

University of New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

Master's Theses and Capstones

Student Scholarship

Spring 2016

The Milites of Orderic Vitalis and the Problem of Knights

Keith Kempenich

University of New Hampshire, Durham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/thesis>

Recommended Citation

Kempenich, Keith, "The Milites of Orderic Vitalis and the Problem of Knights" (2016). *Master's Theses and Capstones*. 838.

<https://scholars.unh.edu/thesis/838>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses and Capstones by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact Scholarly.Communication@unh.edu.

THE *MILITES* OF ORDERIC VITALIS AND THE PROBLEM OF KNIGHTS

BY

KEITH KEMPENICH

Baccalaureate of Arts, St. Cloud State University, 2011

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

History

May, 2016

This thesis has been examined and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History by:

Thesis Director, David S. Bachrach, Professor of History

Ethel Wolper, Associate Professor of History

Susan Curry, Senior Lecturer in Classics

On May 6, 2016

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of New Hampshire Graduate School.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project and indeed my entire graduate education were made possible only by the help, generosity and support of many people, which a brief acknowledgement in a research paper can hardly begin to repay. I owe many thanks to the faculty, staff and students of History Department at the University of New Hampshire for creating an inviting and intellectually rigorous environment in which to study, and the Department specifically for the funding they generously provided for my second year as a full-time student. I am indebted to Professor David Bachrach for his guidance and editing suggestions, as well as the other members of my thesis committee, Professors Sara Wolper and Susan Curry and my other readers. I owe my gratitude to my friends and family in Minnesota for their constant encouragement, and to my colleagues, Angela Costello, for her commiseration and friendship, and Michael Gregory for his professional advice. If not for the support of my wife, Sarah, I may never have attempted grad school, but her insistence that she did not want to spend the rest of her life with me if I was going to be dissatisfied for having never tried was a forceful argument. Lastly, I owe a deep debt to my late grandfather, Leonard Kempenich, who set my love of learning and passion for the Middle Ages into motion over two decades ago. This all began with evenings spent with him watching television programs about dinosaurs and ancient Egypt and a pair of wooden swords made in his workshop.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM OF KNIGHTS.....	1
Orderic Vitalis.....	19
II. THE IDENTITY OF THE <i>MILITES</i>	23
Chronology and Sources.....	25
The Nobility and <i>Milites</i>	30
The Economic and Professional Identity of the <i>Milites</i>	35
The <i>Milites</i> as Professionals.....	40
Generic Usage of “ <i>Milites</i> ”.....	46
III. THE MILITARY FUNCTION OF <i>MILITES</i>	48
<i>Milites</i> as Horsemen.....	48
<i>Equites</i>	53
<i>Milites</i> and their armor.....	58
Commanders and Garrisons.....	60
IV. THE GIFT OF ARMS.....	65
The Giving of Arms in the <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>	70
V. CONCLUSION.....	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	83

ABSTRACT

THE *MILITES* OF ORDERIC VITALIS AND THE PROBLEM OF KNIGHTS

by

Keith Kempenich

University of New Hampshire, May, 2016

There has long been a debate among medieval scholars over the precise definition of knighthood and how the Latin term *miles*, often translated as “knight,” relates to the knight’s identity in the Middle Ages prior to the reign of King Henry II of England (1154-1189). This project offers a systematic analysis of the term *miles* in the twelfth-century text, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, by Orderic Vitalis. I examine the ways in which the historian refers to *milites*, including their varying socio-economic backgrounds, their involvement in the military households of socially prominent men, and their military equipment, among other issues. This paper argues that Orderic’s usage of the term *miles* indicates that he believed the *milites* were professional soldiers and that “knight” is an inappropriate translation of the term *miles*.

I. THE PROBLEM OF KNIGHTS

“Knight” is a word with a powerful set of connotations to the modern mind, often conjuring up images of a mounted soldier, armor reflecting brightly in the sunlight on a verdant medieval battlefield, his identity hidden by a visor shut tightly about his face. Discovering his identity has been a task to which many historians have set themselves with the resulting debate delivering few concrete conclusions, serving rather to highlight the need for a meticulous survey of the source material. The problem of knights is as vexing as it is simple. Tony Hunt characterizes part of the issue well: “the emergence of knighthood as a class and its relation to the nobility constitute a major problem for the historian of chivalry... Although *dominium*, seigniorial and governing rights were certainly important to it, the nobility did not hold a monopoly of freedom, vassalage, allodial and seigniorial right, or knighthood. The question that arises is thus when were knights nobles and when were they not?”¹ Richard Barber identifies the problems that result when historians indiscriminately use the term “knight” to describe early medieval soldiers without a clear definition for the term and seeks “to reach a closer definition of the point at which the words “knight,” “*chevalier*,” “*Ritter*,” [and] “*miles*” acquire a specific meaning [italics added].”² Conor Kostick summarizes the problem perhaps the most succinctly, describing the question of the nature of knighthood as “the issue of whether the change in the usage of *milites* was a reflection of the growth of a rising social class of knights from lowly soldiers into an aristocracy, or whether the sources are indicating not so much change in material social

¹ Tony Hunt, “The Emergence of the Knight in France and England 1000-1200,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* xvii, no. 2. (1981): 93-4.

² Richard Barber, “When is a Knight not a Knight?” *Medieval Knighthood V: Papers from the Sixth Strawberry Hill Conference 1994*. (1995): 2.

conditions but an ideological change in the concept of knighthood and the evolution of the term *milites*.”³

The problem of knights then is a semantic one – who and what were they? At any given time and location and depending on the sources consulted, the answers vary. Does “knight” denote a social class, a specific military function either as a cavalryman or a trained professional, some blending of the three or something else entirely? It is a word rich in connotation, especially to the general public, but lacking in a precise definition. In 1939, Marc Bloch presented a view of knights that has withstood decades of academic scrutiny, for better or worse, the idea of the knight as a heavily armored, mounted soldier performing military service in exchange for a parcel of property. He was apt to be a noble or a “fortunate upstart,” working his way up into the distinct social class demarcated by the ritual of the knighting ceremony.⁴ John Gillingham presents knights in much the same way, arguing that a knight is “a well-armed soldier, a man who possessed horse, hauberk, sword and helmet.”⁵

This interpretation is not altogether unreasonable. Some scholars like Georges Duby contend that in the thirteenth century, if not before, there is a close association between the nobility and knights and that the two were merging into a single class.⁶ Using the *Rule* of the Templar order along with other French and German sources, Bloch contended that sometime between 1130 and 1250, knighthood became an exclusive hereditary privilege for those of high

³ Conor Kostick, “The Terms *milites*, *equites* and *equestres* in the Early Crusading Histories,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 50 (2006): 1.

⁴ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society vol. 2: Social Classes and Political Organization*, trans. L.A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961; first published 1939), 313.

⁵ John Gillingham, “The Introduction of Knight Service into England,” in *The English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. J. Gillingham (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2000), 187.

⁶ Hunt, “Emergence of the Knight,” 96.

birth.⁷ If we accept this common definition, then “knight” perhaps most reasonably can be taken as a literal and direct translation of the later terms *Ritter* and *chevalier*. These terms suggest something familiar, mounted soldiers who were legally members of the lesser aristocracy.⁸

There is inherent in the word “knight” also a problem of translation, in no small part because it is as artificial as it is convenient. In the early and central middle ages up to the mid-twelfth-century, “knights” are absent from the written record, however, his image is present in reflection through other terms, most notably *miles*, which scholars of the tenth through the twelfth centuries have also struggled to clearly define. For some scholars, knights and *milites* are synonymous and there is no issue of translation at all. On this point Bloch is noticeably silent, as if “knights” had sprung from the texts fully formed and armored. Later historians would make note of the issue, however. Gillingham equates *milites* with knights and C. Warren Hollister contends that “it is sometimes safest to translate *miles* as ‘warrior’ or ‘soldier’ and leave it at that.”⁹ Nevertheless, he also suggests that it can and normally does mean “knight” in English sources of the Norman period, “but it would be a mistake to assume that the chroniclers... always used *miles* to signify a feudal cavalryman in full armour.”¹⁰

The literature on both knights and *milites* is a confused tangle of arguments, with each publication often contributing a unique model of how to interpret knights or *milites* rather than addressing the views of other historians directly. Furthermore, there are varying degrees of overlap in these models because scholars often differently emphasize the roles of certain characteristics (predominantly socio-economic standing and military status) in addressing the

⁷ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 320.

⁸ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (Newhaven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1984), 36.

⁹ C. Warren Hollister, *The Military Organization of Norman England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

identities of these soldiers. In a review of the scholarship to explore the problem of knights, it is therefore necessary to be clear about how scholars have developed their particular interpretation of the evidence, and which aspects thereof they have ignored. Some historians, for instance, discuss knights but do not treat *milites* at all. Others address the military status of knights and *milites* without regard for their social or economic status, or others ignore certain pertinent questions about their military nature, such as their training or place in military organization. The result is a body of scholarship consisting of many models interpreting knights or *milites* that often talk past one another, further obscuring the complexities intrinsic to the subject.

The problems inherent in deciphering how the term *miles* was used by medieval writers have been known to scholars for decades, but as this brief introduction has shown, little consensus has been reached about them. Indeed, so fraught is the field that Joachim Bumke, in his 1977 book *Studien zum Ritterbegriff im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert (The Concept of Knighthood in the Middle Ages in the English Translation)*, openly questions the validity of any of the earlier traditional definitions of knighthood and advocates for the study to begin completely anew. This is in no small part because a thorough investigation tends to reveal that "... the actuality of knighthood [pales] more and more into an empty construct of concepts pasted all over with pictures of knightly arms and clothing, castles and tournaments."¹¹ For just this reason a deeper look at the scholarship is warranted, as historians have suggested several potential ways in which we might understand the early medieval *milites* and their connection to knighthood.

One group of scholars largely views *milites* as knights who were members of the nobility. The aristocratic knights presented by Bloch in 1939 continue to find wide favor among scholars,

¹¹ Joachim Bumke, *The Concept of Knighthood in the Middle Ages*, trans. W.T.H. and Erika Jackson. (New York: AMS Press, inc., 1982; first published 1977), 5. See Bumke especially for a historiographical survey of the German literature on knights and *milites*.

but his thesis was modified slightly in 1962 by Georges Duby. The latter also defined the eleventh and twelfth century knight as a vassal, that is, a man who gave an oath of service to his lord in return for a benefice, who had enough property to be self-sufficient and have dependents of his own to work the land for him. In doing so, Duby brought *milites* to the foreground of the discussion. He equated the *miles* with *nobilis*, or if he was not noble, the *miles* was only just outside of their ranks.¹² The origin of the traditional noble knight surfaces here by virtue of the transitive property; if knights are noble and *milites* are noble, then *milites* must be equal to knights, regardless of their place within the structures of military organization.

Twenty years later, Philippe Contamine repeated this sentiment, presenting the “feudal” period of the tenth- through the twelfth-centuries as being dominated by heavily armed mounted forces made up of *milites*, who were both the social and military elite of the period. This class of soldier was open to men of lower social status who demonstrated their fighting skill, though typically the lower classes were excluded altogether or relegated to minor auxiliary roles. These were the *imbelle* or *inerme vulgus*, who were inept at even defending their own towns, according to Contamine.¹³ In his view, a population boom circa 1050 resulted in a reconstruction of political authority and increase in enfeoffment in France, enabling the livelihood of these dedicated *milites*. However, it was the need for well-trained fighting men who could muster with short notice that led to the establishment of the social elite as military leaders. In turn, they recruited their “domestic servants,” tied to their lords through fealty and gifts of arms or as landed

¹² Donald Fleming, “Landholding by *milites* in Domesday Book: a revision,” *Anglo-Norman Studies XIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1990* (1991): 83. Here Fleming quotes from Georges Duby, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Columbia, SC: 1968), 185. See also Hunt, “Emergence of the Knight,” 95.

¹³ Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1984), 31.

vassals.¹⁴ Scholars studying Anglo-Norman, England, however, did not present *milites* as members of a unified social order, but rather as men of the king's household, men granted benefices or men paid in coin.¹⁵

This view of the knight or *miles* as a noble has not been without criticisms. Prior to Duby, Leopold Genicot was already questioning the social importance of the knight, striking a chord among some English scholars as well. Sir Frank Stenton echoed this skeptical view, arguing that the knight was proficient at arms but the term did not imply any social position.¹⁶

In his 1995 article, "The *Milites* and the Millennium," Bernard S. Bachrach suggests that the connection between social standing and *milites* can be found as early as the tenth century, though he does not equate the *milites* with knights, nor with nobility. He argues against the views of Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel who suggest that *milites* in Flanders and the surrounding areas represent a semi-servile class opposite the *nobilis*.¹⁷ He questions their findings on methodological grounds and also criticizes the chronological breadth of their survey¹⁸ and offers a counter argument rooted in Angevin documents from between 960 and 1040, which he identifies as the earliest period for the emergence of *miles* as "representative of social status

¹⁴ Contamine, *War*, 47.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶ Fleming, "Landholding," 84.

¹⁷ Bernard S. Bachrach "The *milites* and the Millennium," *The Haskins Society Journal* 6 for 1994. (1995): 85.

¹⁸ Bachrach identifies several problems with the attempt by many scholars to systematically analyze texts for how they use the terms *milites* and *nobilis*, which Poly and Bournazel typify. He says, "the problems caused by the wide variety of techniques and perhaps even more importantly by the different basic assumptions employed by the several dozen scholars who have applied themselves in a systematic manner to the question of the *milites* has yet to be examined in detail." In short, a lack of methodological controls and too many assumptions about the essential meaning of terms like *nobilis* both within a given a source and between them, Bachrach suggests, have led to incorrect conclusions about the social identity of *milites*. See *Ibid.*, 85-6.

assimilated to the nobility” in the *regnum Francorum*.¹⁹ He argues that Geoffrey Grey mantle and Fulk Nerra, the Angevin counts in this era, were not likely to tolerate any presumption to higher status by their underlings through the use of “terminological hyperbole,” and that the use of the term *miles* in official records therefore did not confer a higher status on the men so named. He contends that there was no fixed social or legal meaning implied by the term *miles* in these comital documents, though he tentatively proposes a social hierarchy under the count that places them below the viscount, *optimes*, *proceres*, and *principes*, but still in relatively high standing. The *milites* in turn may have had their own hierarchy, as implied by a charter from the reign of Geoffrey Grey mantle.²⁰ Of the eighteen men who are identified as *milites* from documents from this era, eight are of high social standing (from birth or office), five are apparently landowners with their own vassals and of the remaining five nothing can be said. However, all at one point or another are included in the upper-middle class among the *optimates*, though not necessarily among the nobles.

Salley Harvey’s 1970 analysis of Domesday Book provided a pivotal moment in the scholarship of Anglo-Norman *milites*. She found that *milites* typically had less than two hides of land to their name and thus could hardly be considered among the ranks of the nobility. She favored seeing a bifurcation among the *milites* along social and tenurial lines, which reinvigorated the debate but again resulted in no clear answers.²¹

Maurice Keen, in his lauded 1984 book *Chivalry*, agrees with Harvey’s assertion that *miles* could refer either to a magnate or to his more modest vassals, though it was only over time that the men of higher social standing began to adopt the term and eventually eclipsed the former

¹⁹ Ibid., 88.

²⁰ Ibid., 88-91.

²¹ Sally Harvey, “The Knight and the Knight’s Fee in England,” *Past and Present* 49 (1970).

meaning. By the middle of the eleventh century, he suggests, “the knighthood appears as a kind of petty nobility, whose military service to its lords was the *quid pro quo* for its freedom from other irksome liabilities, a freedom which marked it off from the tillers of the soil.”²² The term *miles*, by the twelfth century, specifically denoted a mounted soldier and a member of the elite military class and were synonymous with knights.

Not everyone was swayed by Harvey’s examination of Domesday. R. Allen Brown remained unapologetically in favor of viewing Norman and Anglo-Norman *milites* as knights of the upper social stratum. In “The Status of the Norman Knight” he argues against the views of Sally Harvey, Richard Glover and other scholars who, according to Brown, hold these knights to be little more than wealthier peasants lacking real technical training.²³ Brown argues that in France, this demotion of knights has been less severe, suggesting that “in the Maconais and elsewhere, the word *miles* has become a synonym for ‘noble.’”²⁴ In England, he further asserts that the presence of *milites* as witnesses and donors in eleventh-century charters invariably means that they were knights of social significance. He interprets the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis as suggesting that by the middle of the eleventh-century knighthood was both a military and social rank, marked by the receiving of arms after years of training within the household. A large part of his argument for the status of knights rests on the extreme expense of military equipment and horses (implying further that squires, then, are necessary to maintain the horses), but he fails to substantiate the claim that any individual owned the equipment he used

²² Keen, *Chivalry*, 28.

