

Proefstuderen Geschiedenis

5 april 2024



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Introductie

Een student Geschiedenis vertelt hoe jouw eerste jaar bij deze opleiding er uit zal zien.

Hoorcollege

Titel

De vroege geschiedenis van Rome: mythe of werkelijkheid?

Korte omschrijving

Het college behandelt de geschiedenis van Rome in de periode 753-338 v.Chr. De nadruk zal liggen op de politieke en sociale geschiedenis, maar ook enkele aspecten van de Romeinse godsdienst komen aan bod.

Docent: Prof.dr. Luuk de Ligt (l.de.ligt@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Luuk de Ligt (1963) studeerde Geschiedenis en Klassieke Talen aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam. Na zijn promotie (1993) werkte hij negen jaar als universitair (hoofd)docent bij de Universiteit Utrecht. In 2002 werd hij benoemd tot hoogleraar Oude Geschiedenis aan de Universiteit Leiden.

Werkcollege 1

Titel

Het riddertoernooi in de twaalfde eeuw

Korte omschrijving

Het toernooi is nog steeds één van de meest tot de verbeelding sprekende manifestaties van de middeleeuwse ridderscultuur. Het ontstond rond 1100 en werd in de loop van de twaalfde eeuw in West-Europese zeer populair, ondanks kerkelijke protesten. In dit college bestuderen we samen twee fragmenten uit de 'Geschiedenis van Willem de Maarschalk' (*Histoire de Guillaume de Maréchal*), een lange rijmtekst uit de vroege dertiende eeuw die beschouwd mag worden als de eerste Westerse lekenbiografie in de volkstaal. Deze fragmenten geven een goede indruk van de praktijk van een twaalfde-eeuws toernooi, die nogal afwijkt van het laatmiddeleeuwse toernooi dat tegenwoordig dankzij de beoefenaars van living history bij een groot publiek bekend is. Bovendien laat de tekst mooi zien wat we ons concreet moeten voorstellen bij ridderlijke idealen.

Docent: Dr. Marlisa den Hartog (m.i.den.hartog@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Dr. Marlisa den Hartog is universitair docent middeleeuwse geschiedenis aan de Universiteit Leiden. Zij is een cultuurhistorica met een brede interesse in mentaliteitsgeschiedenis en een specialisatie op het gebied van gender en seksualiteit in vijftiende- en zestiende-eeuws Italië.

Werkcollege 2

Titel

Vereren, vergeten. Helden in de Nederlandse geschiedenis

Korte omschrijving

Docent: Dr. Pieter Slaman (p.j.slaman@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)

Pieter Slaman schrijft over de geschiedenis van de Leidse universiteit en van het Nederlandse onderwijs. Hij is universiteitshistoricus en universitair docent Nederlandse geschiedenis. Zijn proefschrift ging over de geschiedenis van studiefinanciering in Nederland.

Q&A

Heb je nog vragen over de opleiding? Dan kan de student die hier allemaal beantwoorden!

Voorbereiding werkcollege 1

Lees ter voorbereiding hoofdstuk 7 ('The Chivalry of the Marshal') uit het boek *William Marshal: Court, career and chivalry in the Angevin Empire, 1147-1219* (Londen en New York 1990) van David Crouch. Formuleer voor jezelf een antwoord op de volgende vragen: 1) Wie was William Marshal? (Maak voor deze vraag gebruik van zowel het artikel als de Engelstalige Wikipediapagina) 2) In hoeverre voldeed hij volgens het artikel aan het middeleeuwse ridderideaal? 3) Wat voor beeld schetst het artikel van het riddertoernooi in de twaalfde eeuw? 4) Wat voor beeld schetst het artikel van oorlogvoering in de twaalfde eeuw?

Voorbereiding werkcollege 2

Kijk ter voorbereiding het volgende filmpje: https://youtu.be/kaYq4y9A_LY?si=7qrrW0Xz6Eap2pH.

and had been in a position to loan money to support a campaign against the Welsh in 1194.

