by K. Busby, *Raoul de Hodenc: Le Roman des Eles; The Anonymous Ordene de Chevalerie*, Amsterdam–Philadelphia 1983.

<sup>12</sup> From his famous collection *The Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>13</sup> See R. W. Kaeuper and E. Kennedy, *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny*, Philadelphia 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. C. Favre et L. Lecestre, *Le Jouvenel par Jean de Bueil* I, Paris 1887.

<sup>15</sup> The Provençal prior was perfectly aware that his book had to be 'authorized' and ennobled by an eminent personality, hence his humble dedication to King Charles VI himself (1380–1422): 'La sainte couronne de France, en laquelle aujourd'huy par ordonnance de Dieu regne Charles VI° en celui nom tres bien amé et part tout le monde redoubté, soit donné los et gloire sur toutes seignories terriennes' (cf. also *L'arbre*, 2. 18; 3. 3). The king is thus the third addressee of the treatise: '[...] souvent et menu ay eu en volonté de compiler aucun livre lequel fust premierement en l'honneur de Dieu nostre createur et de la tres glorieuse vierge Marie sa douce mere et apres de vostre tres excellente majesté;' cf. K.L.E. Bourassa, *Counselling Charles VI of France: Christine de Pizan, Honorat Bovet, Philippe de Mézières, and Pierre Salmon* [University of York doctoral thesis] 2014, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> Modern studies on chivalry at war abound: an older one is G. Köhler's, *Die Entwicklung des Kriegswesens und der Kriegführung in der Ritterzeit*, III. 2, Breslau 1889, pp. 54–100. Good accounts are also found in J.F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages*, Amsterdam–Oxford 1977, pp. 23–97, and M. Keen, *Chivalry*, New Haven–London 1984, esp. pp. 219–237; see recently

Bonet's famous *oeuvre*, and why does it differ so conspicuously from other manuals of this kind?

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The questions of 'what' and 'why', difficult always as they are when the motivation of a writer living in such a distant past comes into question, may be in this case, I tentatively suggest, addressed in two ways. First, *L'arbre des batailles* is essentially the product of a consummate erudite, a man of letters who himself was not a noble baron, landowner, or knight, even less so a descendent of heathen gentry whose obligation was military service for his *souzerain*, duke, or king, but a representative of the clergy—a lowly prior ('humble prieur de Salon en Provence'<sup>17</sup>). But first and foremost, what we have is the work of a scholar and a lawyer of Canon Law ('docteur en decret'),<sup>18</sup> who was, therefore, so vividly interested in the then law and legal aspects of warfare.<sup>19</sup>

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B.S. Bachrach & D.S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Medieval Europe c. 400–1453*, London–New York 2017, pp. 274–334. This being so, the reader should remember that writing treatises or manuals of chivalry in the Middle Ages usually meant dealing with the theme of the proper behaviour of the *bellatores* and *milites* which also required producing treatises about virtues, that is, ethics. This ethical character of medieval chivalric literature, rather than strictly technical details alone, constitutes its characteristic feature (cf. *L'arbre*, 4, 101 and 102, that recall a *speculum regis* genre); see J. Flori, *Chevaliers et chevalerie au Moyen Age*, Paris 1998, pp. 236–266; C.J. Rogers, 'The Age of the Hundred Years War,' in: *Medieval Warfare. A History*, ed. M. Keen, Oxford 1999, p. 139. On chivalric ethos cf. also M. Vale, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 14–32; and M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry. The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy 1066–1217*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 98–131.

<sup>17</sup> G. Ouy, 'Honoré Bouvet (appelé à tort Bonet) prieur de Selonnet,' *Romania*, 80, 1959, p. 256. The exact date of Bonet's birth remains unknown; in his detailed reconstruction of Bonet's *curriculum vitae* Coopland, *Tree*, p. 15, states 'the early forties of the fourteenth century,' see also A. Coville, *La vie intellectuelle dans les domaines d'Anjou-Provence de 1380 à 1435*, Paris 1941, pp. 215–222.

