Two Different Views of Knighthood in the Early Fifteenth Century: Le Livre de Bouciquaut and the Works of Christine de Pizan

Zeynep Kocabıyıkoğlu Çeçen

Abstract

The claim that the renowned medieval military theorist Christine de Pizan (1363-1430) was the author of the biography of Jean le Mein gre Bouciquaut (or Boucicaut), a famous marshal of France in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, has been debated by scholars for a long time. Although the current academic view tends towards rejecting Christine's authorship of the book, the arguments both for and against have not contained any discussion of the respective views of knighthood reflected in the biography and in Christine's works. In spite of scholars' recognition that there were different views of knighthood circulating among authors in this period, the assumption that Christine and the author of the biography shared similar views really has never been challenged. This article contends that the view of knighthood defended by the author of the biography was strikingly different in many ways from that held by Christine, a further reason for rejecting Christine as the biography's author. At the same time, the article also contributes to the discussion of those different views of knighthood during the period.

Le Livre des faicts du bon messire Jehan Le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Gennes written in 1410 about the deeds of Bouciquaut, Marshal of France (c.1366-1421), survives as a single copy of a version printed

Zeynep Kocabıyıkoğlu Çeçen is a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. She is currently working on the topic of knighthood and warfare in late medieval France and is especially interested in the works of contemporary French authors Christine de Pizan, Honoré de Bouvet and Philippe de Mézières. She wrote her master's thesis on crusade images in eighteenth-century British histories.
in the seventeenth century and held at the Bibliothèque National in Paris. The identity of its author has provoked interest ever since Kervyn de Lettenhove, who made the initial study of the book in his late nineteenth-century edition of the Oeuvres de Froissart, attributed it to Christine de Pizan. Over the years this proposition has been much argued over, but the debate regarding the identity of the author has not yet reached a definite conclusion, other than that the work was written most probably by a professional author who had close contact with, and admiration for, the Marshal. The scholars contending for Christine’s authorship, the most recent being Jean-Louis Picherit in 1982, have relied mostly on evidence of the acquaintance between Christine and the Marshal, a certain admiration of the Marshal by Christine, and the supposed similarities of style, themes and sources between the book about Bouciquaut and Christine’s works. Conversely, the scholars who have rejected Christine’s authorship, amongst whom Denis Lalande has provided the most comprehensive summary of the arguments, have simply maintained that none of the evidence points specifically to Christine. A new suggestion of authorship, the candidate being Nicolas de Gonesse, Bouciquaut’s confessor at Genoa, was made by Hélène Millet in 1992. A decade later, Norman Housley, who believed, regarding Christine’s authorship, that “the grounds for this attribution are very thin,” also suggested that the author was likely to have been “within the marshal’s circle at Genoa,” though he does not refer to Millet’s specific contention.

Scholars for or against Christine’s authorship, even while disagreeing on the evidence of similarities in style between her works and Le Livre de Bouciquaut,


3. For the basics of the argument over the authorship of the work, and for a bibliography of the discussion up to the 1980s, see J.-L. Picherit, “Christine de Pisan et le Livre des faicts du bon messire Jean le Maingre, dit Boucicaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Gennes,” Romania 103 (1982) : 300–304, and Le Livre de Boucicaut, xlii–lvi.

have all taken similarities in the treatment of themes for granted. There certainly
did exist a pool of common *topoi* in the early fifteenth century, themes “developed
by the moralists and the theoreticians.”5 There were also common sources from
whom Christine and the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* drew their arguments
and examples, including Ovid, Valerius Maximus, Aristotle, Cato, Cicero, Saint
Augustine, Saint Jerome and Boethius. However, it should also be stressed—and
this has so far largely been ignored—that there could be significant differences in
the treatment of these common themes and sources.6

The treatment of the mutability of Fortune can serve as an example of this.
Both Marie-Joseph Pinet, who does not find sufficient evidence for Christine’s
authorship of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, and Jean-Louis Picherit, who finds plenty,
agree that fear of a change in Fortune is a common theme that is exploited in
Christine’s works and *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*.7 What both scholars miss, however,
is the difference in the approach to the subject. While the author of the *Le Livre
de Bouciquaut* uses change in Fortune as a tool of apology for the failures in the
Marshal’s career, as at Nicopolis and Genoa, Christine often sees a change of
Fortune as a punishment for human failures. Although both make use of the
examples of ancient heroes like Hannibal who go from glory to total destruction,
Christine accompanies such examples with a moral lesson demonstrating that
pride, luxury or other sins will cause the demise of even the most powerful, whereas
the author of the *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* simply uses these examples to prove that
even the most worthy, like Bouciquaut, can face defeat if Fortune decides to be
unfavourable towards them.8 This difference in attitude to Fortune can also be
explained by the respective views of the authors on the relevance of the human
factor to Fate, which in turn may reflect their stance vis-à-vis humanism.9


6. For discussion of the existence of similar themes in Christine’s works and *Le Livre de
Bouciquaut*, such as the praise of science and chivalry, the lamenting of the fratricide in the wars
between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, and the Great Schism, as well as discussion of common
sources in these works, see ibid., xliii-xliv, and Picherit, “Christine de Pisan,” 313–28.


8. For examples of the different treatments of Fortune, see Christine de Pizan, *The Book
[hereafter *Body Politic*], part 1, chaps. 17–18, also available in the original in *Le Livre du Corps
Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003) [hereafter *Book of Chivalry*], part 1, chap. 27;
and *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, 99–101, 438–47.

9. The “challenge to the traditional fatalistic approach to the outcome of war or battle” in
Vegetius’s *De re militari*, through its optimistic view of human ability, “appealed to humanists”
of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Christopher Allmand, “The *De re militari* of Vegetius in
the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,” in *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed.
The different treatments of the theme of the mutability of Fortune do not represent a unique case. A topic more intimately bound up with ideas about knighthood should also be examined—that of courtly love. Love or _amour_, usually referred to by the sources in the plural, is an almost essential theme of chivalric romances, and of other chivalric literature in the same spirit, where it is treated as an ingredient in the making of the ideal knight. Accordingly, love is encouraged in order to enhance the valour of the knight and to bring him more honour, which in turn increases the attraction felt for him by his lover. Pinet, in spite of her rejection of Christine’s authorship of _Le Livre de Bouciquaut_, maintains that the idea of courtly love celebrated in the book might indeed have been expressed by Christine, though only if it belonged to an earlier period in her career. What Pinet contests is not whether Christine agreed with the conventional idea of courtly love, but whether she was likely to have made it an issue at this particular time, when she had more “enthusiasm...for science and philosophy.” Pinet points to _Le livre du duc des vrais amans_, a poem written around 1403–5 as proof that even by then Christine no longer had the enthusiasm for courtly love she had shown in her earlier ballads. Yet what Pinet describes as a lack of enthusiasm might in fact be better regarded as a difference in perspective. If we examine both _Le livre du duc des vrais amans_ and a slightly earlier poem, _Le livre du débat de deux amans_, we find that the latter, one of three love debate poems Christine wrote around 1400, already offers a challenge to the conventional idea of courtly love by debating whether love causes more suffering than happiness for the knight, in spite of also espousing rather traditional praise of knights who have enhanced their valour through love. In Barbara K. Altman’s words, this attitude “allows her simultaneously to engage and dismiss the topic of courtly love.” We can see these doubts further developed in _Le livre du duc des vrais amans_ into a proto-feminist story of the ruinous consequences for women of what is taken to be illicit love, in contrast to the usual male-centred praise of its benefits. Such an attitude goes beyond a lack of enthusiasm for courtly love, but instead displays “a scepticism about the literature that glorifies” such kinds of love affairs and eventually “shatters the romance’s fictional frame, and with it the illusory edifice of courtly romance.” Charity Cannon Willard also points to the difference between Christine’s outlook

10. Maurice Keen, _Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages_ (London: Hamble- don Press, 1996), 25. Keen cites Geoffroy de Charny’s _Livre de chevalerie_, written in the mid-fourteenth century, and _Le Livre de Bouciquaut_ as late medieval examples that treat courtly love as it is in the romances (ibid., 36–38).