Such indications of his canniness are intriguing reminders that the Marshal did not live in a heroic society, whatever the *Histoire* might try to persuade us. Earlier in the twelfth century the highest of Norman aristocrats, Waleran, count of Meulan, did not find it beneath him to take an active interest in the wine trade which passed through his lands on the way to England, and the herring fleets that used his ports.³² Such great men did not market their own produce, but in forming close relations with the men who had the skills to do it for them they entered a world that some of them did not seem to find uncongenial. The world of commerce had its own excitements and dangers, and for the magnates with resources to exploit it was one way to accumulate the sacks of coins that made so much else possible. The Marshal was alert enough to his commercial interests to indulge in town development to improve his lordship of Leinster, with boroughs developed or improved at Kilkenny, Carlow and New Ross.

If nothing else, the Marshal's friendly relations with merchants, burgesses and his own household clerks should remind us, if we need reminding by now, how two-dimensional was the *Histoire* written to commemorate his life. Generations of romantically-inclined historians have long overstressed the military element in aristocratic life (for which the *Histoire* is in no small part to blame): it is as if we judged today's upper class only by their doings at Badminton, Klosters, Henley or on the golf-links. It is arrogant to assume that the twelfth-century aristocracy was less complex than ours, simply because it is so remote from us.

32 *The Beaumont Twins* 1986 185-9.

THE CHIVALRY OF THE MARSHAL

The Marshal was a paragon of the military virtues of his day. We do not just have to take the word of his biographer for that. He was tutor-in-arms to the heir of the kingdom of England for a dozen years; prized captain of three successive Angevin monarchs; and a (generally) successful commander in the field. These things we know from sources other than the *Histoire*, so we need not doubt what it says. The Marshal was a great practitioner of what his day and age called *chevalerie*; but what he meant by the word and what we read into it are two different things. Several writers have had much to say about the Marshal not just as a soldier, but as an example of what they see as an early pattern of 'chivalry' and knight-errantry. In a recent study John Gillingham has picked apart what modern historians have had to say about the Marshal's career as a soldier, and offered his own assessment.¹ He presents us with quite a different Marshal, one that I find rather more convincing than the Marshal of Sidney Painter and Georges Duby. The following chapter, therefore, is very much in Mr Gillingham's debt.

Sidney Painter had a vision of the Marshal as a warrior which seems at times to have owed more to Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* or *The Talisman* than the *Histoire*. He cast William in the role of the 'knight-errant', a man solely guided for much of his life by the pursuit of glory and honour, as he understood it. He saw a man who followed the classic career as described by the thirteenth-century statesman and writer, Philip de Navarre (or Novara); first acquiring renown, then settling down to lands, a wife and respectability. Honest man that he was, Painter admitted that his

1 J Gillingham 'War and Chivalry in the History of William the Marshal' in *Thirteenth Century England* II ed. P R Cross and S D Lloyd Woodbridge 1988 1-13.

category of knight-errant was 'somewhat arbitrary' but we were to understand that it should be taken to mean 'a knight imbued with chivalric ideals'. But what were those ideals? Painter was less than faithful to his text. Despite the delight of the *Histoire* in the Marshal's freebooting on the tournament and battlefield, which it regards as a perfectly respectable activity, Painter condemns the profit motive in warfare as 'unknightly'.²

He also depicts the Marshal as a pursuer – albeit an incompetent one – of the cult of courtly love. The *Histoire*, however, provides little evidence for this. It does not ignore women, it even (as Mr Gillingham points out) credits Countess Isabel with an important role in her husband's council (a role that the charters of herself and her husband go some way to confirm). But it does not venerate women particularly. William Marshal had a good deal of respect for his sisters; he made a point of visiting them on the rare occasions that he was in England in his early career. He was also deferential and polite to the noblewomen before whom he performed his deeds in the tournament. Women came within the bounds of his courtliness, for if they were not possible patrons themselves, they had husbands who were. He was, besides, a well-disposed man and on one occasion, at the firing of Le Mans, he had his squires assist an old lady whose house was burning down with all her goods inside. Perhaps he did not see the irony that it would not have been necessary at all if his colleagues had not set light to the city in the first place. But that is the extent of his 'chivalry' as Painter wanted to understand it. The Marshal saw nothing to admire in the woman he caught eloping with a clerk. He was as stringently moral on that occasion as the priggish Philip de Navarre would have wanted. There is nothing in the *Histoire* of the sensuality and playfulness of Andrew the Chaplain or Bérout, the Marshal's contemporaries. Their 'advanced' notions were far beyond the conventional morality of the Marshal and his men. The suggestion that the Marshal might have committed adultery with the Young King's wife is greeted with genuine horror and outrage. The Marshal prided himself on his sound principles.