<sup>18</sup> So he introduces himself in the Prologue; cf. A. Coville, *La vie intellectuelle...*, p. 215; 'docteur en droit à l'université d'Avignon' – as F. Duval, *Lectures françaises...*, p. 258, reminds us; he rightly, p. 259, sees in the handbook 'une texte normatif'; cf. also N. Valois, 'Honoré Bonet prieur de Salon,' *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 52, 1891, pp. 265–268, 481–482.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. M. Keen, *Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*, London–Toronto 1965, p. 7; see too F.H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1975, pp. 2–3, and generally M. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars. A Moral Argumentation with Historical Illustration*, New York 1977, pp. xxii–xxiv.

The second type of explanation is provided by context, for it is the context that matters chiefly, as usual. Accordingly, it is Bonet himself who in the Prologue clearly and precisely indicates what his reasons are for undertaking such a thorny topic:

Et les raisons pourquoy j'ay enterpris de ce faire sont, selon mon advis, assez bonnes. Car tout premierement l'estat de sainte Eglise est aujourd'huy en telle tribulation que se Dieu n'y met aucun bon remede et vostre seignorie qui a acustume d'achever et mettre a neant les fieres adventures de la foy chrestienne, je ne scay voye ne chemin comment y soit mise bonne et brieve accordance. La seconde raison si est que je voy toute la sainte chrestienté tant agravée des guerres et de la Haynes, de larrecins et de dissensions que à grant peine se l'on peut nommer un petit pays, soit duchié our conté, qui soit en bonne paix. La tierce raison sie est, car la terre de Provance don't je suis natif et nourry, est à present tellement atournée pour le remuement de nouvelle seignorie et aussi par les diverses opinions qui sont entre les nobles et les communautéz, que en grant douleur tout homme sage doit escouter les maulx que les gens du pays souffrent pour icelui debat. Et la quarte raison si est, car plusieurs glosses de grans clerks nouveaulx qui bien pensoient entendre prophecies anciennes qui jadis deviserent les grands maulx qui à present regnent, si dient que par ung de la haulte lignée de France les remedes seroient donnes au siècle ainsi traveillé et mis en grande pestilence.<sup>20</sup>

The historical circumstances constitute, thus, both the lamentable situation of the papacy, its 'tribulation' (the 'Great Western' Schism,<sup>21</sup>),

<sup>20</sup> In Coopland's, *Tree*, p. 79, tr.:

And the reasons for which I have undertaken to do this are to my mind good ones. For first, the estate of Holy Church is to-day in such tribulation that if God provides no good remedy, nor your signiory, which has been accustomed to end and bring to nothing the fierce hazards of the Christian Faith, then I fail utterly to perceive in what way good and speedy cure may be found. And the second reason is that I see all holy Christendom so burdened by wars and hatreds, robberies and dissensions, that it is hard to name one little region, be it duchy or county, that enjoys good peace. The third reason is that the land of Provence, in which I was born and bred, is at present so placed by the struggle for lordship, and also by the division of opinion between nobles and commons, that every wise man must hear with great grief of the ills that the people of the country suffer through that struggle. The fourth reason is that many glosses made by great clerks of recent times, who consider that they understand the ancient prophecies pointing to the present great evil, claim that, by a member of the high lineage of France, healing will be given to an age which is in such travail and disease.

<sup>21</sup> *L'arbre*, 4. 83. Bonet devoted his another work to this problem: *L'apparicion maistre Jehan de Meun*; see the chapters in *A Companion to the Great Western Schism*

as well as the deplorable condition of Christian society (the cruel conflict between the two great Christian kingdoms), since, to repeat, 'la sainte chrestienté tant agravée des guerres et de la Haynes, de larrecins et de dissensions que à grant peine se l'on peut nommer un petit pays, soit duchié our conté, qui soit en bonne paix.'

It was, therefore, this occasion and these unique historical circumstances that gave the Benedictine prior the impulse to take to the pen.<sup>22</sup> But the problems of war he entered into bore a more general character: the writer touched on the legitimacy of armed conflicts as such. Acute as they were in the moment of composing, the roots of dilemmas with wars were very much older as they appeared even in the eleventh century (in 1027 at the Church Council at Toulouges, and in 1054 at the Church Council at Narbonne), when the concept of *Treuga Dei* ('Truce of God') was formulated.<sup>23</sup> But as many medieval ideas go back, in fact, to antiquity, so the dilemma of the why and the wherefore of wars is naturally much older, too. In ancient times even it remained for many sensitive observers (not to mention participants) a vivid and disturbing issue,<sup>24</sup> including, among others, early Christian think-