12. Marshal Bouciquaut’s father, also known as Marshal Bouciquaut, is one of the knights praised in the poem. “Le Livre du Debat de deux amans,” lines 1585–1592, in _Love Debate Poems_, 123.

13. Ibid., 5.

14. See the emphasis on the consequences for women in the letter from the Dame de la Tour and the ballad that accompanies it, admonishing her to stay away from the dishonour that illicit love will bring her. Letter 5 and lines 3172–3199 in Christine de Pizan, _Duc des vrais_
on courtly love and its traditional, idealized version, suggesting that there was no “necessary connection between chivalry, as it was practised in her day, and courtly love, which she considered to be in decline.”

There is no sign of any of this scepticism in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, which is instead in full agreement with the traditional chivalric literature, defining *amour* as that which brings to all the “young noble valiant men...the courage to undertake difficult things, which they achieve in order to increase their renown, so that they will have the grace of their ladies.” Thus, when the Marshal reaches the age for love, just as in the “histories of the former valiant men like...Lancelot and Tristan,” he falls in love, which makes him “joyful, attractive, full of song and more charming than ever and brings him to make ballades.” As expected, “love increases the courage, desire and will to be valiant in Bouciquaut...which puts into effect...his good deeds and pursuit of chivalry.”

As Maurice Keen puts it, such an attitude to love can be seen as associated with the traditional chivalric focus on the deeds of the individual knight rather than on his “service of the state, or the *patria*, or of any corporate association.” Aply, Marshal Bouciquaut’s outlook on warfare is characterised by personal pleasure combined with the desire for personal advancement. This is displayed throughout the book by his “incessant search for battlefields on which he could earn praise for his prowess.” Although the author often pretends that his account lacks the hyperbolical praises of bravery “accustomed in the romances,” which he says would prolong his account, he does nothing but resort to them whenever he narrates a battle. A similar dismissal of detailed battlefield descriptions in romances and

*amans*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), 171–81. For a comparison between the romances and *Duc des vrais amans* on their approach to love, see Fenster’s introduction to the work (ibid., 19, 22).


16. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, 27 [all translations from the medieval French are mine unless otherwise indicated].

17. Ibid., 28, 32.

18. Ibid., 35. The author of the book discusses the importance and effects of love throughout Chapters VIII and IX in the first part of the book, these being entitled respectively “ci parle d’amours, en demonstrant par quel maniere les bons doivent amer pour devenir vaillans” and “ci dit comment amours et desir de estre amé crut en Bouciquaut courage et voulenté d’estre vaillant et chevalereux” (ibid., 27–35).


20. Bouciquaut is described as loving “warfare in the same way that a beautiful woman loves feasting and a bird of prey hunting.” Housley, “One man and his wars,” 30 (translating from *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, 44).

21. In his account of the battle of Nicopolis, he gives numerous details of the bravery of the crusaders and even cites them by name. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, 108–9. For the Constantinople and Tripoli campaigns as well, we see similar claims that he has discarded heroic details in order to keep his accounts brief, but again there is no lack of such details (ibid., 148, 239).
chansons de geste as overlong and irrelevant can be found in Christine’s *Le Livre de faits et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (1405), her biography of the late king, where she speaks about the victories of Bertrand du Cléquin, the constable of the king, against the English. Yet, she truly does put heroic details aside, instead bringing up issues such as the importance of experience in arms and accomplishing good deeds that are beneficial.  

Lalande confirms that *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* “tends effectively towards the romance by its general atmosphere, by the marvellous adventures of its hero and above all by its manner of hiding the brutality and corruption of the century behind the glaze of heroism and courtesy.”23 Likewise categorized by both Housley and Keen as a chivalrous biography,24 “a genre directly influenced by romance,”25 *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* “celebrated and defended chivalric culture” for the knightly social circles who “liked to hear and read” about it.26 In this it was like other contemporary examples of the same or similar genre, for example, the biographies of Louis de Bourbon, the Black Prince and Henry “the Navigator,” Froissart’s chronicles, and Geoffroy de Charny’s *Livre de chevalerie.*27 Even though by the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth this traditional ideal of knighthood, developed and matured through the romance genre, was found to be “shaken in its foundations and its convictions,” it still persisted in literature, as well as in a “world of *pas d’armes*, tournaments, courts of love and orders of knighthood” that imitated the romances.28 Thus, noble knights and aspirants to knighthood reinforced their self-esteem as a social elite just as their military importance was diminishing.29

What is assumed all the way through the scholars’ arguments for or against Christine’s authorship of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* is that Christine shares the same perception of knighthood as the one presented in the *Livre.* The suggestion that Christine might have had such a perception, confirmed by the statement from Lettenhove—who after all thought Christine was the author—that Bouciquaut “has inspired a work of chivalric enthusiasm that can be placed next to the *plus beaux récits* of Froissart,” has not been challenged by others.30 This is perhaps
because the author was clearly acquainted with the ideas of those who found much wrong with the way knighthood was practised, something which can be clearly observed through certain remarks of the author that pay lip-service to those critical ideas. These comments by the author are concentrated in the fourth part of the book, helping to give it a somewhat different character from the first three parts, something that I will discuss below. However, it was perhaps this apparent awareness of contemporary critical views of knighthood that led Lalande to state that “the work is born...out of the ills of knighthood at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries.”31 Housley, too, sees the work as dealing directly with the contemporary criticism of knighthood, while he also mentions Christine as one of the critics.32

Changes in attitudes towards knighthood during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and Christine’s position as one of those who were critical of contemporary knighthood, may not yet have had any impact on the question of Christine’s authorship of Le Livre de Bouciquaut, but they have been examined by several historians.33 They have mainly underlined the clash between the military realities of the age and the traditional chivalric ideal, the conflict between the need for disciplined armies to protect the common good of the country, and the older emphasis on fulfilling the needs of the individual knight. In this context, they have noted that the “quest for reputation,” as well as the “desire for profit” from wars—the most powerful personal motives for knights—were condemned by contemporary critics as undermining any chance of collective victory.34 Military failures apparently triggered such criticism. Just as the incessant French defeats during the Hundred Years’ War were blamed on lack of discipline and an obstinate fixation on chivalric honour, the success of the English could be attributed to their tackling of the problem of discipline earlier than their French counterparts.35

31. Le Livre de Bouciquaut, xxvii.
35. Although there were efforts both in England and France to introduce rules to impose order on these otherwise uncontrollable forces, the English were noted to be more successful
For example, the refusal of the French knights to retreat from battle because of their chivalric vows of honour, even though the decision cost many casualties, was held responsible for the crushing defeat at the battle of Mauron.\(^{36}\) Likewise, the disastrous failure of the Nicopolis crusade, the greatest collective enterprise undertaken against the infidel in the period, signalled the same symptoms of disorder brought about by the dominance of the motives of individuals, and this became a target of the critics. The stubbornness of the crusaders’ insistence on fighting in the vanguard in order to keep the honour of the expedition to themselves, instead of waiting in the rear as would have been prudent, was believed to have led to the disaster.\(^{37}\)

Although criticism of knighthood was certainly not a new phenomenon, by the end of the fourteenth century the traditional clerical discontent with the sins of knights came to be overshadowed by an increasingly secular criticism of their lack of discipline and of the detrimental individualism among the knights and other men-at-arms. Although the Christian precepts were still there to guide the morals of the soldiers, the Roman military example came to prominence as the critics’ “useful antidote.”\(^{38}\) This Roman military example was learned chiefly through Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus’s *De re militari*, the well-known reference work on military matters, available from the end of the thirteenth century in a French translation, although in Latin it had been available throughout the Middle Ages, and Valerius Maximus’s *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem*, a book of anecdotes mostly from Roman life. This model came to infuse the works of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, stressing what had always been its greatest points of inspiration: order, discipline and care for the common good in warfare through the primacy of the use of reason, rather than through shows of heroism triggered by prowess, bravery and the desire for glory.\(^{39}\) Of course, the vogue for this Roman example benefited from the fact that there was no necessary conflict between these ideas and the traditional Christian teaching of self-discipline or the protection of the common good.\(^{40}\) The idea of military reform along these lines had already been put on the royal agenda by the mid-fourteenth century in

---

\(^{36}\) Barber, *Knight and Chivalry*, 347.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 264–65.