To the author of the *Histoire*, therefore, women are (like the Marshal's own mother) assets and objects of material promotion; delightful, gentle and beautiful it is true, but still pieces in the game of ambition. The *Histoire* has a limited time to spare for women. Not one comes through as a developed character in her

² Painter's particular blindness on this topic is just as apparent in his subsequent *French Chivalry* (Baltimore 1940).

own right, unlike the women of Chrétien's romances. It paints a man's world, a world of violence, comradeship and high politics. The only traces of the world of romance are the adjectives borrowed to depict women from the vocabulary of the stock romance. Few women had any business in the real world of the Marshal's *mesnie*, and they were a positive menace to its emotional life. There men fed their need for security and companionship by fixing their affections on the iconic figure of the Marshal, their impassive lord and father, sinking their insecurities in the brotherhood of serving him. The chasm in their lives that his death opened up could not be filled, although the *Histoire* itself was an attempt by his bereft men to summon up a wraith of the Marshal, so that not all of what had once been was lost to them.

Romantic knight-errant the Marshal was not. He had a transparent horror of being without a patron in his landless, younger days. He needed a household in which to base himself; a master to follow, someone to pay for his horses, arms, the clothes on his back. The sort of knight that Painter described was a less than respectable character, the sort of knight who haunted the wastes and forests of the contemporary romances with a band of like-minded souls; ambushing respectable knights and their ladies in most unsporting packs, until they ended up at the wrong end of the lance of the hero, who unfailingly dispatched groups of up to a dozen of them at a time, as in a twentieth-century western or space opera.

Duby's view is even less in accord with what the text has to say, indeed at one point, as Mr Gillingham caustically but justly points out, Duby has to invent a more grandiose setting for the Marshal's knighting than the text actually provides, to support his views on the centrality of *l'adoubement* in aristocratic society. Duby, like Painter, sees William Marshal as essentially a simple knight. He goes further. He tries to maintain a view that William Marshal 'was blessed with a brain too small to impede the natural vigour of a big, powerful and tireless physique' (to employ Mr Gillingham's translation). We can concede Duby the physique, but he has misjudged the intellect that guided it. How could he describe one of the most successful courtiers of his age as a man of 'few thoughts and brief'? The Marshal had to have a vigilant sensitivity tuned to every tremble in the mood of the court, an ever-ready humour to help deflect envy and malice, and a certain deviousness if humour failed. Above all he had to have self-control; how otherwise could he have survived? No-one was likely in his own day to have rated

the Marshal alongside a John of Salisbury, or even a Walter Map, but that is not to deny the man his due. He was no lucky bonehead. He was an astute, alert and cool-headed soldier and courtier, not a military genius or a Machiavelli, but a great proficient in the field and the council chamber, and no man's fool.

THE TOURNAMENT

Let us look at the evidence. What is the chivalry the Marshal displayed in the tournament field? From around the age of twenty-one to the age of thirty-seven William Marshal was an habitu  of the tournament. The *Histoire* lists sixteen tournaments in which its hero participated between 1167 and 1183. The rise of this sport to respectability was very much a feature of the Marshal's own lifetime. Meetings of knights for the purpose of military games are first mentioned in France in the early twelfth century, but little is known of these early tournaments. They were probably informal meetings of vigorous, military-minded free men, but not patronized by the higher aristocracy. They acquired a bad reputation as undisciplined riots. Kings and popes moved to ban them, in the latter case because they were a distraction of Christian energy from the Crusade. For a good century and more they occupied the same place in the view of the establishment as rock concerts or Stonehenge solstice-worship does now. Henry II of England would not allow them to be held in his kingdom, but as the *Histoire* indicates, permitted them in the Marches of Normandy and in Anjou.

