
This monograph both reviews the rule of Henry Plantagenet (self-styled “FitzEmpress”) and reassesses the rise of vernacular historiography in the twelfth century. The author scrutinizes dynastic history as elaborated by Wace and Benoît de Sainte-Maure. In a single enterprise, each writer was assigned by the king who hoped, with this new vernacular genre in verse, to propagate an authorized, official, and royalist version of the past. In the circumstance of the contested succession and Civil War of the 1130s, Henry was driven, Urbanski claims, to curb baronial power while seeking a memorializing history for his new dynasty, thus solidifying his claim to England and Normandy. The king supported Wace’s *Roman de Rou* (c. 1160–1174) and Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* (c. 1174–1189) to help cement power for himself and his children. The author is at pains to show convincingly (and repeatedly) how Wace’s *Rou* disparaged Henry’s predecessors, thus challenging his policies and invalidating the legitimacy of his rule. In 1174 the king abruptly dismissed him, turning the task over to Benoît, whose *Chronique* contrastingly provided a staunchly loyalist defense of Anglo-Norman kingship. The volume is divided as follows:

1. Situating the *Roman de Rou* and *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*
   Poetry and History
   The Origins of Old French Historiography

2. Henry II
   Lineage and Regional Rivalries
   Stephen’s Reign and the Civil War
The Restoration of Royal Authority
The Great War, 1173/74
The Succession Question
History and Dynastic Memory

3. The *Roman de Rou*
   The Conquest of England
   The Death of William the Conqueror
   Henry I and Robert Curthose
   The Battle of Tinchebray
   Wace

4. The *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*
   Providence and the Norman Dukes
   The Norman Conquest
   William the Conqueror
   Henry I
   The Empress Matilda and Henry II
   Benoît de Sainte-Maure

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