\(^{38}\) Cannon Willard, “Christine de Pizan,” 516.


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 16–17.
France through the reforms of Jean II followed by those of Charles V, and these reforms can be found advocated in the works of Honoré Bouvet and the crusade enthusiast, Philippe de Mézières, in the late 1380s and 1390s. When Christine de Pizan expressed such ideas in the early fifteenth century, they were not new.41

Christine makes considerable use of the Roman military model with reference to Vegetius and Valerius, with an unmistakeable reverence for their military superiority that she emphaizes in terms of the discipline of their armies, and their use of wisdom and concern for the common good in their military decisions. Her awe of the Romans even supersedes the fact that they were not Christians. In Le Livre du corps de policie (1407), which gives advice on the virtues and behaviour of knights, who were one of the major estates of her body politic, she declares her admiration as follows: “The noble Romans were pagans and unbelievers, yet were so well governed that we ought to take them as an example.”42 Moreover, in both Le chemin de longue étude (1402), a book that praises wisdom as the most important virtue in rulers, and Charles V, she praises the fact that the Romans won victories more by their use of a wisdom that considered the common good than by the force of their arms.43 What Françoise le Saux sees as Christine’s feminine outlook on war and knighthood is nothing more than her emphasis on wisdom and the consideration of the common good in warfare, something with which contemporary male critics of traditional chivalric values would have agreed wholeheartedly, in contrast to Froissart’s focus on feats of physical prowess.44 Charity Cannon Willard emphasises Christine’s view of knighthood as one drawn from the Roman model that favours the common benefit instead of personal glory and ambitions, and suggests that it was the duke of Burgundy, having survived the disaster of Nicopolis “to observe the shortcomings of the French knights,” who had encouraged Christine to write her principal work on knighthood, Le Livre des armes et de le chevalerie.45 Kate Langdon Forhan in her discussion of Christine’s just war philosophy and pacifism agrees that the notion of protecting the common good through military wisdom and discipline is dominant


42. Body Politic, 20.


44. Le Saulx often pits the two opposing views of knighthood against each other, depicting Christine’s as a specifically feminine one. Françoise le Saux, “War and Knighthood in Christine de Pizan’s Livre des faits d’armes et de chevalerie” in Writing War, 94–95, 97, 99–100, 104.

in Christine’s works and is drawn from the Roman texts, stating that “none of the characteristics [Christine attributes to knighthood] has anything to do with the traditional concept of chivalry.” Yet both Cannon Willard and Forhan interpret Christine’s ideas on knighthood from a point of view narrowly focused on Christine rather than placing her views within the bigger picture of the criticism of the practise of war in the period.

Having introduced the duality of views on knighthood in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and having suggested that *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* advocates the traditional view against the criticisms of the “malaises de la chevalerie” in which Christine participated, it will be helpful to examine *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* more closely in comparison with some of Christine’s works that were written around the same period to buttress the argument being made here that the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* and Christine were in quite different camps in the contemporary debate on knighthood. While the majority of recent scholars have not found the arguments or evidence for Christine’s authorship of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* convincing or sufficient, it will be suggested in this paper that these different perceptions of knighthood are a more decisive reason not to accept Christine as a possible author of the work. Attention will be drawn to three main aspects of the Roman military ideal that easily can be shown to have been advocated in Christine’s works, but not in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*. These are the aim of the common good, the use of wisdom, and discipline. Indeed, *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* advocates instead the individual advancement of the knight, taking no heed of calculated moves or coordinated actions.

Although material gains do not figure as an important motive for knights in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, the desire to earn honour and renown is emphasized throughout the book, especially in the crusading adventures of the Marshal. In spite of the fact that most crusades offered little promise of profit from war, and although the princes and kings under whom the knights served sometimes showed little enthusiasm or had other priorities, late medieval knights, poor or rich, were often quite attracted to them as a source of good adventure and as a way of winning an honourable name in arms. Thus crusading, for the young knights, became “a part of their training,” and for others an important means of acquiring “knightly fame.” Although piety might be suggested as another plausible motive, as both Keen and Barber maintain, it did not constitute a prominent one for the majority of the contemporary crusaders. Housley, on the other hand, shows how the piety of Bouciquaut and his contemporaries should not be understood in terms of what was demanded of them by the Church. He distinguishes them from what he calls “professional crusaders,” underlining the lack of evidence for their assuming the

46. Forhan, “Political Theory,” 143. For the full discussion of Christine’s just war philosophy and pacifism, see ibid., 141–54.
47. Also suggested by Lalande in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, xxviii.
“heavy obligations” of a crusader by taking vows. Yet Housley is also aware of the Marshal’s great enthusiasm for attacking infidels, so that, just like Louis of Bourbon after the Mahdia Crusade (1390), Bouciquaut simply “looked around for an unbeliever to attack,” with no regard for the ongoing trade between Muslims and Christians, and with the “underlying belief...that Christ was always served when infidels...were attacked.” Thus we can see Bouciquaut’s desire to “strain the Saracens” repeated throughout the book, though most of the time the author felt no need to explain this by expressing Bouciquaut’s wish to serve the Church or Christianity. The acts of pillage that follow the victories against the Saracens are not seen as devaluing the initial expressions of the wish to destroy them in the name of the faith, as seen in the Marshal’s attack on Escandelour (Alanya, now in Turkey) while governor of Genoa. Serving Christ is not presented as something in conflict with personal motives, be it renown or booty. On the contrary, “great honour and remuneration” are understood to be bestowed upon those who “expose their body and life for the well-being of Christianity.” This attitude is not at all different from earlier knightly attitudes that reconciled divine duty with personal quests. The accounts of the First Crusade are open about the “twin goals of the active chivalrous life, fame in this world and salvation in the next.”

