

**AN INTRODUCTION TO  
ENGLISH MEDIEVAL  
LITERATURE**

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An Introduction to English Medieval Literature by Charles Sears Baldwin

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MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

BY

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## PREFACE

THE recent abundance of reprints and translations marks a second approach toward the recovery of the middle age. While the previous generation of historians was dispelling the legendary darkness of this dark age, the critics turned the connotation of *Gothic* from pity to praise. Pity for the middle age became so antiquated that enthusiasts ventured even to demand worship instead. What remained for our time was more exact appreciation through an increasing availability of medieval literature. To the widely interesting body of literature now at hand in English I have tried here to furnish a students' guide. This book is not for scholars. They are provided already. What seemed to be lacking was such a brief manual as should open the main literary significances to students not specially trained. Therefore, though the discussion necessarily includes works written in Latin and Old French, and relies, of course, on foreign as well as English scholarship, the citations and the suggestions for further study are generally limited to works accessible in English. What I have thus tried to provide is, not a substitute for close study, but an introduction.

Meantime even a general survey of English medieval literature corrects perspective. The larger literary interests and habits of the time, even when some of them are discerned through translations, open the way for truer appreciation of later interests. For the comprehension of later, more complex forms also, the best preparation is study of the earlier and simpler forms. To this end I have made

some imitative renderings, not under an hallucination of reproducing the original poetry, but in the conviction that of the elements composing literary connotation the most suggestive in translation is the habit of rhythm. Passing from translation through annotated extracts to the discussion of original texts, I have sought to persuade my readers that Middle English is not altogether beyond them, and that it is too interesting and significant to be slurred.

The frontiers of literature are so broad that no single discussion, whatever its length, can hope to be exhaustive. Though medieval literature is inseparable from medieval theology and sociology, this larger view is hardly furthered by presenting all three at once. The necessity of holding to one aspect becomes a virtue in so far as it leads a student of literature to begin with literature itself; not with biography, nor even with history, but with that expression of truth which has endured because of its beauty; not with the poet, but with the poem. To such an approach we are further invited by the scantiness of medieval biography. The middle age apparently thought of biography as belonging rather to men of action than to men of letters; and this idea, in spite of our modern curiosity, is still suggestive of due proportion. The necessity of beginning with *Piers Plowman* itself, for lack of any certain knowledge of its author, suggests a sound order of study. In another way also my discussion is strictly limited. Many works are deliberately omitted in order that the significant few may stand out. For this book is meant to be neither a history nor a directory, but a guide to the appreciation of medieval literature.

My Columbia colleagues have given me unstinted time. Professor Matthews, after entering sympathetically into the original idea, took pains to reappraise the whole scope



## PREFACE

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and method. That this was carried beyond the critical point of revision to its present form I owe to the generous counsel of Professor Trent. Over the manuscript Professor Krapp and Professor Lawrence disputed with me the larger medieval tendencies. Professor Ayres and Professor Gildersleeve made the proofs occasion for further constructive criticism. The grateful pleasure of recording these obligations is enhanced by the sense of friendly fellowship in the attempt to win more readers for our earlier literature.

C. S. B.

BARNARD COLLEGE, May, 1914.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in the context of public administration and financial management. The text notes that without reliable records, it is difficult to track the flow of funds and ensure that resources are being used effectively and efficiently.

2. The second part of the document addresses the challenges associated with data collection and analysis. It highlights that gathering accurate and timely data can be a complex task, often requiring the use of multiple sources and methods. The text also discusses the importance of ensuring the quality and integrity of the data collected, as well as the need for appropriate statistical techniques to analyze the information and draw meaningful conclusions.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of technology in improving data management and analysis. It discusses how modern software tools and platforms can help streamline the data collection process, reduce errors, and facilitate the integration of data from different systems. The text also touches on the importance of ensuring that the technology used is secure and that data is protected from unauthorized access and misuse.

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10. The tenth part of the document discusses the importance of data-driven decision making. It emphasizes that having access to accurate and timely data is essential for making informed decisions and improving organizational performance. The text discusses the importance of using data to identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement, as well as the need for a culture of data-driven decision making throughout the organization.

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