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(1378–1417), eds. J. Rollo-Koster, T.M. Izbicki, Leiden–Boston 2009; M. Hanly, 'The Writings of Honorat Bovet,' pp. 159–196; M.A. Ryan, 'Byzantium, Islam, and the Great Schism,' pp. 197–198; also F. Autrand, 'France under Charles V and Charles VI,' in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History. Volume VI, c.1300–1415*, ed. M. Jones, Cambridge 2000, pp. 422–441. Interestingly, among *calamitates* Bonet does not mention openly the 'Black Death,' the great plague raging in Europe of the mid-fourteenth century, unless a 'pestilence' in the Prologue is an allusion to it, see note 20; on the plague see J.R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton 1970, p. 58. Direct references to the Hundred Years War are in 4. 34; 4. 48; 4. 97; 4. 107.

<sup>22</sup> Modern experts put the date of writing the book at 1387, when the conflict within papacy was superimposed on the turbulent phase of Hundred Years War; cf. H. Nicholson, *Medieval Warfare. Theory and Practice of War in Europe 300–1500*, New York 2004, p. 19; H. Biu, 'Les traductions...', contends it was within the span of three years, 1386–1389. See C. Allmand, 'Some Writers and the Theme of War in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,' in: *Krieg im Mittelalter*, ed. H.-H. Kortüm, Berlin 2001, pp. 177–178, on war and crisis as context of military treatises.

<sup>23</sup> H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'The Peace and the Truce of God in the Eleventh Century,' *Past and Present*, 46, 1970, pp. 42–67; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'War and Peace in the Earlier Middle Ages,' *Transactions of Royal Historical Society*, 25, 1975, pp. 157–174; also F.H. Russell, *Just War...*, pp. 34–36; J. Flori, *Chevaliers et chevalerie...*, p. 181, and R.B. Manning, *War and Peace in the Western Political Imagination. From Classical Antiquity to the Age of Reason*, London 2016, pp. 80–81.

<sup>24</sup> Both the ancient Greeks as Romans (especially) alluded to or wrote about this vexed problem. This does not mean they had well elaborated theories of 'just war' (cf. my *Frontyn, Podstępny wojenne*, Wrocław 2016, pp. 26–27). But their moral condemnation of wars goes along at the same time with an implicit glorification or acknowledgement

ers who responded to it in various ways.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, all this cultural heritage influenced the final shape of *L'arbre des batailles*. The roots of the work lie, thus, in actual, direct, very pessimistic reflections made by a witness,<sup>26</sup> but the way he approaches the problems are to be sought both in his legal education and his reading of older literature. In effect, Bonet's voice is so strong that his work became, in some sense, a highpoint in the controversies on war for the next generation of readers. It became an authoritative and 'classical' exposition of the topic.<sup>27</sup> And this remains true regardless of the fact that

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of warfare as it was conflicts and wars that allowed the participants to be admired and perceived as heroes. Such ambiguity is already visible in Homer's *Iliad* and Hesiod's *Works and Days*, 145–146; cf. S. Hornblower, 'Warfare in Ancient Literature: the Paradox of War,' in: *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, I, eds. P. Sabin, H. van Wees, M. Whitby, Cambridge 2007, pp. 22–53; see H. Sidebottom, 'Philosophers' Attitudes to Warfare under the Principate,' in: *War and Society in the Roman World*, eds. J. Rich, G. Shipley, London–New York 1993, pp. 195–212.

<sup>25</sup> A useful treatment is provided by L.J. Swift, 'Early Christian Views on Violence, War, and Peace,' in: *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, ed. K.A. Raafaub, Oxford 2007, pp. 279–296; cf. F.H. Russell, *Just War...*, pp. 3–4. Some scholars point to differences between the Western ideals of chivalry and quite different attitudes to war in the East: T.S. Miller, 'Introduction,' in: *Byzantine Warfare*, ed. J. Haldon, Aldershot 2007, pp. 1–4; J. Stouraitis, "'Just War" and "Holy War" in the Middle Ages. Rethinking Theory through the Byzantine Case-Study,' *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 62, 2012, pp. 227–264.