²³ R.A. Brown, “The Status of the Norman Knight,” in *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, ed. Matthew Strickland (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992), 130.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 129.

and thus necessarily must have been wealthy.²⁵ Furthermore, he uses a handful of examples to illustrate his point, applying them over-broadly and assuming that because some *milites* were demonstrably of high social status, they all must have been. His light-hearted tone aside, his boldly stated refusal to be swayed by the opposing view regardless of the evidence might call his credibility and reliability into question.

In 1991, Donald Fleming's revisiting of Harvey's analytical model found a major oversight on her part. By failing to consider that each single entry in Domesday Book per given *miles* does not necessarily reflect the entirety of his holdings, Harvey's entire conclusion is cast into question and the reliability of Domesday Book as a source of information about the property holdings of *milites* rendered doubtful. Fleming contends that these *milites* were certainly not knights, nor even the humble professionals of Harvey's opinion. Given the lack of a native Anglo-Saxon tradition of using horses in warfare, even their role as a mounted force is questionable. The Domesday *miles* was simply a soldier in Fleming's view, and about his social status nothing can reliably be said.

What Harvey did accomplish, however, was to reinforce the idea that *miles* might have more than a single finite definition. This perspective has largely prevailed today, though most scholars still favor one meaning over the others as being most common or representative. Despite her own imprecise use of "knight" throughout her works, Marjorie Chibnall argues for a broad definition of *miles*, offering that it might mean anything from a light cavalryman to a young

²⁵ Michael Prestwich questions the hypothesis of the expense of military equipment in an attempt to explain the decline in number of members of the chivalry in the later middle ages. He finds the late twelfth century to be the pivotal era and examines the tactical use of knights and the costs of arms, armor and horses, arguing handily that none of these issues were the critical factor in the decline in chivalry. Rather, he finds that a volatile economy with rising inflation to be the culprits. He sees the *milites* in the eleventh-century as mounted knights of mixed social backgrounds and legal statuses, though over time the cavalry would no longer fall under the purview of trained professionals. See Michael Prestwich, "*Miles in armis strenuus*: the Knight at War," in *Medieval Warfare, 1000-1300*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

member of a military household. She further suggests that “the technical vocabulary of contemporary historians was apt to be loose and flexible, and *miles* could serve for almost any mounted soldier.”²⁶ Thus, in her view, the word “knight” itself has a broad military definition. Michael Prestwich agrees, suggesting that “in many contexts [*miles*] meant little more than mounted soldier.”²⁷ He too refers to *milites* as knights and recognizes their varied military and social statuses. More recently, Bumke restated this position, contending that *miles* indeed had varied meanings from being a military or noble rank to simply describing one who owed military service.²⁸

In 1975, William Delehanty made an important but frequently overlooked contribution to this view with his doctoral dissertation on the use of the term *miles* in the narrative sources from the reign of King Stephen. He systematically surveyed these sources and catalogued how the term *milites* was used in each, finding that 66% of the entries reflected that the term simply referred to common soldiers.²⁹ The other one-third, excluding the metaphorical use of *milites Christi*, Delehanty interprets as “knights” based on their association with military equipment and horses, feudal obligation, social standing or service as retainers.³⁰ In his view, some *milites* were knights, due in part to their high social status and professional accoutrements, while others were merely soldiers. While not without some faults, his study offers a model for how other scholars might approach a study of *milites*, which is elaborated below.

²⁶ Marjorie Chibnall, “Mercenaries and the *Familia Regis* under Henry I,” in *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, ed. Matthew Strickland (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992), 89.

²⁷ Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience*, (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1996), 15.

²⁸ Bumke, *Concept of Knighthood*, 155.

²⁹ William Delehanty “*Milites* in the Narrative Sources of England, 1135-1154” (Ph.D dissertation, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 1975), 29.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 51.

Other scholars, while accepting that the word *miles* often meant many things, are in favor of viewing the term as one often denoting a group of elite military men who may or may not be of noble background. Franco Cardini argues that that the increased use of horses in the eighth century and increasing demands for expensive equipment necessitated the rise of professional soldiery. By the eleventh century, *miles* had begun to replace all other words for warriors and described a professional elite corps attached to a leading *dominus*. The *milites*, however, may or may not live with, be in vassalage to, or be given equipment by their lord. Further, in Cardini's estimation, the *milites* could be either free or unfree, but they were undoubtedly the undisputed masters of the battlefield, the "crack troops" of the army that all other combatants were present to support.³¹ *Milites*, in his view, are synonymous with knights, further characterized by the ritual gift of their arms, their function as mounted soldiers and "certain external signs of status and a particular way of life."³² These final points indicate certain weaknesses in the argument of this knightly paradigm, however, amounting to little more than a tautology – they are knights because they behave like knights (or rather, as modern people believe and expect knights to have acted).

Richard Barber rightly identifies the problems with the tendency of some scholars in employing a single term to encapsulate a group of people of such diverse backgrounds as the *milites*, though he maintains the feudal origins of mounted soldiers and suggests that "*miles*" emerged as a professional title in the eleventh century among the wealthy families of France and Germany. He argues further that the term *miles*, which he translates as "knight," eventually became a title that applied also castellans or farmers serving obligatory terms of military service, members of a magnate's *familia*, or even entrepreneurial (non-mercenary) soldiers participating

³¹ Franco Cardini, "The Warrior and the Knight," in *The Medieval World* (London: Collins and Brown, 1990), 96.

³² *Ibid.*, 76.

in foreign engagements for profit. The status of these men convolutes the issue further as the German *ministeriales* he contends were unfree, but their French counterparts were freemen bound by vassalage. Under Henry II of England, he finds conclusive evidence that *miles* had both a social and professional meaning that could be parsed and that the roots of the later medieval style of noble knighthood were already present.³³

Two more recent contributions to this perspective were offered by Conor Kostick and John Hosler. Kostick examined the technical vocabulary of the early Crusade historians, Fulcher of Chartres, Raymond of Aguilers, the anonymous author of *Gesta Francorum*, Albert of Aachen, Robert the Monk, Guibert of of Nogent and Baldric of Dol (whom Chibnall calls Baudry).³⁴ Though he concedes that *miles* often is used in multiple ways, he contends that by and large these historians used the word to denote more than simply a mounted soldier, but that it carried with it some social distinction as well: “They were writing about ‘knights’ rather than ‘soldiers’ or ‘cavalry.’”³⁵ Thus, his model of knighthood largely agrees with Delahanty’s – only some *milites* were knights of high social standing.

Hosler, studying John of Salisbury, fleshed out the many ways in which of Salisbury’s use of *milites* reflects several different meanings. The first of these is that of the commonly-understood mounted knight, such as the view offered by Prestwich and Gillingham.³⁶ In some cases, men of high status are described as *milites* and Hosler concludes that, because of their status, they must be knights in this model. In other instances, the term might apply to members of the *famila regis*, whom Hosler similarly concludes are knights, due to their proximity to the

³³ Barber, “When is a Knight,” 7-9.

³⁴ Kostick, “Terms,” 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶ John Hosler, *John of Salisbury: Military Authority of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, (Boston: Brill, 2013), 14.

monarch and substantial equipment.³⁷ Primarily in cases where the context is inconclusive about the status of the men in question he suggests that the term might apply generically to soldiers of various sorts. The third meaning of the term when used by Salisbury “in which he is describing a different sort of soldier entirely,” is not clearly described by Hosler, unless it is in a brief mention of *milites Christi*.

Other scholars view *milites* or knights more precisely in consideration of their place within military organization. An interpretation of Norman military organization is offered by Bernard S. Bachrach in his discussion of the early eleventh-century writer Dudo of St. Quentin. He argues that despite the modern view of Dudo as a poor historian, the military details of his account ought not to be discounted because of the expectations of his militarily experienced audience. To this end, Bachrach explores a “tri-partite”³⁸ military organization - local levies, select levies and the standing army - and then compares the current understanding of each to Dudo’s claims. In recounting Rollo’s seizure of Rouen, Dudo comments that the defense of the region fell to *inerme vulgus*, whom Bachrach identifies as local unarmored defenders. In a fictitious speech, Dudo goes so far as to have Rollo claim that the entire region lacked *milites* and *armigeri* (professional soldiers and armored men, respectively).³⁹ This was clearly an exaggeration in an episode where it was to be expected, but it reveals Dudo’s understanding of local levies, regardless. The select levies, expeditionary forces made up of men meeting certain wealth requirements, are similarly treated in a case where the men of Bayeux and the Côtentin, fighting under ducal command, are said to be operating far outside their home *pagus* against a

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁸ Bernard S. Bachrach, “Dudo of St. Quentin as an Historian of Military Organization,” *The Haskins Society Journal*, 12 (2003): 184.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 169-70.

similar army. Regarding the standing army, made up of the household soldiers of the king and his magnates, Dudo is also clearly familiar. Like other historians of his time, he wrote for the pleasure of the upper strata of society, the very men who themselves were likely to maintain such a military household. Dudo himself was employed by the Norman ruling family and speaks of the duke's *militia domus* and his *milites*, professional soldiers.⁴⁰ These soldiers should not, Bachrach emphasizes, be called knights, nor did they come from any one specific social background.⁴¹

David Bachrach explores the role of *milites* in the tripartite military organization of Ottonian Germany, echoing the sentiments of his father and sometimes collaborator. This three-part organization of the military is striking, he notes, because of its similarity to that described by sources from the Carolingian period. Using Thietmar of Merseburg's text, Bachrach describes *milites* in the late tenth and early eleventh-centuries as professional soldiers, members of the household of the king or his magnates, who served royal interests. The men in the king's household would serve in the personal retinue of the monarch or, together with the *milites* serving his magnates, as soldiers garrisoning important strongholds. In the field, these professional soldiers were often employed in the operation of siege weaponry, according to Bachrach's interpretation of Thietmar. The *milites* he contrasts with expeditionary levies that were raised to supplement the professional contingents in operations outside of their home district and the local levies who acted in defense of their homes.⁴² He makes no mention of

⁴⁰ Bachrach, "Dudo," 179.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴² David S. Bachrach, "The Military Organization of Ottonian Germany, c. 900-1018: The Views of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg," *The Journal of Military History* 72, no. 4 (2008).

“knights,” but rather uses Thietmar’s own terminology in describing the various kinds of soldiers deployed in the Ottonian period, nor does their social status figure into his considerations.

This view of the *miles* as a professional soldier is not without critics, however. John Hosler appears to reject the idea that *milites* might reflect a professional identity as soldiers rather than “knights,” but is both awkward in his explanation and unconvincing in his appeal. He first contends that, “. . . some historians may be inclined to believe that only knights constituted ‘professional’ soldiers in the twelfth century. . . but this would be a mistake, for there were many sorts of ‘professional’ soldiers in the Middle Ages, not just landed knights.”⁴³ However, it is not evident that any historians believe that *only* “knights”⁴⁴ were professionals, nor does this actually present an argument for why *milites* cannot be understood as such. Hosler further caricatures the rival view by stating that rank, uniform and organization are anachronistic (as if that is what was meant by “professional”) and that soldiers of all kinds, by virtue of payment and frequency of military participation, lived as professionals.⁴⁵ In this context, he does not discuss the role of training or equipment in defining the professional soldier.

It is worth making mention of the role of mercenaries in military households as a brief aside because it does come to bear on the identity and social standing of the *milites* in the present study. The late Marjorie Chibnall used her expertise regarding the works of Orderic Vitalis to argue that mercenaries were an important contingent in the armies of the Anglo-Norman kings, usually employed in the *familia regis* prior to the reign of Henry II. She uses Ralph the Red of Pont-Échanfray as an example of how Orderic details the careers of some of these household

⁴³ Hosler, *John of Salisbury*, 21. To offer a better reflection of the views of these historians, Hosler might have stated something to the effect of: “Some historians believe *miles* to mean a professional soldier, not a knight as I have suggested.” This would not have improved the argument, only made it clearer for the readers.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Here “*milites*” would have been a better word choice on Hosler’s part.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See footnote 64.

men. After spending part of his early career fighting among the Italo-Normans, he disappears from the record for twelve years before then reemerging as a member of Henry I's household. For his exemplary service his only reward appears to be a money fief. Chibnall also identifies men of both substantial and more modest means as part of the *familia regis*. Especially the latter she calls "stipendiaries,"⁴⁶ though she stresses that there was little social distinction to be made between the paid men of the household and those serving by obligation. Accounts of the battle of Bourghéroulde, including Orderic's, suggest a mercenary core among the king's troops. In an imagined speech Orderic places in the mouth of Odo Borleng, Odo warns his men that they will lose their wages if their courage should falter. These same men are then called "*gregarii*" by their opposition.⁴⁷ Here, too, her model of knighthood as socially and militarily diverse collective of *milites* is apparent.

J.O. Prestwich responds in part to Chibnall with his examination of the size and composition of the king's military household, also relying heavily on Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. He writes to modify what was then the contemporary thought on the men of the household; "There can be little doubt that the *familia regis* of the Conqueror and his sons was largely recruited from the professional knights whose low social status has been so effectively established by Dr. Sally Harvey... But other members of the military household were of higher status."⁴⁸ In Prestwich's view, service in the king's military household was a means of social mobility. Here he points to Orderic's history of the Laigle family to illustrate not only how service in the king's household could at times be treated as a family business, but also as a means

⁴⁶ Chibnall, "Mercenaries," 87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁸ J.O. Prestwich, "The Military Household of the Norman Kings," in *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, ed. Matthew Strickland (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992), 104.

by which unenfeoffed sons of wealthy landholders could earn their own territories. In other instances, service to the king could be used to reclaim lost patrimonies, as was the case with the land seized from Roger of Hereford in 1075, whose sons perished en route to reclaiming their inheritance.

Prestwich also favors viewing the *familia regis* of the Norman kings as substantial, even when compared to the impressive size of Edward I's. Though Orderic's numbers are at times exaggerated to the extreme,⁴⁹ the numbers of men provided by the household, Prestwich contends, are reasonable and underscore its relative strength. From Orderic's acute references to the role of the *familia regis*, he further postulates that Orderic possessed a precise understanding of what the household was. How Orderic might have come by that knowledge inside the walls of the abbey, he does not say. But it is evident that more than just acting as a private army, the men of the household were also the king's inner circle, so to speak, and by Henry II's reign provided the king with the administrators and officers that he would rely on to run his kingdom.⁵⁰

This historiographical survey has attempted to lift the knight's visor to reveal his true identity and has instead found several which are possible. Several themes appear to dominate in the scholarship. Of the scholarly works surveyed here, the majority propose that *milites* were at least sometimes synonymous with knights, and more yet suggest that the *milites* were typically professionals or "elite" soldiers by virtue of their equipment. There is also a division between those historians who view the *milites* as possessing significant social status and those who argue that the *milites* came from a variety of social backgrounds. More pointedly, there are also three primary, albeit broadly defined, models of knighthood that emerge from this survey. One,

⁴⁹ 50,000 men were said to have partaken in the invasion of England, though Prestwich fails to note that this section of Orderic's work was lifted from William of Poitiers. Ibid., 103.

⁵⁰ J.O. Prestwich, "Military Household," 104, 108.

championed by scholars like Brown and Contamine, contends that *milites* were knights of both high social and military status. Another model, which Bernard and David Bachrach, and J.O. Prestwich endorse, suggests that the term *miles* had no such social implications, but did refer to professional soldiers of military households. The two Bachrachs do not, however, view *milites* as knights, though J.O. Prestwich does. The final model suggested by this investigation is one wherein *milites* has a varied and broad definition, including men from a wide range of social backgrounds and denoting differing levels of professionalism among them. These warriors too, according to scholars like Chibnall, Delahanty and Hosler, are knights. Other criteria by which *milites* or knights are defined by some historians, such as the role in of the knighting ceremony in formally recognizing their position, their martial equipment, or the nature of their professional relationship with their lords, add further nuance, if not confusion, to the discussion. Thus, there is no clear picture of what the early medieval *miles* or knight was, nor a consensus about whether or not they were the same. In examining the problem of knights, we find that the knight is everything and nothing, everyone and ultimately no one at all. Inside the armor, we find whatever we expect or hope the knight to be.

With this confused understanding of knights and *milites*, one would be justified in agreeing with Bumke's desire to go back to the proverbial drawing board and conduct new studies on the medieval treatment of these iconic soldiers. Thus Delehanty's systematic approach is as necessary as it is laudable. To understand who medieval writers believed *milites* to be and to discover the roots of knighthood virtually every known source must be reassessed. This herculean task can only be done one piece at a time, but that it must be done is hopefully now evident.