It was during Henry II's reign that the tournament became a more respectable aristocratic pursuit. This was partly because the fact of being a knight had become more generally regarded, in northern France and England, as a social distinction rather than a military calling. But also, as Duby points out, the organization and sponsorship of great tournaments was a means for the great duke or count to pose as a leader of the nobility. In Stephen's reign in England we first hear of a magnate, Hugh de Mortemer, being killed at such a meeting. In Normandy in 1167, as the *Histoire* tells us, William de Tancarville thought it a desirable thing to lead his *mesnie* around local Norman tournaments. By the time William Marshal was the master of the Young King's *mesnie*, tourneying was all the rage and it occasionally found great patrons around northern France; Philip, Count of Flanders, being the chief of them.

Most of the tournaments were still small affairs, a score or two of knights divided for the purpose of the game into two informal teams. Such meetings were advertised by word of mouth and chiefly attended by local knights and people like the Marshal, professionals who drew much of their income from captures and ransoms. At the height of the season in France, in late autumn, a determined knight might get to one every two weeks. In such circumstances in the later 1170s William Marshal and a Flemish acquaintance, Roger de Gaugy, decided to milk the circuit for everything it was worth. They came to an agreement that they would team up and split the profits from the captures they made on their own account over the next two years. They were meticulous, they had to be, since the money they earned in this way made no small difference to the degree of aristocratic display they could flaunt. The Young King's kitchen clerk, Wigain, undertook to keep a tally of their captures (probably rather a relief for him to be doing something other than totalling the consumption of capons), which survived to be seen by the Marshal's biographer. In ten months Wigain's tally amounted to 103 knights. On his deathbed, the Marshal recalled with mingled regret and pride that he had taken as many as 500 knights prisoner on the field. If he was right one can only marvel at the obstinacy of the knights who were willing to place themselves in front of his lance; confirmation of the old belief that there is one born every minute.

But some meetings were different, great affairs and festivals, drawing hundreds of participants from all over France and England, some even came from Scotland. It is on these that the *Histoire* gives us the greatest detail. On such occasions great magnates from all over the Anglo-French world would converge on the chosen field, lords from the area comprehending Scotland, England and the Marches, Flanders, Anjou, Poitou, Normandy, Brittany, Champagne, Burgundy, Picardy and the area then called 'France', what we now call the Ile-de-France, the region ruled directly by the king. In the Marshal's day, this was as far as the tournament enthusiasm had spread. Few subjects of the emperor, no Italians, Navarrese or Spaniards are mentioned in connection with a tournament.

The patron of the great tournament would host and organize the gathering, feast his great guests and offer token prizes to the best knight on the day. In the case of Philip of Flanders, on one occasion he equipped with some generosity the Young King and

his men who appeared at a tournament in the county of Clermont without the ironmongery of war. The tournament patron, whether Count of Flanders, Duke of Burgundy or the lesser Counts of Clermont, Beaumont-sur-Oise or Dreux, clearly expected to gain something from this considerable outlay. No doubt Duby is right to suggest that it was done as much to assert their dignity against the growing power of the French monarchy, by providing bread and circuses for the knights, as for pleasure. But one should not avoid the more simple cause of the patronage of tournaments: its usefulness in promoting the status of great magnates against each other, as much as the king.

The Marshal owed his position and favour with the Young King to his infection of the boy with the lust to tourney. Duby's description of the Marshal as the 'team manager' of the Young King's tourneying *mesnie* has a certain validity, although player-manager would be nearer the truth. The king's continuing favour to William depended on unbroken success, and the Marshal did his best to provide it. He exerted himself to attract into what was a basically Anglo-Norman *mesnie* the most distinguished knights of Flanders, France and Champagne. Such men could name their own price to enlist under English colours for the season. This was very much a transfer fee market. When in 1183 the Marshal had informally parted from the king, a number of dukes and counts promptly offered substantial inducements for him to join their service. We have seen the evidence that he did in fact accept Count Philip's offer before his recall to his estranged lord.

Others have well described the sort of things that happened on the tournament fields of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.³ I see no reason to go into any great detail here and I will simply summarize some of the main points they have made. The tournaments of the Marshal's day differed very little from war. The same weapons and tactics were used, the same greed for captives and ransoms is evident. About the only thing that distinguished the tournament from war was the fact that the death of a participant was a cause for regret in the tournament. The tournament also allowed the participants to withdraw into roped-off safe-areas called *recets*. Otherwise they were occasions when no holds were barred.