<sup>26</sup> According to R.J. Kilgour, 'Honoré Bonet: a Fourteenth-Century Critic of Chivalry,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 50, 1935, pp. 352–361, the Avignon doctor offers a severe critique of the institution of chivalry in an age, as Kilgour thinks, of crisis of this institution; see his *The Decline of Chivalry as Shown in the French Literature of the Late Middle Ages*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1937; cf. M. Keen, *Laws of War...*, pp. 125f.

<sup>27</sup> *L'arbre* won fame thanks to Christine de Pisan who in her *Le livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie* (ca. 1410) called the prior of Salon her 'master,' and in discussing the 'laws of war' she relies on Parts III and IV of *L'arbre*; cf. E. Nys, 'Honoré Bonet and Christine de Pisan,' *Revue de droit international et législation compare*, 14, 1882, pp. 451–472; with K.L. Forhan, *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*, London–New York 2002, p. 150, and H. Nicholson, *Medieval Warfare...*, p. 19. A fundamental study is now H. Bui's "'Et la gist da maistrise": de *L'Arbre des batailles* au *Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie*,' in: *Une femme et la guerre. Le Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie de Christine de Pizan*, eds. D. Demartini, C. De Le Ninan, A. Paupert et M. Szkilnik, Paris 2016, pp. 149–164; also B. Burliga, 'Antyczne reminiscencje w średniowiecznym podręczniku militarnym Krystyny de Pizan *Księga uczynków wojennych i rycerstwa*,' *Studia z Dziejów Średniowiecza*, 21, 2017, p. 24. Moreover, it is taken for granted that Bonet's work was known to the authors of the later chivalric handbooks from the fifteenth century: Nicholas Upton (*De studio militari*, ca. 1440), de Bueil's *Le Jouvenel* (cf. note 14, above), and William Worcester (*The Boke of Noblesse*, c. 1470–1475). The latter might have used the first English translation of Bonet's treatise, prepared by Sir Gilbert of the Haye in 1456 as *The Buke of the Law of Armys*, on which see

looking from the modern perspective it is clear that the significance and influence of *L'arbre* have somewhat waned now in light of two more influential and famous literary pieces—Giovanni da Legnano's exhaustive and powerfully argued study on war and the laws of war<sup>28</sup> and Hugo de Groot's (Grotius) later, highly acclaimed *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres* (1625).<sup>29</sup>

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Enough about the context of Bonet's intriguing *opus militare*<sup>30</sup> since it can be argued that too much space has already been devoted to its dire background. Yet this seems a necessary step before we attempt to explain the reasons behind the author's decision to insert examples from ancient history in part II of *L'arbre*.<sup>31</sup> But before we proceed to highlight this issue, a few words, equally indispensable, must be said first about the composition of the treatise.

Bonet sets out his plan very clearly. His *dispositio*, that is, the structure of the book, is easy to see in the very short 'table of contents' of the Prologue. About the arrangement of the material, he writes as follows: '[...] la premiere sera des tribulations de l'Eglise jadis passes devant l'advement de Jhesucrist nostre Seigneur et après la seconde partie de la destruction of et des tribulations des quatre royaulmes qui jadis furent.<sup>32</sup> La tierce partie sera des batailles en general. Et la quarte partie sera des batailles en especial. Ci fine prologue.<sup>33</sup> The first two

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Stevenson, *Gilbert of the Haye's Prose Manuscript*, p. lxiv. On Bonet's later popularity see C. Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War*, Cambridge 2013, p. 13: following Biu (see note 1, above), he counts 83 MSS in vernacular French and 13 translations in other languages.

<sup>28</sup> The author cites Legnano by name at *L'arbre*, 4. 78 and 4. 83, while referring to him at 4. 67 and 4. 115; cf. Coopland, *Tree*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> See R.H. Cox, 'Hugo Grotius,' in: *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. L. Strauss and J. Cropsey, Chicago–London 1987, pp. 386–395. Presumably, Grotius was acquainted with Bonet's manual; cf. E. Nys, 'Honoré Bonet et Christine de Pisan...', p. 451, assuming that although Grotius did not cite Bonet, he knew his treatise.

<sup>30</sup> It remains fascinating as a priceless document of the mentality of an intellectual acquainted with the literary tradition and a witness of events.