Orderic Vitalis

Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica* stands out as a candidate in need of prompt scholarly attention for several reasons. First, his is one of many accounts of Norman military undertakings in the late eleventh through mid twelfth century and he was situated near enough to them to provide a reliable account. He was born in Mercia in 1075 and at the age of ten was given over to the Norman abbey of St Évroutl where he would remain, spending most of his life writing his six-volume *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Chibnall suggests that the unstable political climate in his homeland that may have provided his Norman father with the reason to send him to St. Évroutl as an oblate. Normandy would prove no more peaceful, however, and the fighting between the region's noble families would serve to inform Orderic about military matters and fuel his biases.⁵¹ She remarks, "Orderic's formative years were a time of great upheaval and war in the secular world, and disorder in the church."⁵² The continual violence influenced Orderic's understanding of political power – the Normans were a violent people that required the heavy hand of ducal authority (and his faithful men) to restrain them.⁵³

Despite the importance of his writings to modern historians, he was never a man of any social standing, nor did he write for the pleasure of any noble. John O. Ward describes Orderic as a self-conscious historian dedicated to his discipline.⁵⁴ However, where other historians like William of Poitiers or William of Malmesbury had ties to the social elite or had personal experience related to their writings, Orderic had neither. That he was an unimportant figure from

⁵¹ Marjorie Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 24-8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 118-9.

⁵⁴ John O. Ward, "Ordericus Vitalis as Historian in the Europe of the Early Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Parergon* 31, no. 1 (2014): 8.

a “relatively marginal monastic environment”⁵⁵ allowed him a degree of latitude in his portrayal of such important men. His work is therefore less biased towards flattering reviews of the military men whom he describes (but these are not altogether absent).

Secondly, and related to the first reason, is the length of time that his books cover. Historians might rightly remain skeptical of his treatment of the Norman conquest of England and of the earlier events Orderic records, but for the events during his lifetime and especially of the time of his writing, approximately 1114 to 1137, his perspective is invaluable.⁵⁶ If a change in the use and meaning of “*miles*” had occurred during his lifetime, as some scholars have suggested, it would perhaps be manifest in Orderic’s own vocabulary.

The last two reasons are simpler. Orderic is frequently cited, with good reason, by historians exploring military organization during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and has been used by Chibnall and Prestwich to substantiate claims about Norman military households and again on the identity of *milites*. A reexamination of Orderic could therefore impact the work of other scholars who heavily rely on his work. Lastly, the length of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* necessitates its own individual study. Unlike the accounts that Kostick and Delehanty survey, which are relatively short by comparison, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* occupies the space of six volumes.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Orderic uses the term *miles*. Is it a synonym for soldier, as suggested by Delehanty, or does it describe an elite warrior of social distinction of the kind identified by Kostick and Hosler? Are they noble or are they not, and does Orderic use

⁵⁵ *The Ecclesiastic History of Orderic Vitalis: Volume II, Books III and IV*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), xiii-xiv. See also Chibnall, *World*, and Ward, “Ordericus Vitalis.”

⁵⁶ Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica I*, 34. Hereafter, all references to Orderic’s *Historia* shall be listed as “OV” followed by the volume number and page number. The publisher’s information is the same for each volume, save the publishing date.

the terms consistently over time? In turn, how is the term *equites* related to *milites*, and what role did the “knighting” ritual play in their identity? Ultimately, how then these terms relate to knighthood?

In order to escape the tendencies of confirmation bias in cherry-picking the evidence which only best fits a presupposed hypothesis, which Delehanty accuses historians of often doing, the best course of action for any study of terminology is a systematic one. I have therefore catalogued all of the instances of *milites* and *equites* in the six volumes of Orderic’s text and categorized them according to usage. This methodology mirrors that employed by Delehanty in his 1975 study, but with some minor modifications.⁵⁷ In the following chapters I elaborate on each of these terms and the ways in which Orderic uses them.

Because of the large number of instances of these terms in the text, particularly the roughly five hundred instances of *milites*, a general survey of them is offered here with many other examples necessarily neglected. I have thus included only the most useful and representative examples in this study of the varying ways in which the term *miles* is used but have avoided misrepresenting them by providing counter examples, if present. I have also relied primarily on Chibnall’s index located in Volume I for locating the terms in question within the text. While this catalogue is extensive, if not indeed overwhelming, it is nevertheless possible that some instances of each word in question may have been missed.

This paper does not seek to argue any point regarding the origins or later meanings of the vocabulary in question, only to offer definitions for them based upon Orderic’s usage and to reflect upon how they fit into the larger context of the scholarly debate about knights. This work is but a single paving stone set in the path toward learning the meaning of these often confusing

⁵⁷ See Delehanty, “*Milites*,” 18-25.

terms so that our language can be as precise and accurate as possible. There is certainly cause for historians to synthesize works such as those of Kostick, Hosler and Delehanty and to try to untangle the complicated knot represented by knights and *milites* by examining broadly how these words are used by many medieval writers, but that is quite beyond the present aim.

II. THE IDENTITY OF THE *MILITES*

The methodology employed in this study of how Orderic uses the term *miles* (and its derivatives) owes much to William Delehanty and his approach to the same problem in 1975. His doctoral dissertation catalogues the instances in which these terms appear in the texts he studies from the reign of King Stephen, categorizing them based on how they are used. The categories he identifies include: generic usage (either being unclear in meaning from a lack of context or when clearly used to describe soldiers in a general sense), *milites* as retainers, *milites* described in conjunction with their armaments or horses, and *milites* with feudal, social or religious connotations.⁵⁸ He then offers a quantitative analysis of these terms, concluding that while the majority of cases reflect a general use of the term *miles* in the texts from the reign of King Stephen, roughly one-third of the instances suggest “knight” as the intended understanding.⁵⁹

I do not offer such a quantitative analysis here, but do borrow his categories with some modification. As Delehanty points out, the *milites Christi* were metaphorical soldiers in God’s service, though “lay warriors who fought worldly battles for the cause of the Church were also known as *milites Christi*,” by the eleventh century.⁶⁰ I have disregarded this category, however, because of its largely metaphorical nature. Any instances of literal soldiers missed by foregoing their inclusion should not impact our understanding of Orderic’s use of the term *miles*, both because *milites* in general are very clearly not a distinct religious organization and that these few cases pale in comparison to the many hundreds of other occurrences of the word in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Whomever they may have been, the literal *milites Christi* are well accounted for in

⁵⁸ Delehanty, “*Milites*,” 14-48.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 40.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

the other examples examined. I also propose to add a category to those used by Delehanty – nobles and men of the upper social and economic strata as *milites*. This group constitutes an important type among the ways that Orderic uses the term *miles* and it should not be taken for granted that the two groups were always synonymous. On a final point of departure, I treat the “retainers” category rather as one wherein *milites* are shown to be members of a military household. The various military roles of household soldiers are discussed in Chapter III. Each occurrence of the term *miles*, either in the singular or plural, in the entirety of Orderic Vitalis’ text has been placed into one of these categories, which I summarize below. Volume I (Books I and II) has been excluded, offering no useful addition to the study because it contains very little original material from Orderic and is largely “made up of extracts from earlier works, from the Gospels onward,” mostly unrelated to Norman history during the eleventh or twelfth centuries.⁶¹ There is only a singular mention of *milites* in this volume, an unremarkable mention of eighty *milites* who were captured in war in 1132.

Analysis of each of the many ways in which Orderic uses the term suggests that he had a clear and specific understanding of who and what *milites* were - a socially and economically diverse group of soldiers whom we might deem “professionals.” By this term I mean men who made their livelihood as soldiers or possessed the critical training, skills and equipment to set them apart as an elite kind of warrior when compared to levies and militia forces used to supplement the professional forces, not unlike the professional British army of Redcoats during the American Revolution when compared to the farmer militias fielded by the new United States. Orderic often describes *milites* as members of a military household or men engaged in personal or tenurial relationships with their social superiors. However, *miles* is a term describing the

⁶¹ OV, I, 126.

military function of a soldier, not his social identity, though the significance of that identity was increasing, as Orderic's use demonstrates. They are described by Orderic as one of the three professional divisions of society, apart from the clergy and menial laborers. Most importantly, he does not describe the *milites* as members of a true Order of Knighthood. Orderic also less frequently uses the term *milites* in a manner suggesting it was a synonym for a combatant or warrior in the most general sense, but there is reason to doubt that this was an understanding he maintained through the entire process of writing his history. Further, it is crucial to state that this is only how the St. Évrault monk, who lived a particularly secluded life, may have understood the term and may not necessarily reflect the views of his contemporaries. Only a wider study of contemporary documents will reveal how closely his view aligns with others.

Chronology and Sources

This study is somewhat complicated by the chronological breadth of Orderic's writing and his heavy reliance on outside source materials. The *Historia Ecclesiastica* was penned roughly between 1114 and 1137, though Book III (the first he wrote) took a decade to complete.⁶² The remaining twelve books were thus completed and given their final assemblage between 1124 or 1125 and 1137, with Books I and II being written last. The date of Orderic's death is unknown but is speculated to have been in around the year 1142.⁶³

Orderic's sources deserve some attention because they represent an obstacle in teasing apart where Orderic's vocabulary reflects the understanding of the source he is using and where his account reflects his own understanding. Chibnall notes that Orderic used or cited over one

⁶² Ibid., 32.

⁶³ Ibid., 113.

hundred different sources in the production of his history, not including the many charters and council canons he also utilized. Foremost were the four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, as well as the historical books of the Hebrew Bible and Psalms. He also made extensive use of other religious texts, including many *vitae* and *acta* of saints and classical apocryphal texts. “His debt to Bede,” however, Chibnall notes, “is apparent in every part of his work.”⁶⁴

Among the most important sources he consulted with regard to his military vocabulary are several secular histories that may have influenced his understanding of who the *milites* were and what their military function was. William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges provided Orderic with his account of the Norman invasion of England in 1066 and in particular the battle of Hastings, though his reliance on Poitiers’ text diminishes after Book IV, perhaps because his abbey’s library did not possess its own copy.⁶⁵ He was also familiar with Dudo of St. Quentin’s work, despite his few allusions to it in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁶⁶ Most prominently used was the *Historia Ierosolimitana* of Baldric of Bourgueil, the archbishop of Dol. Chibnall remarks that Orderic’s texts also contain echoes of the *Chansons de geste* that were in circulation, praising the martial prowess and valor of particular soldiers.

There is a notable change in Orderic’s usage of the term *miles* in Book III that might reflect a change in his understanding over the course of the ten years he took to write it. The majority of the book is devoted to recounting the history of his home abbey and he uses the term *miles* to describe almost exclusively men of high social status or the men of their military households. They appear in his text primarily as donors and benefactors of St. Évrault, including

⁶⁴ See OV, I, 48-63.

⁶⁵ OV, I, 51-2.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 58.

the men of Giroie and their respective kinsmen and vassals.⁶⁷ This is unsurprising, as only men with substantial wealth and status were in a position to make substantial gifts of land to the abbey. Similarly, because of their influential role, Orderic's partisanship in their favor is evident. However, the end of Book III chronicles the Norman conquest of England and Orderic borrows heavily from William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges to a lesser extent.⁶⁸ Here there is a marked shift in how he uses the term *miles* that reflects either the change in his narrative (from local history to a larger military history) or potentially the influence of his sources.⁶⁹

In several instances in this portion of the text, Orderic uses the term *milites* in a more general sense to describe an entire army's worth of men rather than singular socially prominent individuals. The entire host of men that King Harold had with him to defend the southern coast of England against the impending Norman invasion is referred to as being comprised of *milites* on two occasions, as is the necessarily substantial group left behind by William at Hastings and Pevensey to guard the Norman duke's base of operations.⁷⁰ In another case, drawn from William of Poitiers, there is a distinction drawn between the fifty thousand *milites* and the many *pedites* that William had with him on the expedition.⁷¹ Whatever the reason, Orderic in the following Books offers a much broader understanding of who and what the *milites* were beyond the limited

⁶⁷ See OV, II, 22-40 for several examples.

⁶⁸ See Ibid., xvii-xviii.

⁶⁹ William of Poitiers appears to employ the term *milites* in a general sense as a synonym for "soldiers." However, Poitiers also strongly favors the use of *equites*, a tendency Orderic did not pick up on outside of the passages he paraphrases from Poitiers in Books III and IV. While *equites* appear more often in Book VI than in any other of his Books, Orderic uses the term only approximately fifty times in the entirety of his text, whereas he uses "*miles*" roughly ten times as often. See *The Gesta Gvillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. and trans. R.C.H. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), esp. 102-187. Hereafter abbreviated "WP."

⁷⁰ OV, II, 142.

⁷¹ Ibid., 168,

understanding he displays in the majority of Book III, though he remains consistent in using *miles* in both the general and more specific senses throughout his *Historia* thereafter.

Book IX of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is also deserving of special attention in particular because, as Orderic tells us, much of it is borrowed from Baldric of Bourgueil, the archbishop of Dol's *Historia Ierosolimitana*, a man whom Orderic knew and respected deeply.⁷² Indeed, no other source is so heavily relied upon Orderic's text as Baldric's, for which Orderic's praise is overwhelming: "Never, I believe, has a more glorious subject been given to historians who write of war," Orderic says.⁷³ Even when not directly copied, Orderic's passages retain enough of the flavor of their original author as to be identified by Chibnall.⁷⁴ This presents some obvious difficulties when analyzing Orderic's text for his own vocabulary choices. However, that Orderic maintains much of the language used by Baldric suggests that he had no disagreement with his friend over how *milites* are described in the *Historia Ierosolimitana*, or at least was willing to defer to whatever expertise he felt the archbishop had. Indeed, Orderic admits that he was unable to improve upon Baldric's work.⁷⁵ As such, while Baldric's military vocabulary is not identical to Orderic's, we can still see Orderic's understanding of *milites* partially reflected in the pages of Book IX, as examples below illustrate.

We should not assume, however, that Orderic was completely ignorant of the military organization of Normandy or that he was entirely reliant upon his sources to inform him despite his relatively sheltered life.⁷⁶ "The monks of Saint-Évroul were at all times in close relations,

⁷² *Ibid.*, V, 189.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, I, 60.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, V, xiii-xiv.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

spiritual and feudal, informal and legal, with local lords,” Chibnall reports, and military service was owed from at least two fees from the abbey’s lands which had previously belonged to the Grandmesnil and Giroie families prior to being presented as gifts at the abbey’s foundation.⁷⁷ Further, Chibnall suggests that “the abbot held his own court, in which feudal business might arise alongside all the other transactions involved in land-holding.”⁷⁸ The ties between the local nobility and their supporters might also have been illuminated by the charters and oral histories from which Orderic drew information.

The many wars that embroiled Normandy during Orderic’s life time placed him sometimes uncomfortably near to the action. In an episode in Book XIII, for example, St. Évroult’s lands were raided by roguish *milites*, drawing Orderic’s contempt.⁷⁹ He spent much of his life near enough to warfare that to remain ignorant of it would have required some strength of will. If nothing else, this continual violence influenced Orderic’s understanding of political power – the Normans were a violent people that required the heavy hand of ducal authority (and his men) to restrain them.⁸⁰

Lastly, Orderic’s intended audience may have included laymen. While Book III was started at the insistence of abbot Roger of Le Sap (1091-1123)⁸¹ and was meant to be purely a history of St. Évroult, Orderic’s purpose changed and was perhaps encouraged by abbot Warin

⁷⁶ We know of three significant trips outside of his home district that he made, to Cambrai, Worcester and Cluny, as well as several visits to other nearby abbeys. See OV, I, 25-6.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁹ See OV, VI, 458-62.

⁸⁰ Chibnall, *World*, 118-9.

⁸¹ OV, II, 400.

(1123-37).⁸² Of the thirteen books of his work, three are devoted primarily to his home, two to history following Christ and the lives of saints, and the remaining eight to largely political and military history covering the period of Duke William's reign in Normandy and Conquest of England until 1141.⁸³ That the *chansons* echo so loudly from his texts suggests to Chibnall that "Orderic, like Anselm and the monks and clerks whose language was permeated with feudal terms and whose analogies came from classical and feudal warfare, wrote in part for monks of the knightly class who had been familiar with such things since boyhood; but he also wrote for secular knights in hope of moderating their brutality and directing their swords to the service of God."⁸⁴ A lack of familiarity with military organization would have been apparent to his intended audience. In all likelihood, then, Orderic had enough knowledge to speak about *milites* with confidence and reliability, his susceptibility to influence from his sources notwithstanding.

The Nobility and *Milites*

One of the most frequent and consistent ways that Orderic uses the word *miles* is to describe the military status of men of high social standing. As noted above, a significant portion of Book III is devoted to the deeds of the wealthy founders and patrons of St. Évroult, the Giroie, who receive the bulk of the chronicler's attention for their substantial gifts of land to the incipient St. Évroult.⁸⁵ Giroie himself was "a member of one of the best families in France and Brittany," and

⁸² Ibid., III, 406.

⁸³ Chibnall argues that the epilogue of Book XIII must have been written between July and November of 1141, based on the events he records there. See OV, VI, 551, footnote 4.

⁸⁴ OV, I, 38.

