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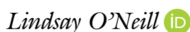
Also, British involvement in the slave trade was expanding at this time, and I would have welcomed more on how ideas of political ecology affected ideas about Africans, both enslaved and free. Mulry does address the topic toward the end of chapter 5, but a little deeper exploration on how it surfaced, or did not, in relation to these populations might help the reader see the limits of these ideas and projects. Were such ideas less powerful where the English were not establishing settler colonies? Did these ideas affect English views of people and places where the English had less control, like in West Africa? How exactly did race and enslavement fit in?

Mulry's main intervention of *An Empire Transformed* is that political ecology was a tool through which government officials could control populations and colonial outposts. There is no doubt, as Mulry argues, that intellectuals, officials, and the king saw ecology as a means of control and that they established bodies like the Royal Society and the Council of Foreign Plantations as think tanks to explore that agenda. I was struck, however, by how rarely officials could implement such plans and how the most successful projects originated from within communities. I agree with Mulry that examining failures is useful and that plans and projects give us insight into how theorists and officials thought about control. However, picking away at the failures could show us how important environmental control was compared to other priorities, and how deeply shared the ideas of political ecology were as one moved down the social ladder and across space.

An Empire Transformed is a welcome addition to the scholarship on the place of the environment in early modern thought, medicine, politics, and empire. Mulry reveals not only that landscapes and the natural world deeply influenced the way people of the period conceptualized and acted within their world, but also that theorists and governments saw landscapes and bodies as tools of power.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Nicholas Perkins. *The Gift of Narrative in Medieval England*. Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture Series 39. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021. Pp. 288. $120.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.29

In *The Gift of Narrative in Medieval England*, Nicholas Perkins uses an expansive understanding of the term *gift* to explore depictions of gift-giving, exchange, and storytelling in a variety of Middle English romances. Drawing on anthropological and theoretical models of gift, object, and exchange, Perkins argues that examining gifts and gift-giving in romance narratives draws attention to the entanglements of people and things and to the permeable boundaries between human and nonhuman actors. He also shows that considering such dynamics leads into questions "about the value and trajectories of persons and things in stories" and "about narrative process, surplus and resolution" (239).

Perkins begins with a study of the Horn romances, focusing on the French *Romance of Horn* before turning to the Middle English *King Horn* and *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*. Perkins uses Marcel Mauss's discussion of the Maori concept of gift *hau* along with writings by Jacques Derrida and Pierre Bourdieu to outline models of the gift and the obligations a gift creates. Perkins then deploys theoretical and historical ideas about gifts and gift-giving to craft compelling readings of the ring and horn gifts in the Horn texts and to argue that Horn himself is both a gift-object and a gift-giver of storytelling. With careful attention to historical and material

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2023.29 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contexts, Perkins shows how repeated depictions of gifts and exchange build upon each other distinctively in each version to enrich and complicate the Horn narrative.

In chapter 2 Perkins examines "what can or should be given and what should be kept back" and whether objects are presented "as description or as narrative," categories that Perkins identifies as analogous to "thing and/or event" (70) and sees as permeable. Perkins again draws on anthropological theory, particularly Annette Weiner's work on gift-giving and value creation. He discusses material objects (the Savernake Horn, the Auchinleck manuscript) in relation to *Horn Childe*, then focuses on ways in which other romances in the Auchinleck manuscript (*Amis and Amiloun*, *Tristrem*, *Orfeo*) demonstrate the complexities of giving, keeping, exchanging, and ascribing value to persons and objects. He concludes with an analysis of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, arguing that exchange, circulation, and the resistance of exchange reveal the permeability between thing and person and the ways in which value is constructed and accrued both socially and narratively.

In chapters 3 to 5, Perkins turns to romances by named canonical authors (Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate). Chapter 3 opens with a discussion of historical prisoner capture and exchange, which Perkins then deploys to discuss women and questions of agency in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" and *Troilus and Criseyde*. Using the ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Gayle Rubin, and Marilyn Strathern, Perkins argues that the women exchanged in Chaucer's texts model how agency works through both constraint and power. Perkins reads Emelye and Criseyde both as prisoners and objects exchanged and as subjects shaping their own exchanges and participating in other exchanges as gift-givers. Perkins presents a thoughtful engagement of Chaucerian scholarship on gifts, exchange, and gender in this chapter, though he might have made more, in the conclusion, of the intersections with historical practices of ransom and exchange raised so intriguingly in the opening.

In chapter 4 Perkins addresses Chaucer's tales of the Franklin and the Manciple. Perkins roots his analysis in theoretical writings by J. L Austin and Derrida, noting that speech-acts, like gifts, are not entirely defined by the speaker's or giver's intent but also create unintended effects, a surplus of further speeches, acts, and bodily experiences that can be socially generative or destructive. Perkins argues for reading speech as gift and act, exploring exchanges of speech in different literary genres and how they create a surplus, either positive and generative ("Franklin's Tale") or negative and destructive ("Manciple's Tale").