<sup>31</sup> To put it briefly, part II, containing eight chapters only, is a *prolegomenon* to the last, most important section of the treatise.

<sup>32</sup> See E. Nys, 'Honoré Bonet et Christine de Pisan...', p. 454.

<sup>33</sup> In Coopland's (*Tree*, p. 89) tr.: 'The first shall treat of the tribulation of the Church in times past, before the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord; the second part shall be of the destruction and tribulation of the four kingdoms of old times; the third part shall be of wars in general; and the fourth part shall be of battles in particular.'

of the four Parts of *L'arbre* retain an evidently 'historical' character, while the last two *partes*, following the scholastic manner of presenting the arguments (a medieval way of arguing that frequently irritates the modern reader<sup>34</sup>), may be labeled 'legal' because they are devoted to juridical aspects of armed conflicts and the 'laws' of war.<sup>35</sup> To every reader is also obvious that the meat of the work is its fourth (and longest) part, numbering 132 chapters.

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There is a logical connection between the historical and 'legal' sections of the study,<sup>36</sup> for Parts III and IV of the treatise, with all their casuistry,<sup>37</sup> are to be interpreted as the author's demonstration of how war should be conducted and what means need to be undertaken to avoid a repetition of miserable events that happened long ago. Accordingly, the 'rules' and prescriptions concerning the conduct of actual battles and conflicts, as discussed in the legal section of the work, may be viewed as a practical guide on how to proceed in concrete cases. The 'historical' section, with its examples of what evil has happened to ancient kingdoms, serves, in turn, as an illustrative warning: it follows that studying the past had, above all, for a medieval

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<sup>34</sup> Apart from Legnano's treatise, this also may be the result of author's legal studies in Avignon and his proficiency in Canon Law (cf. *L'arbre*, Prologue; see F.H. Russell, *Just War...*, pp. 127f.). By the way of contrast, however, it is worth reminding the reader that the two sophistic 'cases' he is dealing with in *L'arbre*, 4. 23 and 4. 24 must have been exceptionally accurate then, as they are perhaps not so far removed from the actual experience of war.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Coopland, *Tree*, pp. 36f.; Duval, *Lectures françaises...*, p. 259, rightly calls this part 'Le cœur de l'*Arbre des batailles*.' Here, as it has been said, Bonet's main guide was *Tractatus de bello, de represaliis et de duello* (written about 1360) and was devoted to the legal aspects of war, cf. the best introduction of T.E. Holland, *Tractatus De Bello, De Represaliis et De Duello* by *Giovani da Legnano*, Oxford 1917; also E. Nys, *Le Droit de la guerre et les précurseurs de Grotius*, Bruxelles–Leipzig 1882, p. 78.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Coopland, *Tree*, p. 29; see P. Contamine, 'L'idée de guerre à la fin du Moyen Âge: aspects juridiques et éthiques,' *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 123, 1979, pp. 70–86.

<sup>37</sup> By this a peculiar, scholastic way of reasoning is understood, that is, a way of arguing that rests on resolving dilemmas (mainly moral issues) by a very careful distinction of various 'cases'. An examination of 'questions' in this treatise occasionally takes the form of dialogue: *L'arbre*, 4. 40; 4. 57; 4. 93; 4. 127. See generally D. Whetham, *Just Wars and Moral Victories. Surprise, Deception and the Normative Framework of European War in the Later Middle Ages*, Leiden–Boston 2009, p. 46.

thinker its informative and educational value,<sup>38</sup> but this is exactly what ancient *auctoritates* were for and what literary *auctoritas* in the Middle Ages was about.<sup>39</sup>

To understand the importance of ‘ancient’ paradigms and ancient history in Bonet’s suggestive vision of wars and conflicts in human history and between individual communities, we must begin from his general view of war. In *L’arbre*, 1. 2, Bonet states, after Legnano,<sup>40</sup> a fundamental question: ‘Quelle chose est bataille.’<sup>41</sup> He goes on then to argue pessimistically (taking Holy Scripture as the point of departure) that wars and conflicts are inevitable,<sup>42</sup> claiming moreover that they are not only difficult to avoid (3. 2), but in some sense

