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0521856108 - *Piers Plowman* and the Medieval Discourse of Desire

Nicolette Zeeman

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## *Piers Plowman* and the Medieval Discourse of Desire

This ambitious work is the first book-length study to link William Langland's great poem *Piers Plowman* to wider medieval enquiries into the nature of intellectual and spiritual desire. Nicolette Zeeman traces the history of psychology and its iconography in medieval devotional and theological literature, stretching back to St Augustine and Gregory the Great, and shows how an understanding of these traditions opens up a completely new reading of *Piers Plowman*. She challenges the current consensus according to which the poem narrates an essentially positive 'education' of the will, and reveals instead a narrative of desire emerging from rebuke, loss and denial. This radical reading revolutionises our thinking about *Piers Plowman*, and sheds new light on the history of medieval psychology, devotion, pastoral care, medieval textual theory and literary history.

NICOLETTE ZEEMAN is College Lecturer at King's College, Cambridge. She has edited several books and published articles in the *Modern Language Review*, *Medium Aevum*, *Paragraph* and *New Medieval Literatures*.

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*The book is dedicated to Elizabeth Salter*

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## Note on the text

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I use a short title reference system throughout, except for a small number of texts cited only once, for which I give full references in the footnotes. For all other works, full references are given in the Bibliography. Here, medieval authors are cited by the (often anglicised) names with which they are referred to in the text; works are listed alphabetically, except for translations, which appear directly after the work translated. A small number of short titles also appear in the Bibliography for ease of identification.

I refer to *Piers Plowman*, unless otherwise specified, in the following editions: A Text, ed. Kane (1960); B Text, ed. Kane and Donaldson (1975); C Text, ed. Pearsall (1978). In a small number of cases I have emended the B Text where the possibly 'non-Langlandian' B manuscript tradition interestingly reflects the concerns of this book.