As a sport, tourneying was a most dangerous activity: in the level of violence the participants suffered, it was rather like horseback American football with sharp sticks and no referees.

³ See bibliography of this chapter, page 211.

There were some elements of it which make the sporting analogy as irresistible to me as it was to Duby. There were teams dressed in the same colours and there was a decided team spirit about the game, with captains, team chants (the war-cry) and regional loyalties. In a great tournament, as at Lagny in 1180, teams were grouped into their nominal place of origin by nations: English, Bretons, Flemings, Normans, and so on. In other ways, though, the analogy is inadequate to describe more than the underlying spirit of the tournament. There was no formal objective to be achieved. The winning side was the one which chased the other from the field, or that which amassed the greater number of captives at the end of the day's fighting. Also, the individual went in for it for more than the satisfaction of team-spirit and co-operative endeavour, he went into it to fill his purse.

Few rules governed the tournament field, apart from the feeling that it was generally bad form to slip away from your captor once his attention had been drawn away, or steal the horses taken by another man. The most regulated part of the business was the taking of ransoms. A man once taken must undertake to pay a ransom, but that done should be allowed to rejoin the field if he felt up to it. The *Histoire* is very hot against bad sportmanship where it involved ransom, and very particular that it be paid. On the other hand it is willing to balance this punctiliousness with admiration for the knight, as William Marshal is said to have been at Joigny who tempered industry with largesse. At Joigny, the Marshal took numbers of prisoners as usual, but is said to have distinguished himself by grandly giving away his winnings.

Men conducted themselves on the twelfth-century tournament field with the same brutality and ruthlessness as they did on the battlefield. Since the main justification for the activity was that it offered an authentic training ground for war, we must not be surprised at this. There was no particular objection to deploying whole companies of foot-soldiers to assist in the action, as was done at the town of Anet on the Norman border in 1176. The French baron, Simon, castellan of Neauphle, drew up 300 footmen to cover the retreat of his team. It says a lot for the quality of armour by this date that William Marshal and the Young King were able to ride the foot-soldiers down with impunity. William took advantage of the situation by grasping Simon de Neauphle's reins as they passed him (his preferred method of capturing knights). He and the king rode away, towing Simon behind. He could do no more than flail around helplessly, deprived of his

reins. Unfortunately for Simon, he came into contact with a low beam as William dragged him along and was knocked off his horse. When William finally drew rein and looked behind him, he saw only an empty saddle and the king, convulsed with laughter.

Some of the other tactics described as used in tournaments also appear distinctly unsporting, until we remember that the tournament field was no less than a rehearsal for battle. When tournaments began, they began with a general onset of the two sides. When the massed ranks met with a thudding crash, their ranks would often disintegrate and a confused mêlée follow. The most successful company was that which kept close together in the charge and whose cohesion survived into the following scrum. But Philip of Flanders' favourite tactic was to avoid the shock of battle altogether; keep back his men until the tournament had become a milling throng of individuals and small, lost groups; then ride in on the fight in a disciplined company and mop up captives at will. The Marshal observed the Count in action. Liking what he saw, he introduced the same tactic to the Young King's team. At a subsequent tournament the Young King pretended that he did not want to join in and held back from the fray. Later when all the teams were engaged he charged in on the count of Flanders' men with great success. This ploy afterwards became the basis of the English team strategy.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The tournament being what it was, we can expect even less of the chivalry of Sidney Painter on the battlefield. Here was a place of real seriousness. Indeed, it was the field of war that gave the aristocracy the only warrant for its privileges in the stock view of contemporary writers. They fought for Christ and for justice while the clerks offered intercession with God. The peasants who worked to provide the necessities for both had to console themselves that they were the foundations of the two shafts which held up the sky.