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<sup>38</sup> As an ancient critic famously conceded, history is nothing more than philosophy that is based on paradigms—so Ps.-Dionysius, *Rhet.* 11. 2. That said, a caveat is needed: it would be little unfair to judge Bonet’s way of reasoning by modern standards of historical criticism and what history should be, which is what Professor Coopland seems occasionally to do in his landmark ‘Introduction’. Bonet’s treatment of ancient history permits us to label him easily as an ignorant who fails to understand classical antiquity and who takes some stories out of ancient context in order to illustrate earlier accepted assumptions. But he was by no means alone among medieval intellectuals in writing history in this way since similar ‘readings’ of ancient *auctoritates* was then almost common. Ancient authorities were read by medieval scholars selectively; ancient books were interpreted to fit an author’s individual purposes which, of course, does not change the fact that they were taken by them as seriously as possible; cf. V. Gillespie, ‘The Study of Classical Authors 2. From the Twelfth Century to c. 1450,’ in: *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism II. The Middle Ages*, eds. A. Minnis and I. Johnson, Cambridge 2005, pp. 145–235, and an older study, H.O. Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind. A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages II*, London 1914, p. 133f.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Bonet’s quotation of and from Aristotle: *L’arbre*, 2. 18; 3. 5 (‘le prince des philosophes Aristote nostre maistre’); 3. 7, 4. 15. On this occasion one important thing cannot be forgotten: Bonet’s strong ‘faith’ in ancient authorities may seem strange to us given that he often only mentions them cursorily and in passing, so to speak. This is true both in the case of ‘pagans’ (Seneca: 4. 12 – ‘l’auctorité des docteurs sicomme et Seneque’ and his ‘especial livre de ces quatre vertus;’ Cicero, *ibid.* – ‘le docteur Tulle’ and his book ‘que nous appelons Rhetorique;’ Plato: 4. 132) as others (e.g., Moses: 1. 2; St. Augustine: 2. 1 and 3. 8; St. John the Baptist: 1. 3 – 4; ‘Monseigneur Saint Peter’: 1. 4; the Emperor Charlemagne: 4. 3). However, even the mere mentioning of ancient eminent personalities proves their great importance, as they always were ‘at hand’ in the argumentation of a medieval intellectual. As many other thinkers of his age, Bonet recalls the ancients when comfortable—true—but the practice itself reveals his intrinsic thinking based on *auctoritates*.

<sup>40</sup> *De bello*, §. 1 (‘Quid sit bellum et qualiter describatur?’).

<sup>41</sup> In Coopland, *Tree*, p. 81: ‘What is War?’.

<sup>42</sup> Miller, ‘Introduction,’ p. 7, observes that there is no discussion of morality of wars in the Old Testament.

even natural (4. 1).<sup>43</sup> The question, then, remains in which sense are they ‘natural’, one may ask. Here the prior offers an answer (4. 1). The reason is that conflicts are permitted by God (1. 2), so, the prior goes on to explain, war is a matter of God, as it is God alone who sends so many conflicts upon sinful and wicked mankind. Discord and human preference to bloodshed may be interpreted as a punishment that falls upon men for their committing many sins, wrongdoings, and offences (4. 54). This line of thinking may really seem to the modern reader a typical kind of casuistry, in quite the negative sense of this word, yet Bonet is far from cynicism. In some sense, he is man with no illusions; he knows that there is an argument that ‘in war and battle many evil things are done’ (1. 4).<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he hopes, war may be ‘not an evil thing, but is good and virtuous’. How is this possible? Because conflicts may (and should) lead to peace and to removing any ‘dissensions’. His point is, thus, that if there occur evils in wars, they come ‘from false usage of battle and war’ that are ‘wrongly conducted’.<sup>45</sup> In sum, the conclusion is, when ‘war comes from divine law’, ‘the aim of war is to wrest peace, tranquility, and reasonableness from him who refuses to acknowledge his wrongdoings.’<sup>46</sup>

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Seen in this light, the historical section of *L’arbre*—a summary of past ‘tribulations’—appears to have been intended to be a collection of selected examples illustrating great calamities that took place

<sup>43</sup> Cf. N.A.R. Wright, *Honoré Bouvet, the Tree of Battles, and the Literature of War in Fourteenth-Century France* [Ph.D., University of Edinburgh 1972], pp. 93–95.