Among the destinations for crusades, Prussia was probably the most convenient for satisfying the purposes of both knightly training and the acquisition of fame, because of its proximity, its promise of regular fighting against pagans, and the attraction of the feasts and prize ceremonies organized by the Teutonic Knights. Aply, the Marshal travels to Prussia four times according to the book, like all “good men who...desired [to] increase their worth.” Whereas unfavourable weather conditions and a summons by the king to return could be impediments to these expeditions, the possibility of one-on-one challenges against other knights were a further cause for enthusiasm. Yet, Bouciquaut is also tempted by other destinations offering the possibility of fighting the infidel. He goes on a pilgrimage to the East out of his wish to visit Outremer, the Latin kingdoms in the Middle East, in the company of a fellow knight. After taking the accustomed leave from the duke of Bourbon, his overlord at the time, he goes off...
to seek adventure at the Hungarian court, and then later at the Ottoman court. We can note his overwhelming desire for personal advancement when he offers his services to the emperor as well as to the sultan—albeit in his wars against other Muslims. Astonishingly, the author does not seem to have any qualms at the prospect of Bouciquaut fighting for the Ottoman sultan, nor find any need to justify it, although this enterprise does not, in the event, materialize.\footnote{65. Housley, “Maréchal Boucicaut,” 97.} Overall, the Marshal seems to have enjoyed his share of crusades, using them to build up his fame in arms, in spite of occasional bouts of disappointment when he is not granted leave by the king, such as the time when he intended to join the duke of Bourbon on the expedition to Mahdia, or when he was called back to serve in the king’s wars while on a trip to Prussia.\footnote{60. For Mahdia and Prussia, see ibid., 74-76.}

The Nicopolis crusade in which Bouciquaut participates as one of the leaders, marked the zenith of crusading enthusiasm for his contemporaries. The author of \textit{Le Livre de Boucicaut} describes the expedition as “an enterprise of great renown,” the most favourable opportunity for youth to seek “the honour of knighthood” and “the most honourable and God approved” path for all knights and squires to take, to “bring them out of inertia” when they “were little occupied with wars.”\footnote{61. Ibid., 88-90.} Inspired by such motives, Bouciquaut and his fellow crusaders make the most of the opportunities to demonstrate their valour, and to claim the honour of the expedition for themselves. At the siege of Rachowa, the Marshal makes a speech of exhortation to his men, saying that if that if they attack first, “the renown will be [theirs],” but that “it would be a great shame” if the Hungarians were to go before them and do everything.\footnote{62. Ibid., 94-97.} Yet, such an attitude had devastating effects on the outcome of the battles. Delaville le Roulx confirms that the reckless manoeuvre that resulted could have ended in great disaster if the Hungarians had not come to the crusaders’ aid at the critical moment. Housley asserts that even though they were fortunate at Rachowa, the crusaders finally met their disastrous end at Nicopolis due to the same stubborn focus on knightly honour.\footnote{63. J. M. A Delaville Le Roulx, \textit{La France en Orient au XIVème siècle: Expéditions du maréchal Boucicaut} (Paris: E. Thorin, 1886), 1: 254; Housley, “One man and his wars,” 38.} However, let alone having any qualms about this attitude, the author of \textit{Le Livre de Boucicaut} applauds it “as a laudable example of audacity,” just as he will later cheer for the Marshal’s insistence on pursuing more honour by fighting wars against the Saracens in Asia Minor and North Africa. He openly states that Bouciquaut, while governor of Genoa, occupied himself and his men in war against the infidels because of their desire to “increase their renown.”\footnote{64. \textit{Le Livre de Boucicaut}, 222.} The Marshal’s projected expedition to Alexandria, which had to change course to Tripoli due to unfavourable winds, was possibly a gesture in imitation of Peter I of Cyprus’s campaign in 1365.\footnote{65. Housley, “Maréchal Boucicaut,” 97.} Bouciquaut’s quest for honour does not seem to have
been easily satisfied. The Marshal “did not want to hear” the Genoese, who “advised him to return to Genoa and said that he had done enough.”

The quest for honour and fame in the book is not confined to the crusades. Boucicaut, “for the great desire he had to be valiant and to acquire honour, hardly cared for anything but...how he would employ his fine youth in chivalrous pursuits.” Hence, at a time when there is no war to fight, having just fought the Saracens in Outremer and then the enemies of the king in Languedoc, he decides to organize a tournament which will attract knights from several realms. The tournament demonstrates the worth of the French knights, and especially the Marshal, and brings “great honour to the king and the knighthood of France.” Surely it is this constant desire for more honour that makes Boucicaut and his fellow knights keep challenging each other in arms. The author is not critical of the individual nature of the fights of this sort in which the Marshal is involved. He sets out the most personal type of reasons, such as who is the better, the more valiant or the more worthy knight, and openly acknowledges the fact that some of these individual challenges actually take place in the middle of a battle or deliberately in concealment from the king, lest he not give his permission. The author possibly appeals to French anti-English feeling in the period by his emphasis on the English identity of the opponents. It appears from the text that as long as Boucicaut or his fellow French knights win the honour of the day, which is always the case, these combats are all praiseworthy.

As we see, the author portrays Boucicaut’s enthusiasm for going on crusades and fighting in jousts and tournaments as stimulated by an explicit desire for personal advancement in arms more than for any other reason. He also acknowledges, rather bitterly at times, that the Marshal, having entered the service of the king early in his career, could only participate in such career-boosting activities by leave of his king. While this confirms a precept found in chivalric literature since the age of the early chansons de geste, that the wars of the king are the priority for knights, and that private participation in crusades is an alternative only in the absence of royal demands for support, the author’s sincerity is doubtful. Whereas he subscribes to the idea by

66. Ibid., 232; for similar advice, also see ibid., 241, 243.
67. Le Livre de Boucicaut, 66.
68. Ibid., 67–74.
69. Ibid., 49–55, 72–74.
70. Ibid., 67, 74–75, 92.
71. Subsequent to the “overwhelming claims of secular lordship on the loyalty of the vassal” in the early chansons de geste, Ramon Lull in the late thirteenth century declares that “the office of the knight is to maintain and defend his worldly lord.” The fourteenth-century poet Guillaume de Machaut also advises that “the time for crusade ... is when your kingdom is not at war,” and his quasi-contemporary Philippe de Mézières, a crusade enthusiast and former royal councillor, asserts that “the knights of France [should] study the laws of true chivalry ... above all for the common weal of the kingdom of France.” On the other hand, he also saw that there was a common benefit to the kingdom of France in crusading, as in his own projects for a great undertaking under the leadership of the French and the English kings. For these extracts from Mézières, see Keen, Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms, 6.
presenting the Nicopolis crusade as an ideal opportunity for the idle French knights at a time of truce with England, he does not hide his resentment whenever Boucicaut misses an opportunity to go on crusade because of royal priorities. When the king prevents the Marshal from going off to Barbary, it “weighs heavy on Boucicaut,” and when the king orders Boucicaut’s return from Prussia, the Marshal does not “dare to disobey what weighs heavy on him” but sets off home “as it was right.” In contrast, when the king set him free to go back to Prussia “he was overjoyed.”

All of this should not be interpreted as hinting at a scornful attitude towards the wars of the king. On the contrary, we have ample evidence from the book to show that Boucicaut thought very highly of being in the service of the king. His first battle in the company of the king (in Languedoc), is described as the “highest, the most graceful and the most honourable enterprise that a knight has undertaken for a long time in Christianity.” On the other hand, fighting in a royal campaign is also thought of in the same way as “amours et vaillance chevalereuse,” as something to drive the “good [knights] to undertake honourable things to increase their worth and honour.” Although the author sees the “valour of the good Frenchmen” as directed towards the “profit of the king of France,” when a group of knights including the Marshal learns about an attack on a church by the English, he states that their decision to strike immediately was not based on their concern to defeat the English and earn glory for France, but on their desire to increase their honour and renown.

This emphasis on individual achievement and advancement sometimes shifts the author’s focus from the outcome of the battle to the praise and honour that Boucicaut has earned. In the account of a battle against the English in Guyenne, the author almost forgets the outcome of the battle, a victory for the French, in order to underline how the Marshal “carried away the honour of the day.” Perhaps more understandably, he hides failure in a battle behind the eulogies of the valour of the French knights. These eulogies, rather than the result, dominate the narrative. For example, the decision of the French knights to abandon the siege of a castle in Guyenne, a decision made because of their lack of numbers, is dealt with in a quick sentence at the end of the account. It might easily be missed alongside all the long praises of the unmatched valour of the knights.

