This original study explores the importance of the concept of *habitus* – that is, the set of acquired patterns of thought, behavior and taste that result from internalizing culture or objective social structures – in the medieval imagination. Beginning by examining medieval theories of *habitus* in a general sense, Katharine Breen goes on to investigate the relationships between *habitus*, language, and Christian virtue. While most medieval pedagogical theorists regarded the *habitus* of Latin grammar as the gateway to a generalized *habitus* of virtue, reformers increasingly experimented with vernacular languages that could fulfill the same function. These new vernacular habits, Breen argues, laid the conceptual foundations for an English reading public.

Ranging across texts in Latin and several vernaculars, and including a case study of *Piers Plowman*, this interdisciplinary study will appeal to readers interested in medieval literature, religion, and art history, in addition to those interested in the sociological concept of *habitus*.

**Katharine Breen** is an assistant professor of English at Northwestern University.
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.

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KATHARINE BREEN
for my husband
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of illustrations</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The fourteenth-century crisis of habit</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Medieval theories of <em>habitus</em></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The grammatical paradigm</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 A crusading <em>habitus</em></td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <em>Piers Plowman</em> and the formation of an English literary <em>habitus</em></td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue: the King’s English</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

1. Diagram of Latin and not-Latin, habitus and not-habitus. page 40
2. Diagram of Latin and not-Latin, habitus and not-habitus, with intersections defined. 41
8. Itinerary from Pontremoli to Apulia, with Rome and Sicily on attached flaps. London, British Library MS Royal 14.C.vii, fol. 4r. By permission of the British Library. 156
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