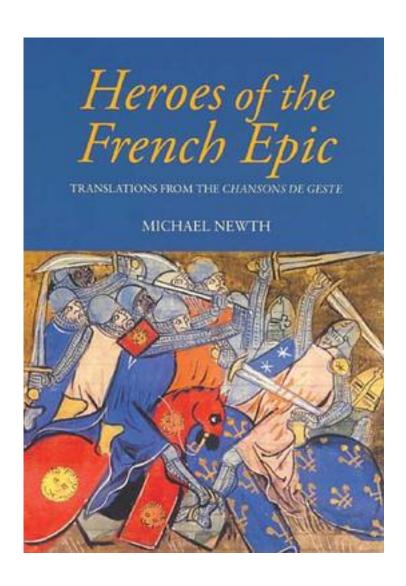
## Heroes of the French Epic



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The chansons de geste, poems offering a narrative of heroic deeds, provided the chief

means of cultural and imaginative expression in the French language for over one hundred years, and its surviving examples offer a fascinating insight into the matters and manners of their times. However, although they form a vital and varied body of verse, their literary achievements have been represented almost exclusively, and to somé extent atypically, by the Chanson de Roland. This volume offers a seléction in translation of the surviving chansons. The poems translated here (Gormont and Isembart, The Song of William, Charlemagne's Pilgrimage, Raoul of Cambrai, Girart of Vienne and The Knights of Narbonne) are taken from all three Old French epic song cycles, and apart from their individual merits, display the complete range of themes, episodes and character types which were the life-blood of the chanson de geste genre. They vary considerably in metre and narrative length, tone and diction, but all reflect the general development in the artistic modes and social purposes of this heroic poetry during the main period of its popularity; the translation aims to preserve the dynamic, musical quality of the orally-transmitted originals. Each is accompanied by an introduction and a select bibliography, providing important information both for the general reader, and for those more familiar with the genre.

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