Even when Boucicaut seems to perceive war as private quarrel, the author appears to have no qualms about this quest for personal honour. The Marshal, as governor of Genoa in 1404, with the full approval of the author, challenges the Doge of Venice and his captain to personal combat to clear his honourable name of their accusations after he is restrained by royal order from making war

72. On Nicopolis, see Le Livre de Boucicaut, 90, and on the Barbary and Prussian expeditions see ibid., 74–76.
73. Ibid., 66.
74. Ibid., 43.
75. Ibid., 45–46.
76. Ibid., 60–61.
77. Ibid., 44–46.
on the Venetians. These examples illustrate the mindset of the contemporary knighthood that sees all wars in terms of their contribution to the knights’ honour and renown. This, however, was nothing new: it had been expressed quite frequently in knightly literature and some authors even ranked wars according to the honour they yielded to the knight. More than half a century before Le Livre de Bouciquaut, Geoffroy de Charny, although someone who promoted the loyalty of knights to the crown, produced such a ranking of wars, very much like the one made in the late thirteenth century by Badouin de Condé, which accorded wars at home second place to crusades, which were thought to be the most honourable of all. The ranking of crusades as the most honourable enterprises passed into the statutes of the fourteenth-century secular orders of chivalry that were founded in order to create a group of knights loyal to the crown. One of these orders was La chevalerie de la passion de Jésus-Christ founded by Philippe de Mézières, a former royal councillor and promoter of a crusade under the leadership of the king.

In addition to the higher ranking of crusades in terms of honour, Bouciquaut’s preference for fighting in crusades over fighting on royal campaigns might also have stemmed from the greater, more independent role that prominent knights could play in crusading expeditions without royal leadership. On these occasions, the knights could enjoy and exploit their ties with fellow knights that were often stronger than the ties between knights and the crown. Even though at the beginning of the fifteenth century monarchs and princes were trying to create clusters of knights around their courts by exploiting the chivalric traditions of “pas d’armes, tournaments, courts of love and orders of knighthood,” we can observe from Bouciquaut’s example that personal bonds between knights retained a great importance, prompting knights to follow each other to wars. They would quite likely have agreed with the Hungarian ambassador’s explanation, given in Le Livre de Bouciquaut, of why knights ought to join the Nicopolis crusade: “All good Christians, and especially all valiant, noble men must desire to work for the Christian faith, and gladly and willingly help support each other against the infidels.” The author acknowledges the influence of the Marshal’s “great love” for the Count of Eu, with whom he had earlier built up bonds of brotherhood, in his decision to participate in the Nicopolis campaign. Similarly, he writes of Bouciquaut’s chagrin when he could not follow the duke of Bourbon, his “father in knighthood,” to Mahdia. Keen, demonstrating the persistence of such
emotional ties between knights during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, asserts that only “the slow development of an idea of public authority and a public weal” could curb these ties. Indeed, Keen sees these ties as a part of a greater individualism on the part of the upper classes.84

If we turn to the works of Christine de Pizan, we do not find such a view of the knight’s role in warfare, one dominated by the objective of increasing the individual knight’s honour and renown by feats of courage and prowess. Instead, as suggested earlier, we find a focus on the protection of the common good. This is not only regarded as the ultimate just reason for warfare, but also as the ultimate justification for the existence of knighthood.85 According to two of her popular works, Charles V and Le chemin de longue étude, knighthood is necessary “for protecting and defending the prince, the country and the common good”86 and war is just only if the common good is defended.87 Aptly, her Corps de police maintains that one “ought [not] to fight...unless he is forced to fight,” this giving him a just cause.88 Likewise, the lawful reasons for warfare set down in Chevalerie are the protection of the country, the people and the prince from oppressors, usurpers and such.89 By the same token, whenever warfare is against the common good, peace should be made in order to stop the further shedding of blood.90 Yet, the protection of the common good is only a matter for the sovereign princes, who are “set up...to do right for...[and] defend” the people.91 In turn, they can, or rather must, delegate to good commanders who can perform this duty for them.92 Individual honour is not entirely discounted, but is hardly given pride of place. Thus, the “good army leaders” have the duty to govern “a large number of people for the will and good order of all” and the “benefit of [their] sovereign” as well as “[their] own honour.”93 Knights are “guardians of the prince and the people of the country, and the champions that shed their blood and life for the honour of the prince and the public good.”94

84. Keen, Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms, 62. For the whole discussion, see ibid., 43–62.
85. Forhan, “Political Theory,” 143–44.
86. Charles V, 1:5: 332.
88. Body Politic, 70–71 [the quotations from Body Politic are Kate Langdon Forhan's translations].
89. “The first lawful ground on which wars may be undertaken or pursued is to maintain law and justice; the second is to counteract evildoers who befoul, injure, and oppress the land and the people; and the third is to recover lands, lordships, and other things stolen or usurped for an unjust cause by others who are under the jurisdiction of the prince, the country, or its subjects.” Book of Chivalry, 16 [the quotations from Book of Chivalry are Sumner Willard’s translations].
90. Ibid., 59–60.
91. Ibid., 15.
92. Except in cases like putting down rebellions, sovereign princes are not advised to lead their own armies lest they will be killed or taken prisoner, which will cause the disruption of their country. Ibid., 22–23.
93. Body Politic, 71.
So, according to Christine’s *Corps de Policie*, love of God, fear of God, love of the kingdom’s public good above personal interest—these would lead to both paradise and to “glory and praise in the world from all people.”  

Hence, true honour and glory is earned from feats contributing to the common good, as it is towards this that “the virtue, or the essence of knighthood” should be directed.  

Even though she agrees with Valerius that it is natural to seek honour, glory and reverence in this world, Christine frowns upon glory and praise earned from wars fought for vengeance or the acquisition of lands, like those of the “conquerors in the past, such as Alexander [and] the Romans.”  

In *Chevalerie* too, she asserts that knights will be honoured and praised as long as they bring honour and profit to their prince in his just wars.  

The same idea can be found in an earlier work, *Épître d’Othéa* (1401). Although here Christine does not use the term “common good,” she underlines that true honour and glory will ensue only in the case of a war concerning “an absolute necessity” and “legitimate defence.”  

She then admonishes the good knight to fight for “a good renown in this world for God and not for a vain glory.”  

Thus, a quest for “deeds of prowess...to earn a worthy renown” is neither necessary nor the right way to earn honour.  

Private combats, “inspired by pride, presumption, or foolishness,” to prove one’s superiority “in order to gain honour, or for the love of [one’s] lady,” and for equally frivolous reasons, are neither lawful nor honourable. The only exceptions are cases where private combat is authorised by the prince to resolve matters of justice.  

These bad reasons for fighting condemned by Christine are reminiscent of the several jousts of the Marshal, mostly in the early years of his career, recounted in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*. As discussed above, we know that at least one of these was fought explicitly without royal authorization. Moreover, while the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* often argues that the Marshal was compelled to accept challenges to private combat in order to preserve his honour, Christine states that the knight “who makes or accepts a wager of little merit, or for a foolish or stupid reason, should be less honoured than one who refuses it, for certainly it is not dishonour, but rather the contrary, to refuse a foolish undertaking.”

100. Ibid., 24–25 [all translations from the modern French translations of Hélène Basso are mine].  
102. *Book of Chivalry*, 212. For more on foolish combats, see also ibid., 199, 205.  
103. Ibid., 211. She thanks God that combat, “undertaken through youth and for no reason except for the sort of vanity of conquering each other,” has been banned in France four years prior to the publication of her book, that is, around 1406 (ibid., 199).
In contrast to such a discussion of true honour and glory in Christine’s works, there is nothing similar in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, which, as shown above, simply finds honour in all fighting. A striking comparison of the notions of the two authors is their respective treatment of Valerius’s statement on men’s natural desire for glory and renown. Unlike Christine, who, as we have seen, underlines the condition of virtue for achieving honour and glory, the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* simply asserts that “all valiant men can and must lawfully wish and desire praise, honour and glory in the world.”

