



# Richard the Lionheart: King and Knight

*Jean Flori*

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## **Richard the Lionheart: King and Knight** Jean Flori

Richard I, the Lionheart, remains forever (and perhaps wrongly) the mythical king of England who preferred to wage war than to rule over his empire. The familiar epithet conveys all the principal features of his indomitable character: courage, valour, prowess, the pursuit of glory, the thirst for fame, generosity in war and peace, a sense of honour combined with a sort of haughty dignity made up of both arrogance and pride. In this book Jean Flori examines both Richard's role as prince and king in history and also analyses the different and sometimes controversial elements which, for the chroniclers of his day, helped to make Richard a true model of chivalry. Among the questions addressed are: What influences formed his character and determined his behaviour, real or assumed? Why did the image of Richard as a king who was also a knight so quickly and so soon supplant all others, creating a quasi-definitive point of reference? Why did Richard deliberately, it would appear, choose to present himself in this chivalric guise and disseminate this image of himself by what we would today call a 'media campaign', using all the methods then at his disposal, limited perhaps but by no means ineffective? Last but not least, what is the historical and ideological significance of the choice and, even more, success of this image, which has been adopted by history and disseminated by legend, an image based on historical accounts and documents in which history and legend are sometimes inextricably interwoven? Jean Flori's *Richard Coeur de Lion* was written to mark the eighth centenary of the death of the "knightly king". The book is a tour de force that provides the reader with a reappraisal of Richard's life as well as a study of the myth and reality of Richard's image as the personification of medieval chivalry. The first part of the book takes a straightforward chronological approach to Richard's life, from his birth in 1157, through conflict with his father, Henry II, and his brothers, to his coronation and his years of crusading and fighting the French; culminating in his death in battle in 1199. The second part analyses Richard's image in relation to medieval chivalry.

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