



Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger (Middle English Texts)

James M Dean

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This volume makes available two somewhat neglected yet significant and instructive Middle English alliterative texts that are usually read in conjunction with William Langland's *Piers Plowman*. The texts, both anonymous, are *Richard the Redeless*, which concerns the government style of Richard II (1367-1400; reigned 1377-99), and *Mum and the Sothsegger*, which addresses social issues in the reign of Henry IV (1367-1413; reigned 1399-1413). They should be assigned reading not only for those interested in the later reception of *Piers Plowman* but also for those seeking to understand literary and historical forces in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England. *Richard the Redeless* (focusing on events in and around 1399) offers an often regretful, sometimes sharp critique of Richard's kingship under the guise of advice; *Mum and the Sothsegger* provides a satirical look at bureaucratic institutions during Henry's regime. Both works reveal that alliterative poetry in the *Piers Plowman* tradition continued to be the chief vehicle for political and social criticism at the turn of the fourteenth century.

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