The Marshal and his class had ways of alluding to their reason for existence. On surviving impressions of the Marshal's seal he appears represented, as do almost all of his lay contemporaries, garbed as a knight on horseback. The common image of aristocracy in the late twelfth century was a military one. Since William I had his new seal cut after conquering England it had

been thought increasingly suitable for a great man or ruler to be depicted as a horse-soldier. It did not happen all at once. There was a different, older, idea that a lay lord should be shown in civilian dress, the military display confined to the sword that was to represent his power to discipline the evil-doer. Some seals and all tomb-effigies preserve this more pacific and judicial aristocratic image until the Marshal's time. But in general, from the early-twelfth century onwards, it was the arms and accoutrements of a knight which automatically identified the aristocrat. The association of ideas had advanced so far by 1200 that just to be a knight was recognized as qualifying for inclusion in a superior social group. In the Marshal's own lifetime this idea had advanced to the point where a knight, however poor, could still expect to be addressed as *sieur* or *messire*; a form of public deference extended in the first half of the century only to earls and barons.

Since the great aristocrats had for many generations made war their profession, this conjunction of ideas is by no means odd. The oddity lies in the newer idea that the knight was himself noble just from taking the rite of passage of dubbing; this particular association of ideas was a novelty, and it appeared in the Marshal's own lifetime. He would not have been averse to the idea, however. It was partly through people like himself that the idea came about. Younger sons of barons, such as he was, would have bridled at the thought that they were not as noble as their father. If they took up the profession of arms it did not alter their status, and their presence would enhance the status of the men of meaner origins they associated with in the *mesnies* in which they were employed.

On his seal (and his alleged tomb) we see the Marshal garbed as a knight would have been at the close of the twelfth century. He wears the flowing surcoat on which in real life his arms would have been stitched or embroidered. Beneath are the fine-meshed mail hauberk and leggings which protected him from spear-points, arrows and the sharp edge of swords. Beneath that, we know, would have been a buff-leather or quilted under-robe to deaden the shock of blows which reached his body. About his shoulder, on a thong, was his shield, a construction of wood and boiled leather, painted over with his arms; lighter and smaller than the great kite-shaped shields of the Conqueror's army. On his head was a mail coif, like a balaclava, and over that, by 1200, it would have been customary to wear a light iron cap, less confining than the older helmets with nasal which remained the fashion until the end

of Henry II's reign. For full protection in battle and tournament, however, the great helm would have been worn that is depicted on the Marshal's seal. It was an enveloping iron bucket with eye-slits and ventilation holes punched in it, laced tightly to his shoulders. The *Histoire* has the Marshal wearing one in the 1170s, but that is perhaps an anachronism; they do not seem to have been in full fashion till King Richard's reign.⁴ His sword and light, ashwood lance completed the Marshal's war gear.

The Marshal at war was a formidable and, we might also say, colourful figure: robes of yellow, green and red linen or silk, the polished steel helmet, gilded clasps and jewels flashing in the sunlight; one could hardly imagine a more impressive military peacock. The effect of a whole, uniform company of such creatures must have been a quite deceiving sight. No wonder that the young Perceval, brought up in ignorance of the world by his mother in a Welsh forest, was made by Chrétien de Troyes to fall in love with such military magnificence at first sight, and mistake the first knights he met for angels.⁵ Contemporary writers, such as Jordan Fantosme, preserved stirring descriptions of the effect of a twelfth-century army on the observer. It is colour they often pick on, the overwhelming effect of the strong colours – red, blue and white – at a distance. Then there is the added effect of the uniform accoutrements of the disciplined companies (*conrois* or *constabularia*); the shields, the fluttering pennons and thickets of lances, which hypnotized the eye. In terms of visual effect, at least, the twelfth century fielded more formidable armies than had been seen in western Europe since the time of Theodosius.

We can only wonder, in the moralizing strain adopted by the older and wiser Guy of Warwick, home from the wars and alone on a tower of his castle as the sun went down, whether all this glamour was justified by the result.⁶ Indeed there is nothing

⁴ The great helm, as opposed to the lighter helmet, is represented on the seal of Richard I cut for him in 1189. However an early version of the great helm, an iron cap with a metal mask attached to the front (rather like the Sutton Hoo helmet), was carved c.1160–70 on the military tomb effigy of William Clito, Count of Flanders, at the abbey of St Bertin, St-Omer, see F Sandford *A Genealogical History of the Kings of England and Monarchs of Great Britain* London 1677 17; E Warlop *The Flemish Nobility before 1300* (4 vols) Courtrai 1975–6 1 pl. fac. 139.