⁸⁵ Ibid., II, 31-9. For the Giroie and Grandmesnil patronage of St. Évroult, see Chibnall, *World*, 22-4.

a “renowned hero.”⁸⁶ Though he is not specifically called a *miles* by Orderic, his sons William and Arnold are, perhaps indicating that their father was as well.⁸⁷ Ralph, son of Godfrey, the *miles* of Robert, another son of Giroie, also made a donation to the monastery. So too did a *miles* named Wado of Dreux, and William Provost, the uncle of a child oblate four generations removed from the elder Giroie sometime later.⁸⁸ This patronage undeniably earned the good will of the abbey and the historian.

Apart from his evident bias in favor of painting an idyllic view of these benefactors,⁸⁹ other men of high status whom Orderic specifically names as *militēs* abound throughout the entirety of his *Historia*, with the exception of Books I and II, which do not discuss Norman events at length. Among them are Ralph of Conches who made gifts to St. Évrault in repentance for his earlier offenses against the abbey⁹⁰; William Pantulf, the *miles* of earl Roger of Bellême⁹¹; Walter Tirel, “a wealthy chatelaine of Poix and Pontoise, one of the more powerful magnates,” and close friend of King William Rufus;⁹² and Hugh of Poix, who held land in Langham, Essex.⁹³ These are only a few examples, but this selection suffices to illustrate the point that Orderic uses the term *miles* to describe some important men.

⁸⁶ OV, II, 23.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁹ See OV, I, 92.

⁹⁰ OV, III, 126.

⁹¹ Ibid., III, 156; IV, 72; VI, 24.

⁹² Ibid., V, 288-9.

⁹³ Ibid., 294.

It is important to note, however, that not every socially important individual is described as a *miles*. In particular, Orderic rarely refer to counts, dukes and other men with titles as *milites*, even when they appear in military contexts. At the battle of Brémule, Orderic names several of the men King Henry I kept around him due to their skill. These include Count Henry of Eu, William of Warenne, who was the earl of Surrey, and Walter Giffard, the earl of Buckingham, among many other magnates.⁹⁴ These men Orderic compares to the censors, the Scipios and Marii, for their “*equestri probitate*,” yet still refrains from applying to them the term *milites*.⁹⁵ This suggest that Orderic did not consider the highest ranking men of society to be *milites*, or at least did not always refer to them as such, even in military contexts.

Orderic maintains this formula of differentiating the *milites* from the men of the upper aristocracy, albeit less rigidly, in Book IX, which is nearly a wholesale reproduction of Baldric of Dol’s history of the early Crusades. Here he names many men who went with Robert Curthose on crusade, including Ralph the Breton of Gael, Ivo and Aubry who were the sons of Hugh of Grandmesnil, Count Walter of St. Valéry, and many other *milites*. These men are differentiated from the even more prominent social elite, who are not suggested here to be *milites*. Among them were Duke Godfrey of Lotharingia, Count Eustace of Boulogne, Count Baldwin of Mons and others, who brought with them their own *milites*.⁹⁶ However, Roger, count of Flanders is later described as a *miles*, as is Duke Godfrey, both in military contexts.⁹⁷ Orderic does refer to Baldwin of Boulogne, the count of Edessa, as a *miles* as an epithet of praise when he entered

⁹⁴ Ibid., V, 236.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 54, 60.

triumphantly Edessa.⁹⁸ This last example is not from Baldric's history but is rather Orderic's own addition to the narrative.⁹⁹ Instances in which members of the social and economic elite are called *milites* are rare, however, and more often it is the middling lords who are referred to as such.

Whatever biases Orderic may have had towards some of these men, particularly the benefactors of St. Évroult, "*miles*" is demonstrably not merely a term of praise in itself, but rather had a particular meaning. An episode involving Mabel, the daughter of William Talvas, son of William of Bellême clearly illustrates this. All three were open enemies of the Giroie, and Mabel especially, according to Orderic, could scarcely hide her animosity toward St. Évroult.¹⁰⁰ Her retinue reportedly consisted of one hundred *milites* and she had many more at her disposal. Unable to openly harm the abbey due to the love and protection her husband, Roger of Montgomery, gave to St. Évroult, she resolved to visit the monastery with her retinue in tow to take ruinous advantage of its hospitality. Despite these barely concealed hostilities, Orderic does not flinch from referring to her retainers as *milites*, which he does three times in short succession.

Similarly, another figure about whom Orderic personally had qualms was the later Robert of Bellême. The monk compares Robert to the dragon cast out of Heaven in the Book of Revelation and describes how he pillaged and burned Normans' estates and tortured the *milites* and other people he was able to capture.¹⁰¹ This was after he was charged with forty-five offenses against King Henry I, all of which he was unquestionably guilty, Orderic's tone implies.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 126.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 118; see footnote 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., II, 54-5; Appendix I of volume II offers more on Orderic's biases related to the lords of Bellême; 362-7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., VI, 30.

Persisting in his rebellious ways, he was ultimately exiled from England.¹⁰² He further “inflicted all kinds of tribulations on Ralph, abbot of Séez, a cheerful, witty and lovable man [and] persecuted the men of St. Martin’s abbey with undue extortions.”¹⁰³ Despite the unfavorable portrayal of Robert, Orderic again does not deny his military status or prowess. Robert had previously been appointed *princeps militiae* over three hundred *milites* by King Henry, which Orderic tells us with the hindsight of knowing Robert’s later crimes.¹⁰⁴ In another instance, we are told that Robert Curthose knew Robert and the future Henry I, then only count of the Cotentin, both to be “*potentes ac fortissimos milites.*”¹⁰⁵ All of this Orderic says with the benefit of hindsight, knowing full well the kind of man who Robert of Bellême was.

Judging from Orderic’s language, it is also clear that he thought military prowess to be a commendable trait. There often rings a note of appreciation and even admiration in his description of any particular *miles*; such a man was not just a soldier, but an exemplary one. For example, Robert of Rhuddlan, who was also a donor to St. Évrault, is described as a “*miles fortis et agilis.*”¹⁰⁶ William of Buchelay, he says, was a “*sapiens miles,*” Roger of Gloucester a “*strenuus miles,*” and Raymond, prince of Antioch, Orderic counts among other “*virtuosi milites.*”¹⁰⁷ Laudatory descriptions of *milites* can be found throughout his text. However, as the above example of Robert of Bellême indicates, the term *miles* held an important meaning apart from whatever praiseworthy connotations it held for the monk.

¹⁰² Ibid., 21, 30.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., V, 242.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., IV, 148.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 136.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., VI, 52, 81, 502.

Orderic often employs the term *miles* to describe men of high social and economic status, but far less often in describing the most powerful magnates, the counts and dukes. The examples above illustrate that *miles* was not a synonym for *nobilis*, however, but rather that Orderic believed some men who possessed high social capital were *milites*. Thus the term is not used to denote social or economic standing, but is indicative of their professional status. Indeed, this would account for the instances in which the men of the upper aristocracy are also called *milites* – by going to the Holy Land, they relinquished their former roles as powerful land owners and instead dedicated their lives to warfare. The use of the word *miles* to denote a profession is also in evidence where it is used to describe people who had earned Orderic’s ire; despite their wickedness, they remained *milites*.

The Economic and Professional Identity of the *Milites*

There are social implications that could potentially be read into these examples, but closer inspection would be sure to disappoint the champions of the upper-class Norman knight like R. Allen Brown or Georges Duby who argue that the nobility and the *milites* were synonymous. While Orderic certainly describes many men of high social status as *milites*, he did not reserve the term *miles* for nobles, nor did he describe all nobles as *milites*. Instead, Orderic draws attention to those nobles who had the military training that made them the functional equivalent of *milites*. Put another way, the nobility were a group defined in economic and political terms, whereas the *milites* were defined by the job they did.

That nobles and *milites* were separate groups, albeit with some overlap in membership, is evident in the numbers of *milites* Orderic claims to have been present in Normandy. The above mentioned Mabel of Bellême, the daughter of a dependent of Norman duke, was said to have had

more than one hundred *milites* at her disposal. Even if an exaggeration, it nevertheless gives the impression that they were too many in number for them all to have been men of great status, especially as dependents. Similarly, on their return journey from a pilgrimage in Jerusalem, a *miles* named Drogo and his “*centum milites*” were entertained by Duke Gaimar at Salerno.¹⁰⁸ In another well known passage, Orderic tells how King William allocated lands to his *ordines*¹⁰⁹ to ensure that he could muster 60,000 *milites*.¹¹⁰ The number is certainly an exaggeration, but it is clear that the 60,000 men were not meant to all be understood as established men of wealth or status, but rather that they were subjects of the *ordines*.

Armies of large numbers of *milites* are consistently reported by Orderic throughout the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, strongly suggesting that there were too many men counted as *milites* for them all to have been among the nobility or upper class of land-holders, or even all landowners at all. Several of these examples, if not indeed all of them, are unrealistically exaggerated for rhetorical purposes, just as the 60,000 figure above is. Orderic relates that King William I possessed 100,000 *milites*, as did his three sons following William’s death.¹¹¹ In his blockade of Antioch, Duke Bohemond reportedly had 4,000 *milites*, according to Orderic and Baldric of Dol, his source. When local food supplies began to run low during the protracted siege, he and Robert of Flanders departed the area with a total of 20,000 men, including both *milites* and *pedites*.¹¹²

There is reason to be cautious, however, when observing these numbers, both in taking them too

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., II, 56.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 266. The identity of these *ordines* is unclear, but they appear to constitute a group apart from the “*comites et optimates*,” including Count Eustace of Boulogne, Robert of Mortain, William of Evreux, and Robert of Eu, who Orderic lists separately in the same paragraph as recipients of English land holdings.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., IV, 102, 196.

¹¹² Ibid., V, 70-2.

literally and in being quick to reject them as preposterous. Orderic also relates a story in which nine hundred European *milites* defeated a Muslim army of 300,000, suffering incredibly few losses. The latter number is unquestionably inflated, but the number of *milites* may be more reliable. Because this story exalts the victory of the Franks over a numerically superior army, it would have been in Orderic's interest to *understate* the number of *milites* involved in the battle, just as he obviously inflates the size of the enemy force.

That this figure may be a more realistic count of the numbers of *milites* available to military leaders is corroborated by other examples. Amidst a rebellion in 1106, we are told that King Henry I rode to a fortress at Dives with seven hundred *milites* and in a later attack on Hugh of Gournay, he fielded one thousand *milites* in Bray.¹¹³ Contrastingly, Henry, William (both are unspecified by name or title), and Odo Borleng¹¹⁴ commanded three hundred *milites* in defense of the highway from the encroaching armies of Count Waleran at the battle of Bourghéroulde.¹¹⁵ Waleran had perhaps one hundred men.¹¹⁶ In Book III, Orderic claims that Mabel of Bellême similarly had about one hundred *milites*. If one hundred men in the military service of a middling lord seems typical, then the supposition that the king may have personally commanded one thousand *milites* is perhaps not unreasonable. These numbers, if reliable, suggest that they were far too many in number to all have been land-owners of significant social standing.

¹¹³ Ibid., VI, 80, 200.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., xxvi-v. Little is known about Odo Borleng other than that he was a prominent member of King Henry I's military household.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 348.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 351. Waleran and about eighty other *milites* were captured, Orderic reports. Assuming at least a few deaths and more who successfully fled, one hundred is a conservative estimate of the size of his forces.

The systematic approach to cataloguing the *milites* in Orderic's history that I have undertaken in this study confirms the findings of both Marjorie Chibnall and J.O. Prestwich.¹¹⁷ Both scholars argue that the military households were populated by men of varying social backgrounds who compensated for their service in varying ways. Whereas some men were engaged in tenurial relationships with their lord and used it as a means of social mobility, others, as Chibnall contends, were mercenary forces paid in coinage.

Orderic does not say much with regards to the economic status of *milites* beyond the men of higher social status he discusses, but in two cases Orderic does make clear that men of lower social and economic status were included among the *milites*. At the battle of Bourthéroulde, Odo Borleng proposed to his co-captains that they dismount a portion of the troops and place a line of archers at the front of their battle lines. The young Count Waleran, against the advice of the older Count Amaury, decided to attack despite their disadvantage, being unimpressed by the “*pagenses et gregarios*” who blocked their path.¹¹⁸ While Orderic refers to the three hundred men under Odo, Henry and William as *milites* (it is unclear if the archers are counted among them or if they are separate from the mounted *milites*), Waleran is less than impressed by them because of their relatively low social status. The young count's remark is certainly derogatory, but there is also no reason to believe that his derision was not rooted in the truth of the identity of his opponents. That is, there is no conflict in supposing that Odo's forces were both *milites* and of low social status.¹¹⁹

Orderic also recounts a miraculous vision witnessed by Walchelin, a priest from Lisieux. Returning home in the middle of the night from visiting a sick parishioner, he saw a great

¹¹⁷ See J.O. Prestwich, “Military Household” and Chibnall “Mercenaries.”

¹¹⁸ OV, VI, 350.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., See Chibnall's footnotes on this passage.

spectral army of ghostly *milites*, armed for battle astride massive horses. Among these soldiers were the recently deceased sons of Count Gilbert, Richard and Baldwin and Viscount Landry of Orbec. Landry, we are told by the phantom soldiers, rose from a low birth to become viscount, signaling that low social status was not inherently a barrier to becoming a *miles*, or even necessarily to social advancement.¹²⁰

The distinctions offered here are reminiscent of the three “orders” proposed by Georges Duby – the military, the laborers and the clergy.¹²¹ Chibnall suggests that this “was an assumption that [Orderic] never questioned,” and which a passage in Book VIII seems to confirm.¹²² Here he defines the roles of these groups; the *rustici*, who work the fields and work as servants, the *monachi* who dedicate themselves to the Word of God, and the *milites*, scholars and philosophers “who have renounced the world” and ought not to be “compelled to spend their time in servile and unbecoming labours and occupations like low-born servants in order to earn their bread.”¹²³ Again, there is an economic element present in this definition of the *milites*, but neither are they strictly defined in economic terms; that the low-born are condemned to a life of servitude and labor is assumed, but that the ranks of the clergy and military are not similarly equated with the upper classes is telling.

¹²⁰ Ibid., IV, 236-43.

¹²¹ See Duby, *Chivalrous Society*, 88-93.

¹²² OV, I, 40.

¹²³ Ibid., IV, 320-1.

The *Milites* as Professionals

The two other categories that offer a positive identification of *milites* in tenurial contexts and as men of military households can now be brought into the discussion. These two categories are difficult to divorce from one another because where a *miles* is engaged in a tenurial relationship, it is because he is acting in his lord's *familia* as a soldier. However, not all men in the military household were "paid" with property, and as Chibnall notes, some men served for monetary payments as mercenaries.¹²⁴ Of central importance at present is that *milites* were paid, and therefore professional, soldiers of the *familia*. There may also be a distinction between *milites* who were paid but were permanent members of the military household and mercenaries who were paid but were only temporary members of the military household.

Here Orderic likely had some personal experience, as St. Évrault had its own tenants, lending credibility to his accounts of tenurial relationships. The historian tells how William of Montreuil, the son of William Giroie, on his deathbed, entrusted his wealth to two *milites*, Anquetil of Noyer and Theodelin of Tanaisie, to bring to the abbot of St. Évrault. These two men, Orderic says, were men of St. Évrault and owed fealty to abbot Thierry, though they predated his own lifetime.¹²⁵ During Orderic's own tenure at St. Évrault, Abbot Mainer selected Fulk of Guarnanville to be his helpmeet, whose father had been dean of Evreux and held "*ex paterna hereditate feudum militis.*"¹²⁶ This man, also confusingly named Fulk, had owed military service in exchange for the lands that he held from the monastery, though whether that was before his appointment as dean at Evreux or a concurrent obligation is not said.

¹²⁴ See Chibnall, "Mercenaries."

¹²⁵ OV, II, 60.

¹²⁶ Ibid., III, 120.

