



Fashioning Change: The Trope of Clothing in High- and Late-Medieval England (Interventions: New Studies Medieval Cult)

Andrea Denny-Brown

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Medieval European culture was obsessed with clothing. In *Fashioning Change: The Trope of Clothing in High-and Late-Medieval England*, Andrea Denny-Brown explores the central impact of clothing in medieval ideas about impermanence and the ethical stakes of human transience. Studies of dress frequently contend with a prevailing cultural belief that bodily adornment speaks to interests that are frivolous, superficial, and cursory. Taking up the vexed topic of clothing's inherent changeability, Denny-Brown uncovers an important new genealogy of clothing as a representational device, one imbued with a surprising philosophical pedigree and a long history of analytical weightiness.

Considering writers as diverse as Boethius, Alain de Lille, William Durand, Chaucer, and Lydgate, among others, Denny-Brown tracks the development of a literary and cultural trope that begins in the sixth century and finds its highest expression in the vernacular poetry of fifteenth-century England. Among the topics covered are Boethian discourses on the care of the self, the changing garments of Lady Fortune, novelty in ecclesiastical fashions, the sartorial legacy of Chaucer's *Griselda*, and the emergence of the English gallant. These literary treatments of vestimentary variation—which develop an aesthetics of change itself—enhance our understanding of clothing as a phenomenological and philosophical category in medieval Europe and illustrate the centrality of the Middle Ages to theories of aesthetics, of materiality, and of cultural change.

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