Moreover, *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* has no discussion of the common good as is seen in Christine’s works. Even if the Marshal could be deemed to be fighting for the profit of the king or the good of Christianity, no emphasis is placed in the book on the way his actions contribute to these. The account of the Nicopolis expedition, a crusade much criticised for being “bent on the pursuit of glory,” is a good example of how *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* fails to deal with matters of the greater good, as opposed to the interests of the individual knight. Bouciquaut apparently gives no thought to the wider consequences of his actions when he hastens to attack at Rachowa, or when he insists on fighting in the vanguard at the final battle at Nicopolis. All he can think of is earning the honour available from such actions for himself and his men. This attitude is usually accompanied by an ignorance of military strategy and tactics. As mentioned before, the first of these actions, the attack at Rachowa, undertaken without prior planning and at the cost of a long and tiring journey to reach the city before the Hungarians, could easily, it seems, have ended in the “massacre or capture of most of the crusade’s leaders,” except that the Hungarians did eventually come to the aid of the crusaders and saved them. At Nicopolis, Bouciquaut was not so fortunate. When he and the other leaders of the crusade learned of the approach of the Turks at Nicopolis it was at the last minute, as they had ignored earlier news from spies and scouts. In spite of being so unprepared and without any knowledge of normal Turkish tactics, Bouciquaut and the others stubbornly insisted on fighting in the vanguard, ignoring the warnings of the Hungarian king, who had more experience of this enemy. All the western crusaders could think of was the glory and honour promised by victory.

104. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, 455. The author exploits this statement to justify his reason for praising the Marshal in such a book. For the whole discussion, see ibid., 452–56.
107. Another primary source for the battle, the Monk of St. Denis, one of the principal critics of the crusade, accuses Bouciquaut of ordering the torture of scouts who brought bad news, on the grounds that they were demoralising the crusaders. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, xxxvi; Delaville le Roulx, *France en Orient*, 1:259. While Delaville le Roulx denies that the Marshal joined the other leaders of the crusade in insisting on being in the vanguard, Lalande argues that Bouciquaut was responsible. Kelly DeVries, reading Froissart as did Delaville le Roulx, however agrees with Lalande, as he cites Bouciquaut among the Franco-Burgundian generals who “were reluctant to listen to" Hungarian advice. Delaville le Roulx, *France en Orient*, 1: 261–62; *Le Livre
While the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* does hint that the crusaders had been taken unawares by the sudden appearance of the Turks, he makes no reference, perhaps not surprisingly, to the disregarding of news from scouts and spies, or to the warnings of the Hungarian king. At Nicopolis and at Rachowa before, the author is keen only to applaud the Marshal's feats of courage. There is no attempt to justify the Marshal's actions in terms of a military strategy designed to ensure the overall success of the expedition. For the author, it was not the underlying purposes of fighting or the outcome of the battle that mattered. Instead, the stress was on the Marshal's persistence in feats of courage and prowess. Bouciquaut at Nicopolis was a “ferocious lion,” cutting through all the enemy lines alone, fighting against twenty Saracens and killing several of them. Even though “he knew well that it was impossible to prevail against such a great army...he told himself that he would rather die with the others.”

With regard to Bouciquaut’s later career, the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* persists in his praise of the Marshal for his military actions with the same unconcern for strategical considerations or the common good. On a mission to Gallipoli in 1399, the Marshal makes a display of boldness, insisting on saving two galleys from a Turkish ambush at the risk of his entire force and in spite of warnings. The author indeed makes this a symbol of Bouciquaut’s chivalric valour, quoting him as declaring that “he would rather die than see his company dead and lost by his fault.”

The same attitude is shown towards the Marshal’s later expeditions against the infidels in the eastern Mediterranean as governor of Genoa. The title of this second part of the book “speaks of the sense and prudence of the Marshal Bouciquaut and the valiant and the principal good deeds that he did.” There are indeed occasional remarks that appear to illustrate this “sense and prudence.” For example, “the wise Marshal...was informed of all [the] tricks of the enemy.” However, the author also discloses, without any criticism, that these expeditions, on which the Marshal embarks from a constant desire to destroy the Saracens, were often made against Genoese advice. In the space of the twelve pages which recount Bouciquaut’s expeditions around Tripoli and Beirut, the author mentions three times that the Marshal declines to listen to the Genoese advice to him to stop. The casualties suffered in these attacks, the constant Venetian betrayal of the Marshal’s plans to the Saracens, and the damage to the interests of the

---


110. Ibid., 137–38; see a criticism of this act in Housley, “One man and his wars,” 38.
111. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, 176.
112. Ibid., 241.
113. Ibid., 235, 238, 243.
Genoese and to their peaceful relations with the Muslims, seem to make these expeditions no less praiseworthy in the eyes of the author. On the contrary, he keeps applauding the Marshal for persisting in his desire to destroy the Saracens, and expressing confidence that God will protect Bouciquaut and his men. Yet, the outcome of these campaigns amounted to little of strategic value. Saracens were massacred and their lands and goods were plundered with a fury on the Marshal’s part that is vividly described by the author. The Saracens were forced to retreat, but only until Bouciquaut and his men had left, content with the honour they had earned and “with the praise of God.”

In contrast to Le Livre de Bouciquaut’s praise of the Marshal’s feats, which seem dominated by reckless, impetuous moves, Christine de Pizan emphasises the use of reason, counsel and strategy in military decisions in all her works. These ideas are distinct even in her earlier work, Épître d’Othéa. Here the Goddess of Prudence repeatedly admonishes the “chevalier méritant” that he should not fight out of impulse but out of reason: he should judge the outcome of his actions beforehand, take counsel from the wise and be prudent against the tricks of the enemy. Likewise in her Corps de policie she asserts that “honourable boldness, which should be praised, is that which is based on reason.” It was not “undertaking something that is very likely to be wrong out of presumption and foolhardiness... for example, such as one man against many or when a few people attack a great force of the enemy.” This kind of boldness is neither long-lasting nor will it bring any honour. Also, “victory is not joyous when accompanied by great losses,” as it is when it is “won by strategy and by strength without great losses.”

When decisions are taken on “good advice and counsel and for...good reasons... there could be no room for doubt in battle.” Christine quotes Vegetius as saying that “the good army leaders...above all [should] be wise and well advised in their duties, because it is a heavy responsibility [that] means governing a large number of people for the will and good order of all, one’s own honour, and the benefit of the sovereign.” The opinions of the wise should not be discarded through arrogance. Such foolishness can bring down even “the most chivalrous...and most fortunate” such as Hannibal. Again in Chevalerie, Christine underscores the use of reason in battle by asserting that “the knight who seeks good adventure should fight...using good judgement and not ‘from the hip.’”

114. For reference to the author’s confidence that God would help the Marshal and his men, see ibid., 234–38. For the whole account of the expeditions of Bouciquaut against the infidels as governor of Genoa, see ibid., 215–52. A similar emphasis on divine favour can be noted in the account of Bouciquaut’s later attempt to attack Alexandria, which did not materialise (ibid., 344–51).