The aftermath of battle of Bourghéroulde is particularly illuminating, however. We are told that several of the captured men, including Geoffrey of Tourville and Odard of Le Pin, were brought before King Henry at Rouen and blinded as punishment for their treason against him. Charles, the marquis of Flanders, raised an objection, stating that it was against custom to mutilate *milites* who were captured in war in service to their lord. Geoffrey and Odard, with the consent of their respective lords, had become the king's men, and had placed themselves in the impossible position of owing fealty to both sides of the conflict. Henry stated that they ought to have chosen to uphold their fealty to their king before that which was owed to their liege lords. Luke of La Barre was also blinded, but for different reasons. He had previously been captured, but because he had never paid homage to the king, he was released with his possessions. He immediately continued in the rebellion against the king writing insulting songs against him. It was only after being captured a second time that he was punished, not as an enemy combatant in service to another lord, but because he was inflammatory.¹²⁷

These examples elucidate the role of *milites* as soldiers performing military service for their lords, presumably in exchange for property, office or coin. Fulk, the dean of Evreux illustrates this above. This issue was also the cause for Robert Curthose's rebellion against King William, or so Orderic's chronicle supposes. Robert requested that he be given control over Normandy prematurely so that he could provide for his dependants. The conversation between father and son does not provide enough information to determine the exact nature of the payment that Robert wished to offer his men, but that payment was crucial to the arrangement is central to understanding the reason for their argument. Robert even protested that he no longer wished to be treated as his father's *mercennarius*, which Chibnall contends was a statement regarding his

¹²⁷ Ibid., VI, 352-5.

landlessness.¹²⁸ This claim may also have been with regard to their personal relationship, with Robert forcefully implying that he was little more than an impersonal hireling to his father and not a personally close member of his household and confidant. In either case, the hyperbole of the statement is evident. While these tenurial relationships represent one aspect of the way that Orderic portrays *milites*, it is by no means clear that this was a necessary or sufficient condition to being a *miles*. However, this usage does strongly agree with the view of the *milites* as a corps of professionals, defined by their function in medieval society despite the varied backgrounds from which its members come.

Though references to tenurial relationships are relatively sparse in his text, Orderic uses the term *miles* to denote men in military households frequently and consistently. Often times, Orderic only hints at this relationship, in all likelihood because his readers would have understood the shorthand. In these cases, language denoting possession is frequently used. Ralph, son of Godfrey, the *miles* of Robert Giroie is listed as a donor to St. Évrout,¹²⁹ and Orderic reports that “*vicini enim milites qui homines seu cognate Geroianorum fuerant,*” stole land holdings from St. Évrout. We also are told of Count Fulk of Anjou, who “*militesque suos et sagittarios peditesque aggregavit,*” as well as the brothers Theobald and Stephen and their respective *milites*.¹³⁰ Similarly, that *milites* might also refer to fighting men of the household is evident in passages Orderic abbreviates from Baldric. After taking Heraclea, Tancred departed from Baldwin for Tarsus, along with “*suis militibus.*”¹³¹ Later, upon securing the Church of the

¹²⁸ Ibid., V, 98-9.

¹²⁹ Ibid., II, 38.

¹³⁰ Ibid., VI, 206-8.

¹³¹ Ibid., V, 64, 66.

Holy Sepulcher, Tancred left Ilger Bigod, the commander of his household men, with two hundred others to defend the site.¹³²

In other instances, Orderic is more direct in stating that *milites* were members of a military household. Conan, the son of Gilbert Pilatus, Orderic claims was the wealthiest and most powerful man in Rouen. Caught between King William Rufus and Duke Robert Curthose in their struggle over Normandy, Orderic states that he maintained a large household of *milites* and *satellites* against the Duke and decided to cast his lot in with the king.¹³³ The unclear identity of the *satellites* notwithstanding, *milites* were clearly a part of the household.¹³⁴ Similarly, in response to the French King's invasion of Normandy with the intent of restoring many of his men to power, King Henry sent his son Richard with two hundred *milites* of the *familia regis*, along with Ralph the Red and Rualon of Avranches as captains, to aid Ralph of Gael resist the encroachment.¹³⁵

More frequently, however, only the military role of the *familia* is described without mention of who precisely was participating. In the account of Walchelin's ghostly vision of the damned *milites*, Orderic claims that the priest at first believed the noise he heard was from the

¹³² Ibid., 170; see footnote 1. Ilger was well known to Orderic and appears in his interpolation of William of Jumièges.

¹³³ Ibid., VI, 220.

¹³⁴ The meaning of the term *satellites* varies throughout Orderic's work. At times the *words* appears to possibly indicate mercenaries (OV, II, 122, 308; VI, 34, 74 are some examples) and at other times the term seems nonspecific in its use, describing men of the household or those who are closely associated with a lord (OV, II, 28, 106; V, 270; VI, 14). Marjorie Chibnall points out that the terms *milites stipendiarii* and *milites gregarii* in Orderic's work are used to describe mercenaries of the military household. (See Chibnall, "Mercenaries," 89-91.). In one instance, Orderic describes a *miles de satelicio* of Robert Guiscard's wife Sichelgaita (OV, IV, 28-30), which might be interpreted as either a *miles* from among a company of mercenaries or a *miles* from among her whole body of attendants. Thus the relationship between the *satellites* and *milites stipendiarii* is unclear.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 246.

household of Robert of Bellême, on their way to the siege of Courcy.¹³⁶ Similarly, in a 1092 campaign in Domfront, Robert Giroie participated in an attack with the future English King Henry's household forces.¹³⁷ Orderic offers many descriptions like these that do not explicitly state that *milites* were members of the *familia*, but the implication is however clear.

The composition of a magnate's household is suggested by a description Orderic offers of Hugh of Avranches's *familia* after being given the county of Chester following the Norman Conquest. Orderic says that he maintained a large household, full of boys both of noble and more humble origins, as well as noble men, clerks and *milites*. These boys we might assume were there for military training, as Chapter IV will discuss, but that the household of this important magnate of William's welcomed boys of various socio-economic backgrounds is of crucial importance. Marjorie Chibnall reached a similar conclusion in her 1977 article, "Mercenaries and the *Familia Regis* under Henry I."¹³⁸ From this it is apparent that nobility was not a prerequisite of being a *miles* and, when taken with the previous considerations, the image of Orderic's *milites* begins to clarify.

What these examples of household *milites* suggest is a functional meaning of the term as a profession. Many of the prominent magnates he describes were certainly landowners with all of the concerns that entails, but they all are described not by their wealth, but by the job they perform, whether of high birth or low. Even the magnates are shown to be soldiers receiving payment in the form of land grants for their military service, while those lower on the socio-economic ladder are less richly rewarded, but still engaged in formal relationships with their

¹³⁶ Ibid, IV, 238.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 292.

¹³⁸ Chibnall, "Mercenaries," 87.

social superiors. The following chapter will elaborate further on the nature of this professional soldiery and how they stand apart from other kinds of fighting men.

This view of the *milites* in Orderic Vitalis' text as professional soldiers is bolstered by several instances in which he refers to *milites* outside of his contemporary Norman context. Likewise, these examples also topple the monolithic distinct and formal order of knighthood from its pedestal – *milites*, as described by Orderic Vitalis, were certainly not knights. Alexius Comnenus, emperor of Byzantium from 1081 to 1118, Orderic describes as a *bellator* who was generous to his *milites*.¹³⁹ Orderic relates how Alexius assembled an army of *bellatores* to lift the crusader's siege of Durazzo. The advance unit of this army, consisting of five hundred *milites*, met with Bohemond and was summarily defeated.¹⁴⁰ In Book IX, borrowing from Baldric of Dol, he states that “*Cesi sunt ibi Turcorum multi milites; quoniam prelium illud non habuerat pedites.*”¹⁴¹ In another battle, he claims that twelve *principes*, called emirs [“*admiralios*”] and 1,500 *milites precipui* were killed.¹⁴² Though these examples may have been lifted from his source material, Orderic in the following book describes how King Baldwin addresses his troops, urging them to remember the biblical heroes “*Dauid fortissimo regis et militum eius,*” Joab and Abishai, Banaiah and Uriah, Ethite and Jonathan and Judas Maccabeus, among others.¹⁴³ The evidence is clear that in these cases, Orderic viewed *miles* to be a word denoting a professional or adept soldier, devoid of connotations of social class or wealth. Further, these examples

¹³⁹ Ibid., IV. 14.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., V, 80.

¹⁴² Ibid., 84.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 348-9.

illustrate that he did not believe that the term *milites* applied to members of a unique European chivalric order.

Generic Usage of “*Milites*”

The final category to discuss in this systematic analysis of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis, other than that which concerns the following chapter, is the “generic” one. Little can be said, however, because by their very definition, they are cases where the context offers too little information to conclude the exact nature of the *milites* in question, but they are necessary to discuss because of their frequent appearance in the *Historia*. Most of the examples that fall into this category are indeed cases where the contextual clues are too vague to be conclusive in identifying the men. One could speculate, but hazardously so, as the *milites* in these examples could be read either as military professionals or as a more general term for fighting men, equal in meaning to *bellatores* or *pugnatores*.

There is reason to question this latter possibility, however, as Orderic does sometimes suggest a distinction between the *milites* and these more general soldiers. On the eve of the Norman invasion of England in 1066, we are told that “the men of Gaul and Brittany, Poitou and Burgundy, and other peoples from north of the Alps, assembled for war overseas,”¹⁴⁴ and that Harold likewise also summoned a great host of Englishmen to meet William at Hastings.¹⁴⁵ In both cases, these military forces that are not referred to as being made up of *milites*, but rather reflect the kind of expeditionary levies Bernard and David Bachrach have argued were employed

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., II, 144.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 172.

to supplement the professional armies.¹⁴⁶ The varied composition of William and Harold's respective armies certainly consisted of substantial numbers of magnates and their retinues, as well as other species of soldiers besides, yet *milites* is not the chosen collective noun for the soldiers. Rather, when discussing common men, they are not described as having any kind of military status, even in military contexts. Frequently, they are simply called the "men of" such and such place. Whilst on a difficult march, "the men of Anjou, Brittany and Maine loudly complained" about the conditions and asked to be discharged from William's service in England.¹⁴⁷ They are later referred to as *pedites* and there no reason to consider these men as anything other than men of comparatively low standing who were neither soldiers by training nor members of military households.¹⁴⁸ In a passage which Chibnall identifies as originating from William of Poitiers, the distinction is also sharply made between the *milites* who had elevated social and economic status and the *plebeis*, commoners who rose in support of William in England following his victory at Hastings.¹⁴⁹ Despite Orderic's sometimes vague use of the term *miles*, he often draws a distinction between the *milites* and unprofessional fighting men, indicating that the term most likely was not used as a generic expression for fighting men in cases where Orderic's meaning is unclear.

¹⁴⁶ See David S. Bachrach, "Thietmar," and Bernard S. Bachrach, "Dudo."

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 234.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 208-9; "*Tunt etiam aliquot sapientissimi ciuium urbanorum, et nonnulli ex militibus ingenuis quorum nomen et opes ualebant; et multi ex plebeis contra suos pro Normannis magnopere insurgebant.*"

III: THE MILITARY FUNCTIONS OF *MILITES*

The previous chapter demonstrated how Orderic Vitalis, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, describes the *milites* as professional soldiers and indeed a distinct species of warrior apart from other kinds of fighting men. This chapter will examine these soldiers more closely, looking at their equipment and how they were used in military situations to more fully support the conclusion that they possessed the training and skills that defined them as professionals. The final category of ways in which Orderic uses the term *milites*, as part of the systematic analysis undertaken by this study, indicates that he understood *milites* to often possess both horses and armor. *Eques*, another term Orderic uses, must also be examined in order to see how it relates to the *milites* and their role as mounted soldiers. This chapter also explores how, as members of military households, *milites* were employed in garrisoning fortifications and as military leaders (Orderic uses “*princeps milititiae*” and “*magister militum*,” which Chibnall translates as “captain.” I prefer “commander,” in this regard, having fewer connotations suggesting a formal rank). Each of these will be elaborated upon in order to more fully reveal their professional status.

Milites as Horsemen

Beyond simply conveying a professional status, Orderic Vitalis uses the term *milites* in a manner suggesting that they were mounted soldiers. Instances where mention is made of the *milites*’ mode of combat are infrequent but appear throughout the text. In the majority of these cases, *milites* appear as horsemen by their comparison to *pedites*. In the 1069 revolt by the magnates of the Maine against their Norman occupiers, King William amassed an army of “*milites peditesque*” to descend on the county after learning that his men had been cut down or driven out

of a city left unnamed by Orderic.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Orderic later describes how Gilduin of Dol led one hundred and forty *milites* and a large body of *pedites* on a raid on the abbey of St. Michael *de periculo maris* and the surrounding areas, whereafter he was killed in a skirmish with twenty Norman *milites*.¹⁵¹

Two examples more clearly state that Orderic associated *milites* with horses. Following the Norman Conquest, some of the English sent ambassadors to one of Edward the Confessor's former allies and one-time brother-in-law, Count Eustace of Boulogne, to ask for aid in their rebellion against King William. Despite his participation in the Conquest alongside Duke William, the count responded, bringing with him many soldiers, but Orderic notes that he left most of the horses behind as he approached Dover castle to besiege it.¹⁵² This was to be his undoing as the army was put to rout by the Norman *equites*. Returning once again to the priest Walchelin's supernatural encounter with an army of the dead, Orderic notes here as well that each *miles* rode upon a giant horse and was fully armed for battle.¹⁵³

Orderic's description of *milites* on horseback indicates just how thoroughly Orderic was influenced by his source materials, namely Baldric of Dol. Time and again in Orderic's retelling of Baldric's history in Book IX, *milites* are specifically differentiated from the *pedites* alongside whom they fought. Orderic reports that Robert Curthose left Normandy with a force of both *milites* and *pedites*, bound for the Holy Land¹⁵⁴ and after Christmas of 1097, Duke Bohemond

¹⁵⁰ OV, II, 306.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., VI, 492.

¹⁵² Ibid., II, 173.

¹⁵³ Ibid., IV, 242.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., V, 32.

and Robert of Flanders broke camp, departing from Antioch with over twenty thousand *milites* and *pedites*.¹⁵⁵

Another notable passage suggests that the *milites* were typically mounted. While in pursuit of the Seljuk Sultan Kilij Arslan who was reportedly sacking the homes and churches of Syrian Christians, the Franks came into an inhospitable region and Orderic claims that many *milites* lost their mounts and were forced to proceed as *pedites*.¹⁵⁶ Given that there is no reason to assume that these men had lost their place in a military household or that their professional status was somehow diminished on account of the loss of their horses, it can only be concluded that the term here implies that *milites* were commonly understood to be mounted soldiers.

The books following Book IX contain more frequent reference to foot soldiers than those prior to it, indicating the influence of Baldric on Orderic was substantial. Prior to Book IX, Orderic makes two references to *milites* and *pedites*, in the case of the Maine rebellion and in the 50,000 “*militum cum copia peditum*”¹⁵⁷ the Norman duke commanded for his invasion. In the interceding books, V-VIII, he does not mention *pedites* at all, suggesting that Orderic did not consider this distinction to be an integral part of the *miles*’ identity until late in his career as a historian, after utilizing Balric of Dol’s history. *Pedites* appear with greater frequency in all three books of Volume 6, as does the distinction between *milites* and *pedites*. However, Books III and IV, derived partly from William of Poitiers, contain examples comparing *equites* to *pedites*. *Pedites* are mentioned six different times in Orderic’s narrative of the battle of Hastings, and in two of those they are contrasted directly with *equites*. The distinction between mounted soldiers

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., IX, 72.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., II, 168.

and foot soldiers was therefore well known to Orderic, but it was not until he conferred with Baldric's text that he routinely distinguished *milites* from foot soldiers.

Orderic, still borrowing from Baldric, also hints that the *pedites* may not have been of the same professional caliber as the *milites*. In one case, he describes the *pedites* as “*inualida et indocta*,” indicating that that they were untrained. They also lacked the discipline of the *milites*, disregarded their orders and fled from battle.¹⁵⁸ To be more certain of the professional status of the *pedites*, whether in Baldric's text or in Orderic's, a more concerted study would be necessary, as there is clearly some discrepancy between the unhorsed *milites* who are called *pedites* in the above example and those of a more undisciplined nature mentioned here. In this regard I offer no conclusion.

Although it is apparent that both Baldric of Dol and Orderic Vitalis considered *milites* to be mounted soldiers, a caveat must be added - Orderic indicates that they did not fight exclusively on horseback. That the monk rarely specifically states that the *milites* involved in combat situations were mounted suggests that instances where *milites* are described as fighting on foot were atypical, at least in Orderic's apparent conception of how *milites* commonly fought. Two examples from Baldric particularly illustrate that *milites* would fight on foot as necessary. During an attack on the city of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, ladders were employed by the crusaders, both *milites* and *pedites*, in order to storm the walls.¹⁵⁹ This tactic was repeated during the siege of Jerusalem, where *milites* are described as fighting with the Saracens on the wall with swords

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 138.

and spears.¹⁶⁰ This example suggests that Baldric, and by extension, Orderic clearly saw a difference between *milites* and *pedites* that went beyond their mode of travel.

Orderic also presents a number of other cases in which *milites* fight on foot. Notably, these examples do not draw upon information provided by Baldric, and do not involve the First Crusade. For example, as noted above, shortly after the Norman duke's conquest of England, Count Eustace of Boulogne intentionally left behind his soldiers' horses as he approached Dover castle to besiege it.¹⁶¹ Likewise, at the battle of Bourghéroulde, Odo Borleng and his co-commanders agreed to dismount a portion of their troops in their stand against Count Waleran.¹⁶² In the battle at Brémule between King Louis of France and Henry I of England, we are told that "*Ricardus filius regis et centum milites equis insidentes ad bellum parati errant; reliqui uero cum rege pedites in campo dimicabant.*"¹⁶³ That the *milites* who remained with Richard are qualified as mounted suggests that those in the field with the king were also *milites*, but rather on foot. William Crispin and eighty French horsemen all charged, but their horses were killed by the footmen. All told, Orderic reports that one hundred and forty French *milites* were captured that day.