<sup>44</sup> A lot of compassion towards the civilian population can be seen in *L’arbre*, 4. 102; cf. Coopland, *Tree*, p. 68; on this K. DeVries, ‘Medieval Warfare and the Value of a Human Life,’ in: *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities. Warfare in the Middle Ages*, eds. N. Christie and M. Yazigi, Leiden–Boston 2006, p. 50: ‘The medieval culture that defined warfare valued human life as no era before or after;’ cf. R.W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford 1999, pp. 63–64; also J.T. Johnson, ‘Thinking Morally about War in the Middle Ages and Today,’ in: *Ethics, Nationalism, and Just War. Medieval and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. H. Syse and G.M. Reichberg, Washington D.C. 2007, pp. 3–10.

<sup>45</sup> See N.A.R. Wright, ‘The *Tree of Battles* of Honoré Bouvet and the Laws of War,’ in: *War, Literature, and Politics in the Late Middle Ages. Essays in Honour of G.W. Coopland*, ed. C.T. Allmand, Liverpool 1976, pp. 12–31.

<sup>46</sup> Here Bonet is not far from Augustine’s way of reasoning, cf. R.A. Markus, ‘The Latin Fathers,’ in: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450*, ed. J.H. Burns, Cambridge 1988, pp. 115–116; also G. Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West 450–900*, London–New York 2003, p. 16.

in the distant past. The first two parts are plainly meant to provide moralising instruction and warning. Read today, a striking feature is its somewhat homiletic, apocalyptic, and grandiloquent tone. Indeed, Bonet's narrative, which may be legitimately considered now as an exercise in medieval historiosophy (a kind of philosophical interpretation of history), recalls preaching rather than history in the modern sense of this term.<sup>47</sup> It soon becomes evident that the prior reads the sources from a specific angle—his examples work as a lesson, a *memento*, to highlight horrific cases of great misfortunes ending with catastrophes such as the doom or destruction of great states as well as failures of eminent personalities (e.g. 2. 13; 2. 15: Caesar; 2. 16: Hector; 2. 17: Octavian<sup>48</sup>). In the interpretation that the prior offers, history, ancient history in particular, is seen, thus, as a series of disasters, feuds, downfalls, collapses, discords, and decays,<sup>49</sup> for it serves to illustrate the thesis with which all students of medieval literature are well acquainted—*sic transit gloria mundi*.<sup>50</sup> The writer's intention is all the more obvious, more so in part I where he openly relies on the *Apocalypse* of St. John, with its gloomy visions of five (in Bonet) angels, who announce miseries.<sup>51</sup> But the same 'apocalyptic' perspective on the past, seen through the lens of the visionary text from Patmos, Bonet also adopts in exploring the baleful fate of the four other ancient pagan kingdoms<sup>52</sup>: Babylon,<sup>53</sup> Carthage,<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> On this see Coopland, *Tree*, pp. 38–47; also J. Coleman, *A History of Medieval Political Thought. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Oxford 2000, p. 9, and 'Medieval Political Philosophy c. 1000–1500,' in: *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. G. Klosko, Oxford 2011, p. 183.

<sup>48</sup> Although in this last case Bonet's explanation of the failure of Octavianus Augustus (cf. severe opinion about him at 4. 53) as being well understandable and peculiar to the mentality of the medieval scholar, it is plainly odd for the modern reader; on the differences between medieval and modern ways of interpreting historical processes, see esp. Coopland, *Tree*, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> But it is not without some reason to argue that many people today—leaving aside Bonet's metaphysical argumentation—would agree with his pessimistic conclusions, given especially the frequency of various armed conflicts, local and those of greater scope alike, which as the subject of TV news cause anxiety.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. note 55, below.

<sup>51</sup> *L'arbre*, 1. 4; 1. 5; 1. 7; 1. 8; 1. 10.

<sup>52</sup> This is of course the result of his knowledge of the prophetic revelations Bonet found in the *Book of Daniel* and in the *Book of Revelation*; cf. Coopland, *Tree*, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> Conquered by the Persian king Cyrus the Great: *L'arbre*, 2. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *L'arbre*, 2. 12, where Bonet reveals his predilection for a pathetic style and a homiletic manner of expression. On this occasion, the prior does not fail to mention Corinth, razed to the ground in 146 BC by the Romans, who made Greece the Roman province

Macedonia,<sup>55</sup> and Rome.<sup>56</sup> As a result, it becomes too clear that such a specific interpretation of historical data brings a somewhat bizarre and artificial vision of ancient history, as if its author finds a perverse penchant in enumerating a dreadful, really awful picture of spectacular past falls and evils that excuse his pessimistic worldview and make the narrative a text that is sermon-like and full of lamentation.