⁵ *Le Conte de Graal* II.125–52.

⁶ *Gui de Warewic* II.7568–74.

glamorous in the warfare described by the Marshal's biographer. It is a prosaic business of siege, calculated brutality, waste and trickery. The pattern of the warrior most admired by William Marshal was his father, John. It would seem from the *Histoire* that the Marshal instructed his young followers in war in examples he drew from his father's life. To William, his father provided an admirable example of a captain and lord. If John Marshal was so admirable as a soldier, then we have in his son's stories of him the particular qualities that he admired.

Courage, particularly in adversity, was plainly one quality to emulate. Although the *Histoire* does not admire failure, it could at least praise the desperate stand of John Marshal in Wherwell abbey in 1141, holed up in a tower, engulfed in flame and spattered with molten lead. It was not his fault that he was in such a pass. He was there because the Angevin army he had joined was defeated, and he had for once done the generous thing and covered the retreat of the empress. Such was the reward for the truly self-sacrificing chevalier; he was sacrificed. The *Histoire* preferred that its heroes did not get in such desperate straits. It admired far more the cunning that could turn possible disaster to triumph. John Marshal was admired for his address in luring the dangerous mercenary, Robert fitz Hubert, into captivity in his castle, under smiling assurances that he was in fact planning an alliance with him. The *Histoire* chuckles over John's dawn ambush of King Stephen's force, just as it emerged, unarmed, from its base to destroy him; fooled by his deceptive assurance that he had too few men to resist the king. Most praise went to John for edging out of a losing military situation by a strategic capitulation; putting aside his wife and taking instead the sister of his great enemy to form an alliance. William Marshal himself was a by-product of this particular stratagem, son of this politic marriage.

Like father, like son. John Gillingham has described better than I can the various deceptions and brutalities that the Marshal perpetrated in his long, military career. The Marshal's wars were not usually the sort of full-dress affairs for which tournaments were the preparation. 'The kind of war William fought – and by definition this was the kind of war the best knights fought – was a war full of ravaging, punctuated quite often by attacks on strong-points but only rarely by pitched battles.'⁷ The *Histoire* describes seventeen sieges, but only three or four battles (depending on how seriously Drincourt is taken as a battle). The Marshal,

⁷ Gillingham 12.

only took the field in two pitched battles in all his long life.

The *chevauchée* (the word is employed by the *Histoire*) was the principal horror that war inflicted on the land. It was the systematic pillaging and burning of enemy land by a raiding column of knights and sergeants. It enriched one side at the expense of the other, and put pressure on the enemy. Although, as Mr Gillingham points out, there is good evidence that the author of the *Histoire* was well aware of the idea of attrition and the pressure of economic damage on resources, such warfare was also a denial of the enemy's lordship: he could not protect his people and this was a grief to him (as the plundering of Netherwent by the Welsh was a matter of grief to the Marshal). There was otherwise no feeling that this, the seedy side of war, was anything but honourable.

Self-control in battle, as much as in the king's hall, was also admired in this age. It was a more sophisticated age than it is given credit for being. By the twelfth century warfare was the professed occupation of an aristocracy that was also becoming literate and articulate. It was a century that saw for the first time for a long time magnates as well as kings who turned to the pen and the written word for the purposes of propaganda, administration, correspondence and, indeed, amusement. Even the Marshal did not escape the influence of this movement although, unlike Geoffrey fitz Peter and many of the court of the kings he served, as well as the kings themselves, he was not in any way literate. It may be that the Marshal was untypical among his generation in being unlettered; in which case his biography (again, the product of a lettered laity) may have grossly distorted our picture of the barons of his day. There is every reason to see the twelfth century as the first in northern Europe since the eclipse of Rome in which there was an aristocracy which prized learning amongst its members as much as military proficiency.