Though Count Eustace's forces were defeated, the latter two victories perhaps demonstrate why the tactic of dismounting was favored. Despite the seeming advantage offered by horses, the likely well-trained infantry forces commanded by Odo and King Henry in these engagements handily defeated their mounted opponents, in the latter case, by apparently targeting the horses. The battle of Hastings also indicates the efficacy of a disciplined rank of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 158.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., II, 172.

¹⁶² Ibid., VI, 348.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 238.

foot soldiers against men fighting from horseback; it was only after the Anglo-Saxons broke ranks that they were summarily crushed by the Norman duke.¹⁶⁴ This too is a topic for a separate study and is only mentioned here to briefly offer an explanation for why the *milites* might have dismounted, despite the evidence that Orderic considered them to be soldiers with horses, who, given the circumstances, may or may not use them in combat.

Equites

Orderic also uses the term *equites* to specifically refer to mounted fighting men. This term appears throughout the entirety of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but Orderic employs it far less frequently than he does *milites*.¹⁶⁵ Rather than differentiating them from the *milites*, however, or even suggesting only a method of travel, the term *equites* often appears as a near-synonym for *milites*, which in turn further supports the argument that Orderic understood the *milites* to be mounted. To be more precise, it appears that while the term *equites* refers to *milites* on horseback, it is not clear that in every case a *miles* was also an *eques*. Because it was not unheard of for the *milites* to fight dismounted, there is reason to suspect that Orderic used the word *equites* at times to differentiate between mounted and dismounted *milites*. In his analysis of John of Salisbury's text, John Hosler reports that *equites* is used primarily by Salisbury to describe literal Roman *equestores* or other ancient horsemen. Only in a single instance does the term *eques* suggest "medieval knight," where it is used to describe the retinue of the King of Sicily. This, Hosler infers, means that the *equites* in question were of high birth, rank and skill.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., II, 174.

¹⁶⁵ See footnote 69 above. Only in two instances is the term *equites* used in Book IX, where he relies heavily on Baldric of Dol's *Historia Ierosolimatana*.

¹⁶⁶ Hosler, *John of Salisbury*, 18-9.

Orderic's use of the term is quite different, however. Orderic clearly uses the term *equites* to refer to contemporary mounted *milites*.

In many cases, Orderic uses the term *equites* to differentiate mounted soldiers from those fighting on foot. In recounting the events of the battle of Hastings, Orderic repeats almost verbatim William of Poitiers' description of the Norman troops' battle arrangements, with archers on foot in the front rank, armored foot soldiers in the second and the *equites* in the back around Duke William.¹⁶⁷ Shortly thereafter, Poitiers makes the same distinction between the *pedites* and *equites* of the Bretons who were unable to overwhelm the English forces during the battle.¹⁶⁸ Notably, William of Poitiers does not distinguish between *milites* and *pedites* here, nor does Orderic interject the term *milites*. This suggests that Orderic saw all of the men engaged at Hastings as having a similar professional status as soldiers.

It should be emphasized, however, that William of Poitiers deliberately employs the word *equites* in the above examples, even though he uses the term *milites* earlier in his narrative. Neither does Orderic correct him. Poitiers reports that William had an army of 50,000 *milites* for the invasion,¹⁶⁹ but in his description of the battle, he does not refer to any of the soldiers as *milites*. Rather, William of Poitiers distinguishes the troops by their function (e.g. as mounted *equites* or on foot). Orderic repeats this deliberate word choice, indicating that he too understood the distinction between the *equites* and the armored foot soldiers in William's army to be along functional lines and not professional ones.

Both historians do perhaps recognize the professional status of some soldiers, or lack thereof, by other means. For example, the Orderic repeats William of Poitiers in saying that the

¹⁶⁷ OV, II, p. 172.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 174.

¹⁶⁹ WP, 102.

Bretons, and others by implication, were *auxiliares*.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, both authors refer to the men of Maine, France, Brittany and Aquitaine, as participants in the battle, possibly denoting militia men as opposed to professionals.¹⁷¹ However, none of these groups are described as being apart from the three ranks of William's troop deployment. There are two ways to understand these descriptions, though neither of which can be fully substantiated by the context. First, these two examples may simply reflect soldiers of non-Norman origins without any professional connotation implied. Or, secondly, it may be that these examples illustrate a lack of professional status, thus indicating that the terms *equites* and *pedites* were not merely used to more specifically describe *milites*, but rather that the two words denote *only* military function, with no implication that they were synonymous with *milites* as a professional category.

Orderic also uses the term *equites* to differentiate the mounted men from foot soldiers in a number of passages that he wrote independently of any other narrative work. For example, Orderic notes that King Henry I had a siege castle built at Tinchebray to besiege William of Mortain, which he populated with many *equites* and *pedites*, with Thomas of St. John at their head.¹⁷² Similarly, at the battle at Brémule, Henry's *pedites* are clearly distinguished from William Crispin's eighty *equites*.¹⁷³ In all of these cases, Orderic draws attention to the military function of the troops as either foot soldiers or mounted combatants.

However, Orderic is at other times more deliberate in his descriptions. In one case, Orderic tells of a ceremony wherein Ansold of Maule made substantial gifts to the monastery of St. Mary, with his *milites* as witnesses. He then made his eldest son Peter his heir, who received

¹⁷⁰ OV, II, 174.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., VI, 84.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 238.

the “*homagium et fidelitatem*” of the *equites*.¹⁷⁴ Among them were Ansold’s brother William, his nephew Robert, and a *miles* named Gumbold, as well as several others. Here the text is clear that two groups were synonymous. Orderic details the phantom army of Walchelin’s vision similarly, first describing the host of *milites*, then recounting how Walchelin was harassed by “*quattuor horrendi equites*” from among them as he attempted to mount one of the mighty horses.¹⁷⁵ Orderic’s description here offers no conceivable way to understand the four *equites* as being distinct from the larger body of *milites* they rode with, other than possibly reflecting a word choice to alter his vocabulary.

In light of these latter examples, it is likely that Orderic did not alter William of Poitiers’ language because the distinctions Poitiers made between the *milites*, *pedites* and *equites* already made sense to him. Simply put, the *equites* in the Norman duke’s army were not called *milites* because the armored foot soldiers may also have been *milites*. Orderic’s text does not provide conclusive evidence for this conjecture, but it nevertheless remains a possibility worth considering. Disregarding the passages Orderic borrows from William of Poitiers, it remains clear that he understood the term *eques* to be a synonym for mounted *miles*.

Marjorie Chibnall contends that the term *eques* was used by Orderic to denote a veteran *miles*.¹⁷⁶ There is reason to be skeptical of this position, however. While the word *equites* is frequently used to describe smaller groups of soldiers or an individual *eques* who might appear as a unique case, in some places Orderic refers to large bodies of *equites* that is more suggestive of an army of mounted *milites* than of an entire host of particularly experienced warriors. In one occurrence, which Orderic possibly derived from William of Poitiers, given its proximity in the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., III, 184.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., IV, 240, 244.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., IV, 201.

text to other accounts more clearly borrowed from the earlier historian, Orderic says that the newly crowned King William I rode out with five hundred *equites* to survey the area around Exeter in order to take stock of how the rebellious Englishmen there were preparing for his assault.¹⁷⁷ In another example, Eustace of Breteuil, Richer of Laigle and William, son of Richard of La Ferté-Frênel, invaded Normandy with three hundred *equites*. Uniting several garrisons under his command, Ralph the Red met and defeating the invading force in the field, capturing a few of the *milites*.¹⁷⁸ As we have seen above, one hundred seems to be typical for the number of men a middling lord might command,¹⁷⁹ so the three hundred *equites* is more likely a reflection of the total number of men they possessed, rather than a select corps of experts from their respective households.

Orderic often uses the term *equites* to draw the reader's attention to the method by which some of the *milites* fought, just as he does at times by distinguishing between *milites* and *pedites*. In these examples, the distinction between fighting on foot and fighting on horseback is an important one, and as Orderic demonstrates, sometimes central to one side's victory over the other. Similarly, the term *equites* is used by the historian to emphasize the mounted role of *milites* in a particular military episode rather than to indicate a difference in rank or experience among the *milites* or as a unique kind of soldier apart from the *milites*. Further, there is cause to suppose that they were synonymous because of the training necessary to fight effectively from horseback, which combines both skillful riding and at least a degree of martial proficiency.

Milites and *equites* both appear as highly trained soldiers and while training was not a sufficient

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 212.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, 222.

¹⁷⁹ The consistency of this number may suggest that it is actually a rhetorical device to the effect of "a whole bunch of guys," not a literal accounting. Even if so, context often suggests that the "hundred" men represent a large portion of a lord's retinue, not a mere fraction.

condition to make a warrior a *miles*, it was evidently a necessary one.¹⁸⁰ In the view of Orderic Vitalis, *milites* were *equites* sometimes, and *pedites* in other cases.

In light of this analysis, the popular scholarly understanding of *milites* as horsemen appears correct, at least from what can be learned from Orderic's history alone. This defining feature of the *milites* has been identified by scholars including Marjorie Chibnall, Michael Prestwich, Phillipe Contamine, and Connor Kostick,¹⁸¹ and has been used to justify the view that the *milites* were therefore knights by others like John Gillingham, and R. Allen Brown.¹⁸² However, nothing in this analysis of Orderic Vitalis' text would indicate that the *milites*, as professional soldiers, were necessarily also knights. However, there is another feature of both knights and *milites* that is seen as crucial to their identity – their armor.

Milites and their Armor

Orderic makes few references to the military equipment of *milites*, but several instances give the impression that he understood *milites* typically to be armored. Orderic was not apparently strongly influenced by his two main sources of military information, William of Poitiers and Baldric of Dol in this regard. For example, descriptions of military equipment do not appear in greater numbers in Books III and IX than elsewhere in the text. In two illustrative examples of armored *milites*, King William Rufus sent the *magister militum* Robert, son of Hugh of Montfort,

¹⁸⁰ It is therefore possible that nobles might be referred to as *equites* because they fought from horseback, but that does not imply that they were *milites*. The following chapter clarifies the distinction between *milites* and noble fighters.

¹⁸¹ Chibnall, "Mercenaries," 89; Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare*, 15; Contamine, *War* 31; Kostick, "Terms," 1.

¹⁸² Gillingham, "Knight Service," 187; Brown, "Status," 130.

to occupy the tower of Le Mans, along with seven hundred “*milites electos loriceis et galeis et omni armature fulgentes.*”¹⁸³ The *milites* in the priest Walchelin’s vision were also all armored, according to Orderic.¹⁸⁴

Orderic also offers two separate accounts of women who both went armored as if they were *milites*. The first example is of Isabel, the wife of Ralph of Tosny, who went to war against the Countess Helwise of Evreux over a minor matter. Orderic reports that she went to war armed as a *miles* and was no less courageous than the “*loracatis equites*” around her.¹⁸⁵ This may be something of a rhetorical trope, as Orderic says “*Heluisa quidem sollers erat facunda, sed atrox et auara; Isabel uero dapsilis et audax atque iocosa, ideoque coessentibus amabilis et grata.*”¹⁸⁶ Orderic clearly favored Isabel, so the description of her engagement in military matters may not be truthful, yet the association of *milites* with armor is unmistakable. In the second example, Orderic relates that Sibyl, the wife of Robert Bordet of Cullei wore the armor of a *miles* and patrolled the city walls of Tarragona in her husband’s absence.¹⁸⁷

The connection between the *milites* and armor is important to this discussion because it further highlights the professional nature of the *milites*. The mere possession of armor alone indicates that *milites* expected to see heavy fighting. We might further infer that they therefore had the financial wherewithal to afford the otherwise unnecessary expense, had incentive enough to make the substantial purchase of an armor or had relationships with their lords such that they were given the armor in fulfillment of their military obligation. These examples may also suggest

¹⁸³ OV, V, 246.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., III, 243.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., IV, 212.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., VI, 404.

that the *milites* possessed at least some military training, given the technical difficulty in fighting in armor due to its weight and restriction of mobility. Orderic tells of Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances, who was a man of noble birth and, because of his extensive military experience, was better suited to teaching “*loricatos milites*” than to clerical duties,¹⁸⁸ suggesting that training in armor was indeed part of the routine of a *miles*. Isabel and Sibyl, the two women Orderic describes wearing armor, are not themselves said to be *milites*, but rather only engaging in practices typical of them. These two cases are unusual, Orderic indicates, so these two women likely did not possess any training in effectively fighting in the armor they wore. Nevertheless, the use of armor closely fits with the image of the professional *miles* as a trained soldier with particularly military accoutrements.

Commanders and Garrisons

Orderic also indicates the professional status of *milites* by how they were employed as military commanders and in garrisons; in other words, military roles that required training and experience by their nature. While garrisoning a town or fortification might seem little more than guard duty, it is evident from Orderic that the *milites* were expected to engage in substantial military operations as these became necessary. Less important locations that were unlikely to see war may have been populated by lesser trained men, but strategic fortifications in contested territory were put under the command of capable soldiers and manned by *milites* - men we can presume who had the training and ability to withstand an opposing force. In his war to subdue Maine, King William I had a castle built in the valley of Beugy so that he could lay siege to Viscount Hubert of Le Mans, who fortified his position in the castle of Sainte-Suzanne. William

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., IV, 278.

placed this new castle in the charge of a Breton count, Alan the Red, supplying it with many *milites* of the *familia regis*, as well as horses and supplies for war.¹⁸⁹ A generation later the conflict in Maine resumed with William Rufus meeting Viscount Hubert's son, Ralph of Beaumont, in battle at Fresnay. Here, Orderic reports, the king's forces fought against the "*equitibus milites*" Ralph had placed in the garrison there.¹⁹⁰ After taking Le Mans, William Rufus left the royal tower there well supplied with arms and food and in the hands of Walter of Rouen.¹⁹¹ Hostilities resumed again in short order, the St. Évrault monk relates, and a messenger sent by Robert of Bellême informed the king that the men of the *familia regis* continued to defend the fortifications left to them.¹⁹²

Orderic also draws attention to certain men who acted as military captains, using three different but apparently related terms – *magister militum*, *princeps militum* and *princeps militiae*. There is no context that Orderic offers that indicates that these words were anything other than synonyms. It is in this capacity as military leaders that the expertise of certain *milites* is apparent. Unquestionably, any such leader, and certainly those appointed by the king, had to have extensive training and experience to do his job well. As Orderic shows, the position was not merely a ceremonial one, but came with real military responsibilities.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., IV, 46-8.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., V, 240. This indicates that Orderic did not assume that *milites* were always mounted. In this case, the men were in garrison, so perhaps the conclusion can be drawn that garrisoned *milites* often were not mounted and Orderic had to explain that these men were.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 250. This is in conflict with Orderic's earlier statement that Robert, son of Hugh of Montfort was stationed there as its military captain (Ibid., 246). It is possible that Robert was relieved of command, or Orderic may have been mistaken about Robert's role there, as Walter's authority at Le Mans, Chibnall notes, is proven by a writ from William II.

¹⁹² Ibid., 256.

Several of these men have been listed already as the head of the garrisons at important sites, including Robert, the son of Hugh of Montfort, Walter of Rouen and Hervey the Breton.¹⁹³ Robert is described as the leader of the *milites* at the tower of Le Mans after William Rufus captured it, but he must have been relieved, as Orderic then describes Walter as leading men of the *familia regis* at the same royal tower, though he gives no indication that there had been any fighting or that Robert was killed. Both Walter and Hervey definitively saw combat after being made captains, however. Before Hervey's appointment, Alan the Red oversaw the men of the *familia regis* garrisoned at William I's castle in the Beugy valley which was built during the campaign against Hubert of Sainte-Suzanne, viscount of Le Mans.¹⁹⁴ He was evidently relieved as well, as Orderic relates that the *magister militum* Hervey was killed with many others defending this fortress.¹⁹⁵ Interestingly, Orderic does not name any nobles with a title who occupy this position of authority. Rather, this appointment appears to have often fallen to middling lords, like Robert of Bellême. One possible exception may be Count Alan the Red, though despite the command he was given at Beugy, he is never actually called a *magister militum* by Orderic.

