



# **From Lawmen to Plowmen: Anglo-Saxon Legal Tradition and the School of Langland (Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series)**

*Stephen Yeager*

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The reappearance of alliterative verse in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries remains one of the most puzzling issues in the literary history of medieval England. In *From Lawmen to Plowmen*, Stephen M. Yeager offers a fresh, insightful explanation for the alliterative structure of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the flourishing of alliterative verse satires in late medieval England by observing the similarities between these satires and the legal-homiletical literature of the Anglo-Saxon era.

Unlike Old English alliterative poetry, Anglo-Saxon legal texts and documents continued to be studied long after the Norman Conquest. By comparing Anglo-Saxon charters, sermons, and law codes with Langland's *Piers Plowman* and similar poems, Yeager demonstrates that this legal and homiletical literature had an influential afterlife in the fourteenth-century poetry of William Langland and his imitators. His conclusions establish a new genealogy for medieval England's vernacular literary tradition and offer a new way of approaching one of Middle English's literary classics.

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