Modern students quickly realize that in part II Bonet essentially relies directly on one work—the *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum* (*Chronica martiniana*) by Martinus de Troppau (Martinus Polacus *vel* Martinus Oppaviensis).<sup>57</sup> It is this relatively ‘recent’ source in which the prior finds these examples from ancient history. But de Troppau’s chronicle must be regarded at best as an intermediary authority<sup>58</sup> since the main ancient testimony which Martinus uses is, in turn, the influential world history by Paulus Orosius, a disciple of St. Augustine. Thus, it is Orosius’ influential ecclesiastical vision of history, *Adversus paganos historiarum libri septem*,<sup>59</sup> that stands behind Bonet’s tale of the Roman Republic in the narrative of part II of *L’arbre*.

What, then, of the ancient examples in Bonet’s handbook? The philosophy that lies behind the way he treats ancient history appears to be relatively clear. It can be argued that the only logical conclusion the modern reader can reach is that the author’s aim was to prove (and to teach) that examples he finds in the Bible, the Apocalypse, and Martinus Oppaviensis’ chronicle confirm his thesis about the inevitability of wars and various miseries caused by these wars (e.g. the fall of mighty kingdoms). This approach is not objective in the modern

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of Achaea. Here the author commits a fanciful mistake but one that reveals the way of thinking of a scholar of *medium aevum*: ‘The city of Corinth, that we call in Latin *ad Corinthios*.’

<sup>55</sup> It is omitted by the prior, for, as he argues, ‘the story would be too long.’ Nevertheless, we are told (*L’arbre*, 2. 8) of the pitiful end of this greatest warrior ever (see also Bonet’s sharp critique of Alexander the Great at 4. 53) that ends with the moralising phrase: ‘*Sic transit gloria mundi*.’

<sup>56</sup> *L’arbre*, 2. 1; 2. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Written between 1272–1274. It was edited by L. Weiland in volume XX of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptorum*, Hannoverae 1872, pp. 377–474. Bonet’s second authority for the historical part of *L’arbre* was Bartholomew of Lucca, the author of *Historia ecclesiastica nova* (1313–1316); see Coopland, *Tree*, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup> *L’arbre*, 2. 1 (‘le docteur Orose nomme en latin Orosius’; ‘le docteur Orose’); 2. 2 (‘Orose le venerable docteur’); and so on; see Coopland, *Tree*, pp. 41–43.

<sup>59</sup> It was compiled probably before AD 418; cf. A. Fear, *Orosius, Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, Liverpool 2010, pp. 24–25 (‘Legacy’).

sense of this word; it is nothing of the sort. Bonet's perspective is irremovably metaphysical, so his line of thinking, to repeat, seems to be difficult to accept without reservation today. Indeed, it may be viewed as strange, as history and religion are mixed up in Bonet's vision, constituting, therefore, one whole.<sup>60</sup> But here I do not aim to emphasise the differences between 'us' and 'him' as they are all too obvious. What is to be pointed out, however, is that in his 'abridgement' of the miserable story of ancient kingdoms and men in power, Bonet uses 'old' examples exhibiting fatal wars because he remained a moralist whose aim was to warn and advise his reader. So, leaving aside the obvious truth of how valuable for the modern historian of ideas Bonet's treatise is for understanding the medieval mentality, perhaps literary historians will benefit more from reading *L'arbre*. Anyone interested in both understanding antiquity and the use of ancient ideas by medieval thinkers will find this chivalric manual indispensable. Reading it proves that without knowledge of ancient writings it is difficult to imagine how many intellectuals of that era structured their arguments, and Bonet is no exception to this rule.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, to conclude, we may speak of the 'creative' presence of ancient patterns or models, and here *L'arbre de batailles* remains, undoubtedly, very clear evidence of this, too.

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. note 38, above.

<sup>61</sup> J.J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1981, p. 89.