The St. Évroult monk also offers further examples of these commanders leading men in battle. Gilbert of Le Pin was Duke Robert Curthose's *princeps militiae* in his siege of the castle of Brionne, commanding the "*obsidentium*" of Pont-Audemer and Beaumont in the assault.¹⁹⁶ He was killed there, according to Orderic, by a spear thrown from overhead. The infamous Robert of Bellême also had a distinguished career as a captain during the Vexin war of 1097 and in Maine

¹⁹³ Ibid., V, 246, 250; IV, 52.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., IV, 48.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 52.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 210. The professional status of these besiegers is unclear.

the following year. Little is said of his role as a *princeps militiae* by Orderic in the Vexin,¹⁹⁷ but in Maine he was given three hundred *milites* with whom he ravaged the countryside.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, after the death of King Phillip of France in 1108, his son, the newly crowned Louis, made immediate war on the dissidents in his realm, promptly besieging Count Hugh at Le Puiset. Hugh fled, and during the following pursuit, the count met the French *princeps militiae*, Anselm of Garlande, on the road, striking the commander dead with his lance.¹⁹⁹ William of Garlande followed his brother in this post as *princeps militiae*, and along with many other magnates of King Louis, engaged King Henry I at the battle of Brémule. As reported earlier, they were defeated there by Henry's dismounted men.²⁰⁰ These examples show that these commanders held important responsibilities that could only be well executed with training and experience. Put bluntly, no king or magnate would select an inexperienced nobody to lead his men, neither in battle nor in garrisoning important fortifications.

Also worth briefly noting is that the designation as a *magister militum* may not have been an official rank as much as a general description for a military leader. Orderic calls King William a *magister militum* in his account of the King's offensive against the Angevins after subduing Maine, suggesting that it was a functional term.²⁰¹ He also calls Alexius Comnenus a *princeps militiae* before his seizure of the imperial throne²⁰² and refers to the *princeps militiae* of

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., V, 214.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 242.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., VI, 158.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 236-8.

²⁰¹ Ibid., II, 308.

²⁰² Ibid., IV, 12.

Magnus, the Norwegian king,²⁰³ indicating that if it was a rank or title, it was not one strictly confined to Orderic's immediate Anglo-Norman or French military contexts. In any case, the meaning of the term as a military leader is quite clear.

What these three ways of employing *milites* demonstrate, along with their use of horses and armor, is that these soldiers required training to use the particular equipment of the profession and indeed to perform at a high capacity in their military roles. Orderic describes *milites* in ways that clearly shows that they were, so to speak, in a league of their own. The term *miles*, when employed by Orderic Vitalis, demonstrably means a professional soldier.

²⁰³ Ibid., V, 222.

IV: THE GIFT OF ARMS

Thus far this project has discussed several identifying features of the *milites* Orderic Vitalis describes in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* and has compared them to the characteristics modern historians recognize in eleventh and twelfth century knights. These have included the social status of *milites*, their use in military operations, their place in military organization and their military equipment. This chapter will address one final quality some scholars contend is crucial to recognizing the *milites* as knights –the knighting ceremony.

Franco Cardini, for instance, characterizes the *milites* as a corps of professional soldiers attached to a *dominus*, but it was their service as mounted soldiers specifically and the ritual bestowal of arms that deems them “knights.”²⁰⁴ R. Allen Brown, specifically citing Orderic Vitalis’ *Historia*, argues that the training of a *miles* in a military household was completed with the receiving of arms, whereby he achieves his military and social rank.²⁰⁵ Similarly, Matthew Bennett repeats the traditional squire-to-knight narrative of a youth spent in training, culminating in a knighting ritual. This new knight, though only a teenager, would serve in the household of a magnate or chase the ideal of the knight errant.²⁰⁶ The knighting ceremony is popularly held to be a significant moment, if not the pivotal one, in the life of a *miles*.

Robert W. Ackerman provides a description of the knighting ceremony in “The Knighting Ceremonies in the Middle English Romances” from 1944. He compares the knightings detailed in forty-four Middle English romances, ranging in date from 1050 to 1400, to

²⁰⁴ Cardini, “Warrior,” 76.

²⁰⁵ Brown, “Status,” 25.

²⁰⁶ Matthew Bennett, “Military Masculinity in England and Northern France c. 1050-1225,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. Hadley (Longman, 1998): 77.

“what is known about the historical ceremony of knighting,”²⁰⁷ finding that the romances are a reliable source of information regarding knighting ceremonies. For the “historical” data, he relies on the chivalric treatises from authors such as Ramon Lull and Majorcan, dating from the thirteenth century and later, and then offers a sketch of how the knighting ceremony was conducted. Ackerman identifies two kinds of ceremonies, one secular and the other religious. Both shared many of the same features, though the religious ceremonies, which he suggests became more common after the thirteenth century,²⁰⁸ obviously also had several ritualized Christian elements, like an all-night vigil before an altar prior to the knighting. The secular ceremonies took place publicly either at court or in a hastier manner on the battlefield. All three kinds of knightings were characterized by the gift of arms and the accolade, the iconic sword-tap or a blow delivered with the hand. Other gifts during the ceremony might include spurs, often gilt, lands, office or armor. The ritual was also sometimes concluded with exhortations to “pious sentiments,”²⁰⁹ or a proclamation introducing the new knight and often followed by a celebratory feast or tournament.

Ackerman’s article is problematic in several ways. First, the chronological breadth of his survey fails to account for any changes in the ceremony over time, with the exception of the increased application of religious elements to the ritual. He also takes for granted the identity of the knight across time and space and does not consider how later medieval knights may have differed from the *milites* of the eleventh or twelfth centuries, obscuring other potential interpretations of the knighting ceremony. Ackerman also fails to demonstrate that the romances

²⁰⁷ Robert A. Ackerman, “The Knighting Ceremony in the Middle English Romances,” *Speculum* 19, no. 3 (Jul., 1944): 285.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 310.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 303.

and chivalric treatises were of a different nature, and that the latter were inherently trustworthy historical documents free from the ideology or entertainment values that may have contaminated the historical realities portrayed in the former texts.

Many of these same sentiments and problems are echoed by Maurice Keen's 1984 book *Chivalry*. Keen devotes a chapter of his book to the knighting ceremony and to exploring Leon Gautier's hypothesis that the ritual was virtually an eighth sacrament in light of its religious implications.²¹⁰ Like Ackerman, Keen suggests that there were both strongly secular and particularly religious knighting rituals, though Keen contends that the efforts by the Church to monopolize the knightly investiture were stillborn. He says, "kighthood still carried too many associations that had little or no religious significance: with the achievement of a young man's legal majority, for instance; with the possession of secular weapons; with the elevated status and ancestry."²¹¹ Also like Ackerman, he finds the secular origins of the knighting ceremony in the coming-of-age traditions of the early medieval Germanic and Norse tribes. However, he suggests that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries these rites became associated with "entry into a military following or vassal-group,"²¹² thus connecting majority age with tenurial relationships and military service as a knight.

Two major problems are evident in Keen's analysis which also parallel the difficulties posed by Ackerman's study. First, he declines to discuss men of lower status, taking for granted that knighthood was an establishment for the wealthy and powerful. Even in citing Orderic, who demonstrably viewed the *milites* as a socially diverse group, Keen neglects men outside of the nobility. This lacuna is especially noticeable with regard to the tenurial relationships he supposes

²¹⁰ Keen, *Chivalry*, 64.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 67.

accompanied the knighting ritual. Though he argues that men of humbler origins did seek the elevated status conferred by the knighting ceremony, he does not offer any examples in support of his position. Similarly, he also fails to consider the *milites* who did not do military service in exchange for property rights and whether or not they too were recipients of the knightly accolade (or considered “knights” at all, though he maintains that the term *miles* was synonymous with “knight”). Chiefly, by assuming that *milites* were knights from the start, he blinds himself to a large population of warriors who may not be represented in accounts of knightings and to other interpretations thereof.

A more recent addition to the literature was made by Max Lieberman with his 2015 article “A New Approach to the Knighting Ritual,” proposing a new methodological framework for the study of knightings. He suggests a series of “interconnected questions” for scholars to employ “when comparing [knighting ceremonies],”²¹³ “considering their form and their function, what was done and why.”²¹⁴ He then applies this approach in consideration of six eleventh century knighting ceremonies in demonstration of his argument.

He begins with the elaborately detailed account of Saladin’s “knighting” in the *Ordene de Chevalerie* of 1220, which he uses as a model or benchmark to which he compares his sources. He argues that “knightings” exist “at the intersection of three different histories: those of ritual; of social status...; and of the different ways in which young men might come of age,”²¹⁵ and are essential to understanding the nature of knighthood itself. He argues that in the eleventh century there were “constitutive” knighting ceremonies which specifically intended to mark the creation of a new knight and symbolized a young man’s entrance into both adulthood and aristocratic

²¹³ Max Lieberman, “A New Approach to the Knighting Ritual,” *Speculum* 90, vol. 2 (April, 2015): 393.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 398.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 401.

authority. “In other words, in the eleventh century it was possible, but not yet either necessary or sufficient, to be knighted in order to be considered a knight, in the sense of a newly adult male warrior and perhaps also a member of a kind of order.”²¹⁶

He employs five chronicle sources in his survey and a panel from the Bayeux Tapestry in support of this contention, positing that the similarities between them, despite their chronological and geographic distance from one another, can hardly be coincidental.²¹⁷ However, his limited survey presents several problems. First, he relies on scholarly consensus in defining the terms *miles*, *equus*, *ridere* and *militia*, rather than seeking out the meanings of these terms within the context of the sources from which he draws his examples. This leads him to potentially misapply the definitions of words where they do not necessarily fit. For example, he cites Marjorie Chibnall’s view of the term *militia*, derived from Orderic’s use of the term, which is not necessarily applicable to Count Guy of Ponthieu’s 1098 letter Lambert, bishop of Arras.²¹⁸ Secondly, this small sample does not well account for other instances that might reflect another meaning of the knighting ceremony. For instance, there may be other examples in which non-nobles are given arms, or men are unceremoniously provided with arms, or cases in which new *milites* are recognized without the delivery of arms, among other possibilities. Lieberman admits that he offers only one pattern by which eleventh century knightings may have taken place and that others may have been in use as well, as his aim is primarily to present a new methodological approach for the study of early medieval knighting rituals.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 404.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 403.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 407, 419.

This brief survey reveals several consistent problems with the study of knighting rituals. Historians, operating under the presupposition that *milites* were knights, or that knights were inherently noble, to name two particularly trenchant views, confer biases upon their subjects that inhibit a nuanced view of how arms-giving rituals were used. Men of lower socio-economic status, like some of the *milites* Orderic details, especially are largely ignored in favor of viewing the knighting of counts, dukes and men of the royal family. Likewise, scholars give little heed to the *milites* who served militarily for reasons other than tenurial obligation, like mercenaries who were paid in coin.²²⁰ .

The only redress to these oversights, as with the study of *milites*, is to systematically analyze the data on knighting ceremonies from every available source, at least through the thirteenth century, and with an understanding of the military vocabulary present therein. The purpose in addressing these issues here, however, is first to offer a summary of how Orderic treats the knighting ritual throughout his *Historia*, and secondly, to determine whether, as Cardini and others contend, if it was a crucial part of the identity of the *milites* Orderic details.

The Giving of Arms in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Orderic refers to these ceremonies consistently throughout his text, describing the bestowal of the arms or belt nearly two dozen times in eleven of the thirteen books the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. He was not particularly influenced by his two main sources, however, as it does not appear that any of these examples were borrowed from William of Poitiers and only one was borrowed from Baldric of Dol. Book IX provides a single example that suggests that Baldric of

²²⁰ Because Orderic refers to mercenaries as *milites* (albeit qualified as *stipendiarii*), some of the *milites* mentioned in his history may have been men paid for their service. Chibnall suggests that Odo Borleng, despite being a captain of the household troops, was probably a stipendiary and that Orderic did not draw any meaningful distinctions between men that served in the military households due to their tenurial obligations and those who were paid in coin. See Chibnall, "Mercenaries," 87, 91.

Dol's understanding of the significance of the *cingulum militiae* may have differed from Orderic's. In this case the belt is mentioned as a literal piece of military equipment that the *milites* and *pedites* under the leadership of Raymond Pilet don before engaging in battle with Saracens in a fortification near the town of Tell-Mannas, and is not connected with a ritual of any sort.²²¹

A concerted study of how Orderic describes the gift of arms or belt reveals several important details that stand in opposition to how some scholars interpret the “knighting ceremony.”²²² First, it is questionable that this moment, despite being a recognized rite of passage, was commonly a formal occasion or ritualized in any way. It was perhaps analogous to the moment a modern teenager receives her driver's license; an important turning point of the path to adulthood received with no public fanfare. Only through the lenses of expectation do the gifts of *arma militaria* or the *cingulum* appear as formal ceremonies. For this reason I shall refer to these instances as Orderic does - the gift or bestowal of arms or belt. Secondly, the St Évrout historian indicates that there were two separate but related traditions associated with the *arma militaria* and *cingulum militiae*. The sword, on the one hand, was used primarily in recognizing the incipient civil and secular authority of its recipients, whereas the belt appears to be a symbol of military status on the other.

Of the approximately twenty instances in which Orderic describes these gifts, three indicate that it was a formal occasion. All three of these examples refer to particularly important young men and therefore may have been important public ceremonies. The first case is that of the young Henry, the future King Henry I, and his investiture with arms, armor and a belt. These were given to him, as a king's son, by Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, “*in nomine*

²²¹ OV, V, 130. “*Deinde cingulis militaribus accincti, proximum castellum Agarenorum aggressi sunt; ...*”

domini,” for the “*defensione regni*.”²²³ The use of ritualistic language and the prominent role of the archbishop echo a coronation and indicate that it was a ritual event. Similarly, Bohemond, son of Bohemond I of Antioch, the grandson of the French king Philip from his daughter Constance, received arms with praise when he reached adolescence.²²⁴ Finally, David, the heir apparent of Scotland, was granted arms by King Henry and received many gifts before being seated among the *optimates*.²²⁵ Like Henry’s investiture with arms, there is a suggestion that these were ceremonies with an audience. In all of these of these cases, however, Orderic describes a ceremony involving the son of the ruler of a realm, namely England, Scotland and Antioch, and consequently one might expect to find a higher degree of ceremony with respect to each aspect of these the lives of these young men, as Keen and others suggest. No ceremony is explicitly mentioned in connection with the presentation of arms made to men of slightly lower status, including Hugh, the son of Gerard of Gournay,²²⁶ William of Échauffour,²²⁷ or Robert of Meulan’s twin sons, among others.²²⁸

One example suggests more clearly that Orderic may not have seen the giving of arms as being necessarily ritualized. For example, Orderic describes several *armigeri* being given *arma militaria* in anticipation of an impending siege by Muslim forces.²²⁹ Here there is no implication of a rite of passage, but rather that the young men were necessarily armed to aid in the defense of

²²³ Ibid., IV, 120.

²²⁴ Ibid., VI, 134.

²²⁵ Ibid., IV, 274.

²²⁶ Ibid., VI, 192.

²²⁷ Ibid., II, 126.

²²⁸ Ibid., VI, 328.

²²⁹ Ibid., 108.

the city. This passage further suggests that *arma militaria* were not “knightly weapons,” but literally the weapons of war, as contrasted, one might conjecture, with blunted or even wooden weapons with which young men might train.²³⁰ Speculation aside, the arms in this case were apparently given to the young men unceremoniously in a time of need.

Similarly, the bestowal of the belt does not appear to be accompanied by a ceremony, save for the case of Henry, when he also received arms. Orderic relates that Robert of Bellême received his belt from King William in 1073 during the siege of Fresnay,²³¹ and that Robert of Rhuddlan accepted the belt from King Edward,²³² though no ritual or ceremony is suggested as accompanying the event. Orderic mentions the *cingulum* in only two other instances, though neither provides any information either way. One is the example from Book IX discussed above concerning the *milites* and *pedites* led by Raymond Pilet and the other relates how Richard, the second son of King William I, was killed while hunting before he could be given the *cingulum*, in an obvious reference to his youth.²³³ It is not evident if it is the lower status of the two Roberts that led Orderic to omit any mention of a ceremony for the presentation of the belt or if there simply was no such ceremony to report, but in no measure can we safely say that the giving of the military belt part of a theatrical display.

Orderic also describes the bestowal of arms as coinciding with entrance into adulthood, or at least a physically mature age when the young man was either physically capable of

²³⁰ Ibid., III, 192. Similarly, Orderic says that Ansold of Maule had borne *arma militiae* for fifty-three years before he died. Ansold’s military status is not indicated in this passage, and while it may be that the *arma* imply a position conferred by a delivery of arms, it is equally possible that the phrase was intended to be taken literally; i.e. he carried a sword of war for fifty-three years, indicating that Ansold was a veteran soldier.

²³¹ Ibid., II, 306.

²³² Ibid., IV, 136.