Perkins concludes by considering Lydgate's *Troy Book* in Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 1, a selection that enables him to study not only one of the most famous gifts in literary tradition, the Trojan Horse, but also the particular medieval context of the manuscript given as a gift. Perkins explores most thoroughly in this chapter questions of human and nonhuman agency, drawing on work by Jane Bennett and Andrew Pickering. Perkins argues that the various gifts and exchanges in Lydgate's text present a model of agency more akin to that outlined by Pickering, in which objects and humans intersect in multiple ways to shape events. Specific episodes discussed include the preservation of Hector's body, the fate of Polyxena and other female characters, the Trojan Horse, and the presentation of this manuscript as a gift to Henry V of England and to others over ensuing centuries. In his analyses, Perkins again traces the layering of exchanges, obligations, and intentions onto gifts and moments of their exchange. Objects emerge as enmeshed in human desires and manipulations but also as shaping and developing those desires and manipulations in the productive surplus human-object entanglements create in Perkins's analysis.

Perkins presents readers with insightful textual analyses and thought-provoking questions. Perkins is to be commended for the breadth and depth of his theoretical engagements, for his careful attention to material context, for his compelling readings of medieval romances, and for his efforts to dismantle the divisions medieval scholars often draw between anonymous romances and those written by named writers. Some readers may find the concept of the gift deployed a little too expansively at points, especially because, as Perkins himself notes, he argues that "writing and telling can be understood as a form of gift-giving" (156).

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2023.29 Published online by Cambridge University Press

However, Perkins's carefully constructed chapter introductions and conclusions make clear the ways in which his rich analyses intersect with a complex tradition of thought regarding gifts and gift-giving. *The Gift of Narrative* will be of great interest to scholars interested in medieval romance, Chaucer and Lydgate, and scholars working on ideas of human and nonhuman agency, gift-giving, or narrative.

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Keith Pluymers. *No Wood, No Kingdom: Political Ecology in the English Atlantic*. Early Modern Americas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. Pp. 296. $49.95 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.38

"The early modern world was a wooden one," Keith Pluymers tells us in his impressive history of Atlantic ecology, *No Wood, No Kingdom: Political Ecology in the English Atlantic* (5). This extraordinarily versatile material was freighted with a multitude of uses and meanings. Pluymers maps how it was located at the heart of the household hearth; fueled industrial production of iron and sugar; and propelled the oceanic expansion of English trade and power with timber for naval, colonial, merchant, and slave ships. Both forest and trees are made visible by Pluymers: individual species promised luxuries like lemons or silk, while English forests were preserved as a habitat for royal hunting, honor, and beauty. Woods were also a terrain that governors struggled to oversee and make profitable, condemned as a refuge for rebels and impediment to agriculture. Pluymers reveals how wood became a fulcrum of contact and conflict between competing demands that intensified as England's Atlantic empire emerged between 1560 and 1660.

This monograph rides a new wave of early modern environmental histories. Recent works by William Cavert (*The Smoke of London: Energy and Environment in the Early Modern City* [2016]) and Anya Zilberstein (*A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change in Early America* [2016]), for instance, have emphasized that environmental change was an intellectual, social, political, and cultural process as much as it was a material one. In charting ligneous lines between English and colonial ecologies, Pluymers's innovative research brings into dialogue often disconnected literatures on early modern England and early America. While *No Wood, No Kingdom* can be situated in a lineage with Richard Grove's *Green Imperialism* (1996) and Paul Warde's *Invention of Sustainability* (2018), Pluymers breaks new ground by using wood to map ideas of scarcity and practices of conservation within and across Atlantic ecologies. Individual chapters travel from English forests to Irish plantations, across the ocean to Virginia's arboreal abundance and then onward to the finite island ecologies of Bermuda and Barbados. Collectively, they challenge two claims: first, that English scarcity triggered the exploitation and degradation of colonial forests and, second, that "careless destruction" characterized early modern management of wood (191).

No Wood, No Kingdom makes a crucial contribution to understandings of the imbrication of imperial ecologies and economies. While the crown launched concerted efforts at domestic reform, it evinced only sporadic interest in wood overseas. Not until the eighteenth century did colonies provide a significant supply of timber to England. In the early, uncertain decades of England's Atlantic ventures, Pluymers shows, no coherent imperial economy of wood developed. Instead, lateral networks were forged: Irish timber serviced mainland European markets and Atlantic wood generated intercolonial connections between New England, Bermuda, and the Caribbean. Meanwhile, Virginia's colonists struggled to supply or market

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