117. Ibid., 51.
118. Ibid., 70–71.
119. Ibid., 34.
120. Book of Chivalry, 27.
mostly addressed as the “wise commander,” who has the duty to direct many things including “the affairs of the prince, the commonweal...and the fortunes of battles,” should take into consideration several things before battle.121 These can be briefly described as: making proper assessment of his forces; learning about the situation of the enemy and the conditions of the roads and the battlefield through spies and scouts; providing well for his men; protecting his lodgings well from the enemy; being prudent about enemy traps and spies; awaiting the most favourable moment for attack; and asking the opinion of the wise and experienced.122

There are several specific pieces of advice that directly apply to the situations described in Le Livre de Bouciquaut. The commander should not “hasten to attack...in full-scale battle if it is not to his advantage.”123 “If [he] is aware that his enemies are strong...he should...make a great effort to avoid them,” and should not encourage his troops to attack if they are “tired from a long march.”124 Also striking are the comments on the importance of taking counsel, such as “if those experienced in arms [in the host] are doubtful [of the outcome of the battle], the commander should try to put off the decisions to another day;” and on foreign troops, such as “if there are men from some other land...whose loyalty he doubts, [he should] place them in a position where they cannot run away.”125 Christine’s thoughts on the necessity of being prudent against enemy traps would seem to apply very closely to the state of the crusaders when the Sultan Bayazit made his appearance at Nicopolis. Unlike the author of Le Livre de Bouciquaut, who blames the disastrous end of the crusaders on Fortune, Christine asserts that “one who is overcome or damaged by a deceitful trap can blame only himself” and cannot complain to Fortune.126

One major issue related to the common good, which was considered at great length in Christine’s works, was the plight of civilians caught up in war. In both Chevalerie and Corps de police, she manifests her sympathy towards civilians and the need to establish their rights in order to protect them from the violence of war at a time when they are suffering from the misconduct of knights and other men-at-arms, a misconduct she condemns.127 This concern, exacerbated by continuous warfare in France, is found addressed by such contemporaries as Philippe de Mézières and Alain de Chartier, as well as in Honoré Bouvet, whose Arbre des batailles was an important source for Christine in Chevalerie.128 In contrast, the concern for civilians scarcely appears at all in Le Livre de Bouciquaut. Housley blames such neglect on the narrow scope of the work, while N.A.R. Wright finds

121. Ibid., 44.
122. Ibid., 37–65.
123. Ibid., 53–55.
124. Ibid., 50–51.
125. Ibid., 63–64.
126. Ibid., 47; for the complaint about Fortune, see Le Livre de Bouciquaut, 99–101.
128. For the references to Chartier, Bouvet and Pizan, see Housley, “One man and his wars,” 37; for Mézières, see Mézières, Songe du Vieux Pèlerin, 355–59.
this unconcern common in traditional chivalric literature because of its focus on “the rights of the individual soldiers” as opposed to those of civilians.\textsuperscript{129} The only example of such a concern we can find in the book is one shown towards noble women, expressed by the Marshal’s founding of his military order of \textit{l’escu vert à la dame blanche}, the green shield for the white lady.\textsuperscript{130}

As we have seen, wars, according to Christine, ought to be directed towards the common good, executed according to a rational military strategy under the leadership of wise commanders and their astute advisors, and with a view to minimising the damage to civilian society. However, without discipline in the army, these objectives could not be accomplished. Christine emphasises the importance of military discipline in several of her works. In \textit{Charles V}, she asserts that “knighthood...can be understood as a...strong chain...put together by an order of several enjoined rings...for the maintenance and defence of the common good...and order is not so much necessary in other things as in the exercise of deeds of arms; for where order is not guarded, [the army] is disrupted, confused and damaged...and...immediately defeated and conquered.”\textsuperscript{131} In \textit{Corps de policie}, she praises the Romans as the ultimate experts in maintaining military discipline, “that is, keeping the rules and order appropriate to” knighthood. Discipline, she says, was “the highest honour and firm foundation of the empire of Rome,” as it brought about their great victories.\textsuperscript{132} She illustrates, with examples drawn from Valerius, how the Romans did not spare anyone when they broke discipline, and severely punished even those in the highest ranks,\textsuperscript{133} but she also quotes Vegetius in \textit{Chevalerie} as saying that it is more praiseworthy for commanders, who are responsible for keeping order in their hosts, to maintain discipline “by rule and good doctrine than...merely by fear of punishment.”\textsuperscript{134} Christine’s emphasis on Roman discipline clearly comes as a response to the perceived lack of discipline in contemporary armies. The requirement for discipline arose from the need to advocate “unified action” as a “useful antidote to individual ambition,” as Cannon Willard suggests, as well as to regulate the undisciplined and uncoordinated armies that were so often composed of a mix of mercenaries, indentured companies and fief-holders.\textsuperscript{135} Christine relates in \textit{Corps de policie} that when there is no discipline “in battle everything is confusion, as we know from experience.”\textsuperscript{136} One benefit

130. The author makes an issue of the defence of women and the founding of the order in two chapters at the end of the first part. \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut}, 160–71. For the comment, see Housley, “One man and his wars,” 37.
132. \textit{Body Politic}, 64.
133. Ibid., 65.
134. \textit{Book of Chivalry}, 45.
136. \textit{Body Politic}, 70.
of discipline, emphasised and repeated in *Chevalerie*, possibly in allusion to contemporary disorder, is that it can enable smaller numbers to win against great multitudes that are “more difficult to maintain in good order.”

While *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* clearly pays lip-service to the importance of discipline or good military order, it lacks a real understanding of it. The author’s interpretation of Valerius’s examples of a smaller number of men defeating a greater number is evidence of this. Whereas Christine’s emphasis with regard to Valerius’s text was on the discipline of the Roman armies, the author of *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* chooses to use Valerius’s examples in support of Bouciquaut’s heroism. When the latter fights against ten thousand Saracens with only five hundred men, at the cost of numerous dead and injured, the author claims that this verifies what Valerius said about the deeds of the Romans. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* does make particularly frequent use of the word “ordonnance” and its synonyms in the accounts of the Marshal’s expeditions. However, these same expeditions, those at Nicopolis, Constantinople, Escandelour and Tripoli, for example, are characterised by their disregard for the common good and for military strategy. The accounts taken as a whole contradict the claims of discipline within them. The repeated references to the existence of order in the crusading army at Nicopolis are hardly justified when the author reveals that they were caught at the dinner table unprepared for the Turkish attack.

It was not simply that the Turkish advance was a surprise, but that the crusaders were engaged in festivities while supposedly conducting a siege. In *Chevalerie*, Christine directly addresses the issue of preparedness by asserting that “the wise commander...will make his preparations and remain on alert...so that nothing happens inopportune during meals and they cannot be surprised.” The issue of superfluous eating and drinking and entertainment seems to have drawn great criticism from contemporaries as a perceived great fault of the crusaders, and of French knights in general. Christine herself does not criticise contemporary knights directly on this score, but deals with it by teaching the antidote to it through ancient examples. However, Honoré Bouvet and Philippe de Mézières directly blame the crusaders and French knights in general for indulging in such pleasures and other luxuries, thus undermining their military discipline.

If we turn to other accounts of expeditions in *Le Livre de Bouciquaut*, where the author claims the existence of military discipline, one wonders how the
Marshal could maintain order in his army, as is claimed, during his expedition to Constantinople, or later at Escandelour, given that his men are constantly portrayed as engaged in pillage and massacre. In addition to Christine’s disapproval of pillage from the point of view of its harm to civilians as mentioned above, she also warns against it in Chemin as a matter of misconduct that should not be allowed, drawing upon Vegetius for support, and also in Chevalerie, where it is seen as a cause of distraction from the objectives of war and as an impediment to victory, a lesson Christine derives from the example of Hannibal.