²³³ Ibid., III, 114.

wielding the arms and armor of a soldier or qualified to engage in combat as a soldier. The young Henry's investiture with arms is instructive on this point. Orderic states that Henry had spent his childhood learning his letters and studying natural philosophy, but it was not until Henry reached an age of youthful strength that this bestowal of arms took place. The importance of his strength is suggested by the hauberk and helm that the archbishop presented to him, both of which require some muscle to effectively bear. However, that this military equipment was bestowed upon the young man "*pro defensione regni*," likewise implies that he was eligible to go to war and therefore had reached the age of majority.²³⁴ Despite Chibnall's translation to the contrary, Orderic's Latin possesses no indicator that this ceremony made Henry either a *miles* or a knight beyond what the *militiae cingulum* might imply, a point to which we shall return later.

Other examples suggest that the gift of arms reflected the transition into maturity. Orderic relates that William of Échauffour went to the court of the French king when he reached adolescence, serving there as the king's *armiger* until he was given *arma militaria*. He then travelled to Apulia, apparently emancipated from his father and released from his service to the king.²³⁵ Likewise, Orderic relates how Geoffrey, the son of the count of Anjou (later called "Greymantle"), received adult arms when he had grown as strong as a man.²³⁶ Bohemond, King Philip's grandson, also received his arms upon entering adolescence.²³⁷ All of these grants of

²³⁴ Ibid., IV, 120.

²³⁵ Ibid., II, 126.

²³⁶ Ibid., III, 324.

²³⁷ Ibid., VI, 134. This age is marked as being distinct from *pubertatis* in the passage. Thus, he was not a youth in his young teens, but likely older. Many medieval sources, according to James Schultz, suggest that *adolescentia* lasted from age fourteen until twenty-eight, or perhaps began even later, coinciding with sexual maturity. Bohemond II was born in 1108, and, after receiving his arms, went to Antioch in 1126 to rule in his father's stead. Thus, he was no more than eighteen years old at the time he received his arms. See James A. Schultz, "Medieval Adolescence: The Claims of History and the Silence of German Narrative," *Speculum*, 66, no. 3 (1991): 529-31.

arms all are mentioned in the context of important men, and there is no evidence in Orderic of any ritualistic presentation of arms to men lacking in substantial social status.²³⁸

The most important feature of this rite of passage, according to what can be found in Orderic's narrative, is that while also marking a coming-of-age, it coincides with the young man's assumption of political power or the moment when he is capable of entering into a contractual obligation of his own volition. Bohemond's case is exemplary; after receiving arms, the men of Antioch, as soon as they had heard this, began to ask he the young man come and rule them while Bohemond I was a prisoner of war. It was not for some time that he was permitted to go, however.²³⁹ Hugh, son of Gerard of Gournay, according to Orderic, was restored to his ancestral *patrius*, following his investiture with adult arms by King Henry I. While Hugh received these fortresses as a friend of the king, Orderic admonishes him for quickly rebelling against the monarch.²⁴⁰ Similarly, Waleran and Robert, the twin sons of Count Robert of Meulan, were given substantial properties after receiving *arma militaria*.²⁴¹ Waleran was given Meulan and Beaumont, and Robert received the county of Leicester and the hand in marriage of Amice, daughter of Ralph of Gael, who was previously engaged to the king's deceased son Richard.²⁴²

Notably, none of the prominent young men are described as *milites* in these coming-of-age accounts, severely undercutting the supposition that the gift of arms marked entrance into knighthood. Rather, several examples indicate that the gift of arms and the recognition of a new

²³⁸ It is important to note the difference between "ceremony" and the adjective "ritualistic" used here. While Henry was the only one of these young men to clearly participate in a ceremony, the gift of arms was clearly a symbolic or ritualistic act in all of these cases, regardless of the use of public theatrics.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 134.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 328.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 330.

miles were two separate and unrelated occasions. Walter, son of Gilbert of Auffay, is described by Orderic as becoming a *miles* with the phrase “*miles effectus*,” with no indication that he received arms or a belt for the occasion.²⁴³ Likewise, in the account mentioned above of several *armigeri* being given arms before a siege, Gervase the Breton, son of Haimo the viscount of Dol, was made a *miles*, not through the same gift of arms, but simply with the verb “*fecit*.”²⁴⁴ In only one example, where Orderic describes how Robert of Grandmesnil served Duke William as his *armiger* before being given arms and made a *miles*, is there a clear connection between the sword and the status.²⁴⁵ He joined monastic life shortly thereafter, however, forsaking his martial upbringing.

Further, in only one case does Orderic draw a connection between the receiving of arms and participation in the military household. In this example, King William laments how Robert Curthose fomented rebellion against him, and lured away his *tirones*, whom he had trained and to whom he had given arms.²⁴⁶ Another possible example to this end may reside with William of Échauffour. One interpretation of his departure to Apulia after his investiture with arms may be that, upon entering his adult status, he declined to join formally the French king’s *familia regis* and opted instead to try his luck with his family in Italy.²⁴⁷ This, however, is conjecture.

The *cingulum militiae*, on the other hand, appears more strongly related to military status. The link between the giving of a belt and the status of a *miles* might be read into the account of Robert Bellême receiving of the belt, as we know from later in Orderic’s text that Robert was a

²⁴³ Ibid., III, 256.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., II, 40. “*Miles effectus*” is the phrase used here.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., III, 112.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., II, 126.

miles. In this passage, however, his professional status is not stated and if his receipt of the *cingulum* was related to Robert's later status, it can only be inferred. The connection between the rite and status is clearer in Orderic's depiction of Robert of Rhuddlan, however. He was, according to the historian, "*miles fortis et agilis*," and had been the *armiger* of King Edward before receiving his belt.²⁴⁸ Returning to the young Henry's investiture, he received both arms and a belt in recognition of his majority age and military status, though he was not made a *miles* thereby. He was not given any land or titles, indicating that the purpose of the ceremony was to formally recognize his military status as a function of age.

The picture Orderic paints of the so-called "knighting ceremony" does not match what scholars like Cardini, Bennett or Keen would like it to be. Rather than representing the formal ascent into a military order as Keen argues, the much less grand bestowal of arms upon a young man was a coming-of-age rite wherein the youth took formal possession of his property. This occurred at an age when the young noble was able to wield the weapons of a grown man, having finally physically matured enough to employ them. Orderic is also conspicuously silent with regard to young men of lower socio-economic status, further suggesting that the rite was attached to the inheritance of property. The gift of a military belt signified a young man's ascent to a military status, though not into an order of knighthood. For some, the gift accompanied their recognition as a *miles* of the military household, as in the case of Robert of Rhuddlan. For other men of distinguished social capital, like the young Henry I, it signaled their ability to participate in combat.

However, the connection between the gift of a sword to a young noble, his age and new social authority indicate that the rite held a symbolic military meaning. Because he was now able

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 136.

to use the weapons of war, the gift of a sword represented the young man's self-sufficiency as an adult and his need to hold his territories through violence, if necessary. The ceremony, if indeed it was a formal occasion, marked the induction of a young man into an office or station that required military service. Being a nobleman, we can conclude, meant that one had to be able to fight, but that alone did not make one a professional soldier, a member of a military household, nor even a *miles*. This interpretation fits well with Orderic's account of the battle of Brémule, where King Henry was accompanied by many noblemen not of the *famila regis*.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Orderic demonstrates that neither the bestowal of a belt or arms occasioned the rise into a military order as some scholars have argued.

²⁴⁹See Chapter II, page 31 above.

IV: CONCLUSION

The foundations of a formal knighthood were clearly already partially in place by the early twelfth century. Yet, for all of their similarities, the *milites* were not yet knights. Orderic demonstrates that the term *miles* denoted a professional status, in which membership was evidently not strongly regulated according to socio-economic status, nor equated with membership in the higher social classes. Some of these men engaged in combat as mercenaries for payment in coin. Others participated in the military household because of the tenurial relationships that they had with their lord, serving in exchange for property. The *milites* often appear as members of military households, leading troops of soldiers or in garrisoning fortifications, and often fought wearing armor and on horseback. However, they also fought on foot defending the walls of a fortification, besieging enemy fortresses, or in pitched battles.

Why, then, are historians mistaken by referring to Orderic's *milites* as knights? The knights identified by older scholars like Marc Bloch, Georges Duby, and more recent ones like John Gillingham and Franco Cardini, nearly match the image Orderic presents of the *milites* as mounted, armored soldiers who trained from a young age. The old adage tells us that if it quacks like a duck, swims like a duck, and has an incorrigible temper like Daffy Duck, then it must be a duck. Surely, then, Orderic's *milites* fit the mold of the knight, some might argue. Certainly scholars like John Gillingham or Phillipe Contamine, who see these as the defining features of knighthood, are clearly not offering an absurd conclusion.²⁵⁰

The deciding factor, however, lies not with the military character and abilities of the *milites*, but with their social identity. As has already been demonstrated, Orderic does not

²⁵⁰ Gillingham, "Knight Service," 5; Contamine, *War*, 31.

describe *milites* as a social class, but instead he depicts them as professional soldiers of various socio-economic backgrounds. Duby points out that it was not until the thirteenth century that professional soldiery and nobility merge into a single entity,²⁵¹ a knighthood that would persist through the later Middle Ages. Before that time, certainly within Orderic Vitalis' lifetime in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, the *milites* had not yet assumed this prominent social position and therefore represent a different kind of soldier from the later knights.

This brings us to the final important part of the historiographic debate - how the term *miles* is to be rendered into the modern vernacular. There is a spectrum of opinion on the matter: on one end are the defenders of the traditional view of knighthood, including Brown and Contamine, who see no distinction between *milites* and knights, and on the other, scholars like Bernard S. Bachrach contending that the "translation of [*miles*] as "knight," *chevalier*, or *Ritter*, exhibits a fundamental misunderstanding of military organization."²⁵²

Marjorie Chibnall's view, as one example, lies some place in between these two positions. Implicit in her translation of the entirety of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis is an argument in favor of understanding the Norman military organization as being fundamentally dependent on knights. In both her translation and in her related scholarly works she continually refers to knights, often heedless of the context or Latin word used by the author. She recognizes the nuance in how *miles* is used by William of Poitiers and William of Jumiéges but insists, as said before, that it applies to virtually any mounted soldier.²⁵³ However, her indiscriminate application of "knight" in her translation of Orderic offers only confusion where

²⁵¹ Hunt, "Emergence of the Knight," 96.

²⁵² Bernard S. Bachrach, "Dudo," 180. Bachrach is specifically referring to the tenth and early eleventh centuries in this quotation, though I do not think his words are out of context in their implication here.

²⁵³ Marjorie Chibnall, "Military Service in Normandy before 1066," in *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, ed. Matthew Strickland (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992), 31; See also Chibnall, "Mercenaries," 89.

the term is used, especially given its precise legal definition later in the Middle Ages and its connotations of high social status. She is by no means the only historian to make this error; but that it colors her translation of the primary evidence necessitates a clearer translation of the term *miles*.

For the modern non-academic, “knight” is probably a close enough translation for *miles* as one could hope for, in no small measure because of the misconceptions about knights that already populate the minds of the general public. For scholars, however, this translation only further obscures the nuances that set the early medieval *milites* apart from their later counterparts and further confuses the already incoherent body of literature on the subject. “Soldier,” which Hollister suggests as a better translation, has its own connotations that hinder it from being a precise and clear translation of the word *miles*.²⁵⁴ Though the term once connoted a member of a professional army, and is used by military historians as such, modern military realities and news reporting have obscured the precision of this meaning for wider audiences. No longer are nation-states the only actors who field combatants, but extremist Islamic groups like ISIS or Al-Qaeda, or African warlords like Joseph Kony from Uganda, similarly deploy fighters who are called soldiers by news outlets, despite their differences with modern national armed forces. The plight of “child soldiers,” who by their very nature hardly constitute a soldier in the professional sense, continue to be a human rights issue. In the modern world, “soldier” has become a synonym for an armed combatant in war regardless of his professional military standing and therefore on its own does not wholly capture the professional meaning of *milites*. If indeed scholars are to endeavor to clearly translate medieval terms and concepts so modern audiences can understand them, they must do so in a way that is both precise and understandable to people outside of the

²⁵⁴ Hollister, “Military Organization,” 115.

academic discipline. This is especially true for scholarship on knights, who loom so large in the public's imagination. "*Professional soldier*" is therefore probably the best translation one could hope for. It is a job description without socio-economic connotation, yet the "professional" qualifier suggests something of the advanced training and equipment that set the *miles* apart from the local levies or nobles who also served in medieval armies.

However, there is no force that compels scholars to have to translate the word at all. Rather than wrestle with the connotations offered by modern language, it is best perhaps to leave the word as it is, to let the *milites* stand on their own two feet, or four if they be mounted, to engage in the front lines of scholarly debate under their own unique banner. Regardless of the reams of paper devoted to the subject or the quality of the scholarship, not even the nuance of vocabulary it seems can unseat the majestic knight from his position of superiority on the battlefields of imagination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Works

Baldric of Dol. *The Historia Ierosolimitana of Baldric of Dol*. Edited by Steven Biddlecombe Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2014.

Orderic Vitalis. *The Ecclesiastic History of Orderic Vitalis: Volumes I-VI*. Edited and translated by Marjorie Chibnall. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-1980.

William of Poitiers. *The Gesta Gvillelmi of William of Poitiers*. Edited and translated by R.C.H. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Secondary Works

Ackerman, Robert A. "The Knighting Ceremony in the Middle English Romances." *Speculum* 19, no. 3 (Jul., 1944): pp. 285-313.

Bachrach, Bernard S. "Dudo of St. Quentin as an Historian of Military Organization." *The Haskins Society Journal* 12 (2003); pp. 165-185.

Bachrach, David S. "The Military Organization of Ottonian Germany, c. 900-1018: The Views of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg." *The Journal of Military History* 72, no. 4 (2008); pp. 1061-1088.

Barber, Richard. "When is a Knight not a Knight?" *Medieval Knighthood V: Papers from the Sixth Strawberry Hill Conference 1994*. (1995), pp. 1-17.

Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society vol. 2: Social Classes and Political Organization*. Translated by L.A. Manyon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, first published 1939.

Brown, R.Allen. "The Status of the Norman Knight." In *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, pp. 128-142. Edited by Matthew Strickland. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992.

Bumke, Joachim. *The Concept of Knighthood in the Middle Ages*. Translated by W.T.H. and Erika Jackson. New York: AMS Press, inc., 1982, first published 1977.

Cardini, Franco. "The Warrior and the Knight." In *The Medieval World*, pp. 74-111. London: Collins and Brown 1990.

- Chibnall, Marjorie. "Mercenaries and the *familia regis* Under Henry I." In *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, pp. 84-93. Edited by Matthew Strickland. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992.
- Chibnall, Marjorie. "Military Service in Normandy before 1066." In *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, pp. 28-40. Edited by Matthew Strickland. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992.
- Chibnall, Marjorie. *The World of Orderic Vitalis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Contamine, Philippe. *War in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Michael Jones. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1984.
- Delehanty, William. "Milites in the Narrative Sources of England, 1135-1154." Ph.D dissertation, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 1975.
- Duby, Georges. *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*. Translated by Cynthia Postan. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998, first published 1968.
- Fleming, Donald. "Landholding by *milites* in Domesday Book: a revision." *Anglo-Norman Studies XIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1990* (1991); pp. 83-98.
- Gillingham, John. "The Introduction of Knight Service into England." In *The English in the Twelfth Century*, pp. 209-231. Edited by J. Gillingham. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2000.
- Harvey, Sally. "The Knight and the Knight's Fee in England." *Past and Present* no. 49 (1970); pp. 3-43.
- Hollister, C. Warren. *The Military Organization of Norman England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Hosler, John. *John of Salisbury: Military Authority of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*. Boston: Brill, 2013.
- Hunt, Tony. "The Emergence of the Knight in France and England 1000-1200." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* xvii, no. 2 (1981); pp. 93-114.
- Keen, Maurice. *Chivalry*. Newhaven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Kostick, Conor. "The Terms *milites*, *equites* and *equestres* in the Early Crusading Histories." *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 50 (2006); pp. 1-21.
- Leiberman, Max. "A New Approach to the Knighting Ritual." *Speculum* 90, vol. 2 (April, 2015): pp. 391-423.

Prestwich, J.O. "The Military Household of the Norman Kings." In *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, pp. 93-127. Edited by Matthew Strickland. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1992.

Prestwich, Michael. *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience*. (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1996.

Prestwich, Michael. "*Miles in armis strenuus*: the Knight at War." In *Medieval Warfare, 1000-1300*, pp. 185-204. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006.

Schultz, James A. "Medieval Adolescence: The Claims of History and the Silence of German Narrative." *Speculum* 66, no. 3 (1991); pp. 519-39.

Ward, John O. "Ordericus Vitalis as Historian in the Europe of the Early Twelfth-Century Renaissance." *Parergon* 31, no. 1 (2014); pp. 1-26.