Addressing the history of the production and reception of the great medieval poem, *Piers Plowman*, Lawrence Warner reveals the many ways in which scholars, editors, and critics over the centuries created their own speculative narratives about the poem, which gradually came to be regarded as factually true. Warner begins by considering the possibility that Langland wrote a romance about a werewolf and bear-suited lovers, and goes on to explore the methods of the poem’s localization, and medieval readers’ particular interest in its Latinity. Warner shows that the “Protestant Piers” was a reaction against the poem’s oral mode of transmission, reveals the extensive eighteenth-century textual scholarship on the poem by figures including the maligned Chaucer editor John Urry, and contextualizes its first modernization by a literary forger inspired by the 1790s Shakespeare controversies. This lively account of *Piers Plowman* challenges the way the poem has traditionally been read and understood.

**Lawrence Warner** is Senior Lecturer in Medieval English at King’s College London and Director of the International Piers Plowman Society. His book, *The Lost History of Piers Plowman: The Earliest Transmission of Langland’s Work* (2011), received Honorable Mention for the 2013 Richard J. Finneran Award of the Society for Textual Scholarship.
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.

RECENT TITLES IN THE SERIES

Antony J. Hasler
Court Poetry in Late Medieval England and Scotland: Allegories of Authority

Shannon Gayk
Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England

Lisa H. Cooper
Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late-Medieval England

Alison Cornish
Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy: Illiterate Literature

Jane Gilbert
Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature

Jessica Rosenfeld
Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Love after Aristotle

Michael Van Dussen
From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages

Martin Eisner
Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature: Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular

Emily V. Thornbury
Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England

A complete list of titles in the series can be found at the end of the volume.
THE MYTH OF PIERS PLOWMAN

Constructing a Medieval Literary Archive

LAWRENCE WARNER