The century and a half following the Norman Conquest of 1066 saw an explosion in the writing of Latin and vernacular history in England, while the creation of the romance genre reinvented the fictional narrative. Where critics have seen these developments as part of a cross-Channel phenomenon, Laura Ashe argues that a genuinely distinctive character can be found in the writings of England during the period. Drawing on a wide range of historical, legal and cultural contexts, she discusses how writers addressed the Conquest and rebuilt their sense of identity as a new, united ‘English’ people, with their own national literature and culture, in a manner which was to influence all subsequent medieval English literature. This study opens up new ways of reading post-Conquest texts in relation to developments in political and legal history, and in terms of their place in the English Middle Ages as a whole.

Laura Ashe is Lecturer in English at Queen Mary, University of London.
This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars, and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period c.1100–1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose, and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

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FICTION AND HISTORY IN ENGLAND, 1066–1200

LAURA ASHE
for my father, and for his
Ad uos igitur iam loquar qui in tercio millenario eritis... Nunc autem qui tanto tempore antequam nascamini de uobis mentionem iam uestro tempore puluis in hoc opere feci, si contigerit – quod valde desiderat anima mea – uestras ut in manus hoc opus meum prodeat, precor ut Dei clementiam inexcogitabilem pro me miserrimo exoreis.

Henry of Huntingdon
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And I am sustained, in this as in all things, by my family.

Laura Ashe
London, 2007
Abbreviations

ABBREVIATED REFERENCES


Dean, ANL: Ruth J. Dean, with Maureen B. M. Boulton, Anglo-Norman Literature: a guide to texts and manuscripts ANTS OPS 3 (London, 1999)


Abbreviations


Roger of Howden, Chronica: Chronica Rogeri de Houeden, ed. by William Stubbs, 4 vols. (London, 1868–71)


Illustrations

Fig. 1: Harold returning from Normandy. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry, Musée de la Tapisserie, Bayeux, France with special authorization of the city of Bayeux, and the Bridgeman Art Library.

Fig. 2: St Pachomius receiving the Easter Tables. British Library, Cotton MS Caligula A.XV, fol. 122r. With special permission from the British Library.

Fig. 3: Harold’s oath to William. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry, Musée de la Tapisserie, Bayeux, France with special authorization of the city of Bayeux, and the Bridgeman Art Library.

Fig. 4: Edward the Confessor’s death. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry, Musée de la Tapisserie, Bayeux, France with special authorization of the city of Bayeux, and the Bridgeman Art Library.

Translation Policy

Where translations have been cited in the notes, they have been used, with some alterations as indicated. Where none is cited, translations are my own.