

Emily ALBU, Trojans and Romans in Norman Histories

Norman historical writing flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. On the surface, these histories typically tout the Norman achievement, success in conquest and in governing the conquered. Most of these works, after all, are supposed to be adulatory, written for Norman princes whose exploits they should celebrate. But beneath the surface lie myths that subvert the celebratory themes by revealing patterns of discontent with Norman princes and societies, expressed in veiled criticism of a pathologically treacherous and violent people. These are the myths that suggest, often through symbolic language, stages of alienation that create and reinforce a volatile and predatory identity. At the heart of this subversive mythic structure lie Trojans and Romans appropriated from classical literature.

When Norman historians contemplate the roots of the perfidious Norman temperament, for instance, they share a common opinion. Heeding suggestions in the earliest histories, Orderic Vitalis hints that the Normans' dangerous passions are a dark legacy from their ancient past. He traces their lineage roughly as the first Norman historian, Dudo of Saint-Quentin, had recorded it, back to the Trojan Antenor, who escaped his burning city and fled with his followers to the shore of the northern ocean. In some ancient accounts that reached medieval writers, this Antenor had survived precisely because he delivered his own people to their enemies; so in Dante's *Inferno*, traitors to cause and country dwell deep in Hell, in the zone called "Antenora." This quintessential traitor, in Norman myth, became the progenitor of the Normans, as Antenor's son Danus gave his own name to the Trojan expatriates, the Dani or Danes.

This paper explores allusions to Trojans and Romans, from Antenor and Aeneas to Caesar and Pompey, in Norman histories that often appropriate characters and language from the classical tradition to chastise or ridicule Norman princes and people.