It is somewhat problematic to establish an entirely consistent picture of knighthood in Le Livre de Bouciquaut and therefore to compare this picture with knighthood as it appears in Christine’s works. The problem arises because the different parts of Le Livre de Bouciquaut exhibit different characteristics, especially so in respect of the fourth and last part. This last part is characterized as “synthetic” by Hélène Millet, because it was produced very rapidly, in less than a month, to defend the Marshal against Genoese accusations. Millett sees it as “in the image of the manuals of political morals,” standing out quite at odds with “the linear biographical account” that preceded it. It is the way this last part displays a remarkable defence of Bouciquaut’s devotion, military prudence, and strict sense of discipline that may possibly have led some scholars to attribute the work to Christine de Pizan. The author’s account does indeed remind one of Christine’s works, organizing the chapters according to virtues which more or less correspond to those Christine praised, although they scarcely fit the portrayals of the Marshal in the rest of the book. These virtues can be listed as follows: a piety defined by constant prayer; works of charity; chastity; abstinence from the sins of luxury, covetousness and vanity; pity and self-discipline; as well as discipline, wisdom, justice and eloquence. Moreover, there is a notable repetition in this last part of Le Livre de Bouciquaut of references to Valerius—two-thirds of all the references to this author in the whole book—as well as references to other sources that Christine also uses, such as Cicero, Boethius and St. Augustine. Hence, this last part of the book seems more plausible as potentially Christine’s work than any of the earlier parts. The comparison of the Marshal to the Roman generals in terms of his exercise of prudence and sense in military decisions, and his observance of strict military discipline, accentuates this similarity to Christine’s work, even while, taken together with the rest of the book, an overall identification of Christine as the author remains highly unlikely.

In this last part of Le Livre de Bouciquaut, the author likens Bouciquaut to the “valiant noble men of the ancients,” such as Scipio Africanus and Fabius Maximus.

142. Le Livre de Bouciquaut, 139–47, 221–25.
143. Chemin, p. 348, lines 4410–4424; Book of Chivalry, 75–76.
144. Millet, “Qui a écrit?,” 147 [my translation of Millet].
146. Millet, “Qui a écrit?,” 144.
in his use of reason in military decisions. These accounts the author cites from Valerius. Accordingly, he asserts that “as [the Marshal] starts a battle, he considers well if it is good that he is facing it or not, if the cause is just and what can come out of it, what power he has in his men and in finances, and what his opponents have, the strength of the country and the place, the season and the weather, all that can help and destroy him, and on this he reflects with good sense.” The author also claims that Bouciquaut never hastens to attack “without thinking... [but] waits for the right time and place,” and acts always according to strategy by calculating his advantage, as well as by laying traps for the enemy. He further asserts that the Marshal has proved this knowledge of laying traps “many times against the Saracens and in other places.” The Marshal is deemed comparable to the “aforementioned valiant ancient [commanders]...in the histories of the Romans,” not only in terms of his competence in devising and executing military strategy, and of his prudence while undertaking war, but also for his ability to command his men in excellent discipline and order. The claim that Bouciquaut banned swearing and gambling in camp so as to promote discipline is, as Housley remarks, “hard to take at face value.”

We need only refer back to the accusations of laxity and entertainment directed at the Nicopolis crusaders, or to an ordinary comment in the Le Livre de Bouciquaut’s account of the Tripoli campaign that reports the Marshal’s invitation to his men for a drink in order to refresh and motivate them. Also somewhat unconvincing is the author’s insistence in the last part of the book that the Marshal had such a self-disciplined approach to his work that he never took a break for any recreation or pleasure, even when those who loved him pleaded with him to do so. This is invalidated by the accounts earlier in the book of Bouciquaut’s arrival at the king’s court for some recreation in the company of ladies, with feasts, games and dances. Thus, when read in parallel with the earlier parts of the book, the fourth and last part of the book fails to convince, especially in its attribution of Roman-like behaviour to the Marshal. Also somewhat distinct is the third part of the book. However, here the difference lies more in the domination of its context by politics rather than by

147. Le Livre de Bouciquaut, 401–2.
148. Ibid., 404–5.
149. Ibid., 407.
150. Ibid., 402–3. The author underlines the strictness of this discipline through examples from Valerius (ibid., 409–10).
151. Ibid., 403–4; Housley, “One man and his wars,” 37.
152. Delaville le Roulx mentions, possibly in reference to Juvenal des Ursins and the Monk of St. Denis, that at the blockade of Nicopolis “feasts, games, debauchery, celebrations of all sorts followed each other without interruption, to the detriment of discipline ... Precautions necessary to guard the camp were not taken at all; the spies did not fulfil their duty, the service of the scouts was non-existent.” Delaville le Roulx, France en Orient, 256 [my translation of Delaville le Roulx]. For the comment about Tripoli, see Le Livre de Bouciquaut, 238.
153. Ibid., 433–36.
the knightly adventures of the initial two parts.\textsuperscript{155} The character of this part of the book offers considerable justification to Hélène Millet’s thesis that the book possibly was written by Nicolas de Gonesse, who, as the Marshal’s confessor, was a direct witness of Genoese politics in this particular period.\textsuperscript{156} The account of Bouciquaut’s second attempt at launching an attack on Alexandria in this third part remains quite similar to earlier parts of the book in terms of its expression of piety from the point of view of knightly honour.\textsuperscript{157} However, one does find here a notable concern with the strategic details of the expedition—as laid out in the letter to the Cypriot king—in comparison with the lack of such concern in accounts of other expeditions earlier in the book.\textsuperscript{158} One could perhaps see this new strategic concern as a passing salute to Roman military values, but it is perhaps no more than this. Therefore, unlike the fourth part of the book, the third part cannot really be said to be closer to the views on knighthood held by Christine and other critics.

Despite these problems concerning the consistency of the views about knighthood within the text itself, it remains true that, looked at as a whole, there exist considerable differences between the views of knighthood represented in \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut} and in the works of Christine de Pizan. Whereas the former in general sees the reasons for fighting in terms of the individual benefit to the knight, without any regard to the common good, military strategy or unified action, Christine upholds these as the key elements of just and successful warfare as it ought to be undertaken by knights. This difference in treatment of this subject, which has not attracted the attention of scholars, is indeed a strong argument against Christine’s authorship of \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut}, an argument that can be added to those already made against the attribution. It is conceivable of course that Christine could express a view untypical of her work in general in order to appeal to a different audience. However, given her breadth of knowledge of the ideals of knighthood she usually expressed, and of the texts that could be called on to support them, it would be difficult to identify Christine with the clumsy and half-hearted efforts of the author of \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut} to acknowledge them.

Although \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut} certainly forms part of the discussion of the ills of knighthood in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and while

\textsuperscript{155} This part defends the Marshal’s role in the sale of Pisa to Florence, which was criticised because “it seemed that Bouciquaut had more played the game of Benedict XIII than that of the French crown.” It also defends his role in the Great Schism as an advocate of the Avignon cause.

\textsuperscript{156} For the quotation, see Millet, “Qui a écrit?,” 137 [my translation of Millet]; for the account of these affairs in Genoese politics, see \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut}, 293–387.

\textsuperscript{157} Millet regards the fact that Nicolas was also one of the translators of Valerius’s \textit{Factorum et dictorum} as further evidence for his authorship of \textit{Le Livre de Bouciquaut}. Ibid., 144.

\textsuperscript{158} For the whole argument in favour of Nicolas de Gonesse, see ibid., 135–49.
it certainly shows signs of responding to the criticisms made of the knighthood of that time, for the most part it responds with a praise of the traditional ideal at which those criticisms were directed. Although it shows some awareness of the new expectations about knighthood and warfare, and of the Roman texts often used by Christine de Pizan and other critics to promote and support them, it shows really very little appreciation of them. Christine, as the examples from several of her works discussed in this article demonstrate, was a true believer in what she understood as Roman military precepts, emphasising especially the consideration for the common good, the use of military strategy and reason, and the maintenance of discipline in warfare. *Le Livre de Bouciquaut* indeed shows that, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, a different, more traditional view of knighthood was still alive and kicking, alongside the newer ideals.