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Marcel Mauss's Maori informants called *hau*, the energy a gift generates for response or reciprocation. In the case of narrative, this involves revising past genres and authors (as Lydgate does with Chaucer or Chaucer's characters with one another) as well as one character's desire or hatred or wonder in response to narratives by or about another. The *jouissance* of gifting requires enough delay to avoid commerce, as Pierre Bourdieu argues (p. 44). But as generic conventions show, payback will come. The genre of romance is thus both complicit in and critical of practices such as the trafficking of women; but men are trafficked too. While emphasizing the performative powers of craft, genre, and structure, Perkins notes that such elements are also epiphenomenal of social and economic patterns: 'people's practices of exchange ... construct narrative in real time and space' (p. 45).

Perkins's study persistently emphasizes generosity, offering oneself to another, a topic he finds useful to contrast with modern ethics. Yet self-offering merges with a darker and more complicated issue: people made 'gifts' and thus property, even if contingently or in combination with other roles. Instances appear throughout, from Horn to Gawain to Criseyde to Polyxena, dismembered by Lydgate's Pyrrhus who thus demonstrates 'horribly the logic of person as assemblage' on which Polyxena's own rhetorical self-presentation focuses (p. 212). Amid other entanglements of goods with narratives, the instantiation of person as gift, willingly offered or compelled, but either way a potential or manifest interlocutor, constitutes Perkins's most poetically complex and historically implicated focus.

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Kathryn M. Rudy, *Touching Parchment: How Medieval Users Rubbed, Handled, and Kissed Their Manuscripts, vol. 1: Officials and Their Books* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2023). 272 pp.; 122 colour illustrations. ISBN 978-1-80064-960-6 (hard covers). £29.71. 978-1-80064-961-3 (PDF). <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0337>.

Available in open access, this fascinating study of how and why medieval European manuscripts were touched in different formal situations and ceremonies is a landmark publication. In this first instalment of a promised four volumes, Kathryn M. Rudy sets out to show 'how people who had roles as officials (abbots, priests, members of the high nobility) used books in theatrical ways that reinforced their authority' (p. 5). Surveying a range of manuscripts made between c.1100 and c.1500, Rudy carefully, and highly plausibly, excavates the social histories of books – through the tactile behaviours they elicited – in a variety of settings, including the religious, social, and legal. Documentary evidence for these social histories is rather sparse, yet Rudy's vast experience with 'dirty'

books – an intimate knowledge of, and keen eye for, the processes of material degradation (or ‘wear’) – lead to compelling reconstructions.

The opening two chapters of Part I set out the context and methodology for *Touching Parchment*. What will follow, Rudy writes, is a type of ‘use-wear analysis’ (p. 13), a method derived from archaeology, which interprets the marks left on objects over time to understand their social and cultural functions. While true, it is more apt to say that Rudy pioneers a method of studying manuscript use for future scholars, providing a helpful terminology in English to describe phenomena more precisely. An important distinction, for instance, is set up between ‘inadvertent’ and ‘targeted’ wear, with examples outlined for each (pp. 29–42). Neologisms like ‘wet-touching’ (p. 35) will surely become the established nomenclature. In this section, too, Rudy makes a vital assumption in response to an essential empirical difficulty of this type of work, that is, knowing precisely when manuscript damage occurs. ‘Most wear by abrasion’, she claims, ‘happens during a manuscript’s period of highest functional utility, early in its existence’ (p. 24). Such an assumption, both well reasoned and fully borne out by later examples, pre-empt the facile counterargument that the wear under analysis could always be post-medieval.

Part II is a whirlwind of absorbing case studies. Chapter 3 traces the practice of oath-taking in relation to Gospel manuscripts, a practice which supplanted swearing on relics and which in the fourteenth century expanded to include missals. Chapter 4 studies the gesture of the kiss in a Christian context, and especially the kissing of the missal during Mass. Rudy shows how bookmakers, and their audiences, were co-opted into growing liturgical theatricality. Chapter 5, building on chapter 3, argues that books replaced relics as props for oath-swearing in legal contexts. Attention is paid to representations of oath-swearing in, and tactile use of, the *Sachsenspiegel*, a widely transmitted German-language legal compilation by Eike von Repgow (pp. 125–33), the Occitan-language book of customary law for fourteenth-century Agen (pp. 138–44), the Rood Privilegeboek, a fifteenth-century Dutch privilege book (pp. 144–54), the Old Proctor’s Book of Cambridge, dated 1381 (pp. 154–60), and the Linz manual, an inquisitor’s book compiled in fourteenth-century Bohemia to make Waldensian heretics abjure their beliefs (pp. 160–6). The lucid examples of this chapter demonstrate the pan-European range of these haptic practices. Chapter 6 dives into choral manuscripts used within the Church, arguing that the choirmaster’s physical interactions with the book were both a dramatic event and a dynamo in the transmission of the practice to other contexts. Consideration is also given to the sprinkling of holy water on manuscripts (pp. 176–85), before a final, magisterial study of the Grand Obituary of Notre-Dame in Paris, which sheds light on the tactile use of books for commemorative purposes (pp. 186–212).

Touching Parchment, along with its many book-historical arguments, offers a

masterclass in how to interpret the signs of wear in medieval manuscripts. It is a persuasive account of the manuscript as an emotionally charged, sensual object with cultural gravitas. Yet, what Rudy patiently teaches above all is the subtle art of noticing, and plentiful colour images – sometimes the same manuscript under different light conditions – are generously provided to help us see what so far only she has seen. The next three volumes are eagerly anticipated.

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Allegory and the Poetic Self: First-Person Narration in Late Medieval Literature, ed. R. Barton Palmer, Katharina Philipowski, and Julia Rütthemann (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2022). 326 pp. ISBN 978-0-8130-6951-7. \$80.00.

This volume assembles an admirably coherent set of essays on a distinctive genus of late medieval literature – literary works in the vernacular, narrated in the first person, featuring personification allegory and thematics of courtly love. The result is a kaleidoscopic investigation of a sprawling literary phenomenon, a pan-European ‘family of texts’ that cannot be explained in terms of a single genre or the influence of a single source (p. 1). (The *Roman de la Rose* sometimes looks like the ‘smoking gun’, but medieval authors writing in German seem not to have been aware of it.) The volume’s sense of shared focus is all the more commendable for the fact that it brings together scholars studying different vernacular traditions (French, German, Spanish, Occitan, and Italian), who are part of academic conversations in different languages and places (Anglo-American, German, and, in one instance, French). In particular, the collection offers anglophone medievalists the opportunity to learn from the German discourse, with its different canon and its facility with narratology and discourse analysis. Simultaneously, it demonstrates that many of the giants of medieval French studies (Kevin Brownlee, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, David Hult, Sylvia Huot, Laurence de Looze, and R. Barton Palmer) are still producing vital and vibrant literary criticism.

Considerations of space limit me to brief notices of the collection’s fifteen essays. The Introduction, by Katharina Philipowski and Julia Rütthemann, seeks rather boldly to taxonomize and theorize the volume’s shared object, though the outcome is a bit more confused than elucidating. Greater clarity emerges from the essays themselves. ‘Authorship and authorial identity’ is the first of the volume’s three parts, and the four essays therein investigate how medieval first-person narration brought together the distinctive functions of character, narrator, and author. Hult focuses on the *Roman de la Rose*; Cerquiglini-Toulet treats Guillaume