A military aristocracy that also cultivated and admired learning was going to find much to interest it in that earlier age. Mr Gillingham, in his writings, has proven how widespread amongst the twelfth-century aristocracy were the maxims of Vegetius, the fourth-century writer on warfare. Intelligent, instructed soldiers would fight with more considered and mannered tactics than the popular picture of all-in knightly mêlées would accommodate. Head-down charges, as we have already seen on the tournament field, were not the way that the leading captains won the day. They held back, deceived their adversaries and probed for a weak

point before committing themselves. Only then could the morale of the well-disciplined *mesnie* be used to full advantage. The same was true on campaign. All was feint and movement. A full-scale battle was rarely entered on, for the result might be uncomfortably decisive and irretrievable. Battles, as at Lincoln in 1217, were for desperate men. Otherwise, as when a determined Count Baldwin of Flanders met King Philip of France in 1197 outside an invested city, one did not fight unless the odds were overwhelmingly in your favour. Philip drew off from the belligerent Flemings and left the city to its fate. The *Histoire* did not criticize him for this, it complimented him on his sense. Again, the *Histoire* condemned the Emperor Otto for unnecessarily taking on the retreating French at Bouvines in 1214. If he had just waited he would have obtained as good a result as if he had met and destroyed the French. As it was the emperor's decision, and its unexpected result, cost him his throne and lost Normandy to John for good.

The Marshal knew, partly from his father and partly from experience, the burden of one of Vegetius's maxims as well as if he had read it: 'courage is worth more than numbers, and speed is worth more than courage'. As at Cilgerran in 1204 he knew the value of surprise and the confusion it might cause. To achieve it, he and his contemporaries would march at night, pretend to disperse to deceive the enemy to do likewise, or use the uncongenial winter season to stage unexpected strikes and raids. There was a premium placed on disciplined and reliable reconnaissance to try to minimize the danger of being caught off guard. The Marshal time and again gave lessons on this. Local intelligence and informers were a necessary complement to scouts. As much as could be was done to avoid being taken off guard by the enemy.

This was the way that men fought in the twelfth century if they were wise and experienced. Warfare then was not 'chivalrous' in quite the way Painter and Duby would have us believe. The word 'chivalry' (*chevalerie*) appears a couple of times in the *Histoire*: it describes the action of knighting, and it describes virtuosity in the military games outside Winchester in 1141. The adjective for proper and commendable conduct in the *Histoire*, as Mr Gillingham points out, is *cortois* (courtly); it is an adjective associated by the author with God himself. Used at a more mundane level it appears when King Richard fell in with one of the Marshal's schemes for deceiving Philip and ravaging his lands; he congratulated William with the compliment that he was *molt cortois*. The twelfth century was such an age that could equate ingenious

trickery and stern attrition with the word 'courtly'; and it did so because those were the qualities that it admired: sternness to an enemy and cleverness in the craft of war. Giving the enemy a sporting chance was a perversion of a later age. William Marshal would have gaped at the chivalrous French captain at the battle of Fontenoy who invited the English line to open fire first, and would have judged the catastrophic result to be no more than the man deserved.

LA BONE FIN VA TOUT

The *Histoire* does not in general worry too much about the Marshal's spiritual state. He was a good man, and God loves good men. The Marshal's soul only occupies the author's attention at the point he and his paymasters would have considered appropriate: his deathbed. Nonetheless it is surprising, and unaccountable, that he does not mention any of the Marshal's several, expensive religious foundations, save one. Curiously, the one foundation inspired by the Marshal that the author does see fit to place in his narrative is one that cost him little. After the sea-battle in the Channel in 1217 that destroyed the French fleet, the Marshal expressed a wish that a hospital might be built at the port of Sandwich. It was to be dedicated to St Bartholomew on whose feast day the battle had been fought. However it was neither built on Marshal lands nor with Marshal funds, but with the prize-money taken from the French. I can only guess that the hospital's foundation escaped the editor's knife because it made a neat full stop to the story of the battle that saved Henry III's throne. The Marshal's other religious foundations were but unnecessary digressions to the author.

But pious grants aside, the text of the *Histoire* is nonetheless saturated by remembrances of God, even between deathbeds. We may take this as an accurate reflection of the degree of open religion displayed by the Marshal's circle. There was no mocking (except of the household clerks) nor was there indifference. 'God for the Marshal!' was the cry of the Marshal's men. God was ever present and was particularly to be called on in a crisis, or at the lowest level, invoked in oaths ('By the Sword of God!' was an fittingly military one used by the Marshal). The narrative has occasional asides which demonstrate a strong sensibility of the workings of God in the world: 'My lords, it is no nonsense that God