with a short list of specific policy recommendations, the foremost of which being that Canada adopt an open-ended fair-dealing clause that suggests what fair-dealing is rather than (vainly) attempting to define and limit it. It is time to reform Canada’s copyright law, and Canadian Copyright: A Citizen’s Guide reveals the path that this reform should take. But do not wait for the legislature: practise fair copyright now.

ELI MACLAREN
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There are books one studies with furrowed brow in the confines of one’s study, and there are books one reads under a tree in the garden on a summer’s day. Siân Echard’s splendid journey around rather than about a select number of medieval manuscripts combines both. On the one hand, it is as full of information as an egg is full of meat, and, on the other, it is an immensely enjoyable read which sweeps one from authors of the early Middle Ages to the grand public of the twenty-first century.

The book, the author tells us, is “a study of medieval writers in later print” (vii), and the writers or written works she includes are, primarily, Beowulf, Piers Plowman, Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton, John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Jean Froissart. The final chapter – “The Ghost in the Machine” (more than one ghost makes its appearance) – is devoted to the digital avatars of medieval manuscripts, those wonderfully accurate, if dangerously misleading, representations of medieval imagery which now inhabit our computers. The purpose of her book, in fact, is not to discuss why the texts themselves were written, but why, how, when, and where their reproductions originated. And the key question is surely why.

Sometimes we have honest attempts at scholarly facsimiles; sometimes, alas, we have “bald-faced forgeries” (xi). But the author’s voyage takes her through a discussion of printing-types (especially Anglo-Saxon [ch. 1]), the choice of typeface, qualities of paper, layout, binding, advertising, the role of illustration, family pride (especially in the case of the Gower Manuscript [ch. 3]), the Roxburghe Club
(see especially 117–25), juvenile adaptations of medieval classics (especially of Chaucer [ch. 4]: be sure to read the section, 141–44, on “the virtuosity with which adaptors sometimes dealt with the bawdy tales”), philology, maps, portraits, courtly love, and the quite astonishing transformation of Jean Froissart from a fourteenth-century French historian from Hainault to a nineteenth-century English gentleman (ch. 5).

The chapters (save for the introduction, which begins with Piers Plowman’s plough) follow a roughly chronological order from the celebrated Glastonbury Cross to Froissart’s Chronicles, and in the course of the investigation we see, again and again, how the commercial aspect continued and continues to dominate. “Market forces,” says our author, “continue to be a factor in the digital age, just as they were for the first printers” (208).

At the beginning of book 7 of the Analects (Lun yü), Confucius says, “I am a transmitter, not a creator,” but as every student of Chinese thought is aware, Confucius created in the act of transmitting. The same is true of the scholars, printers, and publishers considered in Siân Echard’s book. Not one of the editions, reproductions, or facsimiles was produced in a vacuum, but all reflected, to one degree or another, the circumstances of their times and the minds of their creators. Thus, an early edition of Guy of Warwick tells us much about “the furnishings of a typical eighteenth-century literary gentleman’s mind when it comes to the medieval textual world; it also offers an instructive instance of the degree to which the vagaries of transmission dictated the arrangement of that furniture” (63).

The same is true of the twenty-first century, when the British Library, with its superb “Turn the Page” technology, can produce a digital version of the huge and magnificent Sherborne Missal. There may, indeed, be some altruism here, but lucre, filthy or not, lurks close to the surface, and the Sherborne Missal and other splendid volumes chosen for digital reproduction can too easily give a false idea of their times and place. The books selected are all, without exception, lavishly and sumptuously decorated – “visually monumental,” as the author says (212) – and this can all too easily offer the interested but uninformed reader a quite misleading impression of medieval books and book production. It is rather like saying that everyone nowadays owns a custom-built Rolls-Royce or Cadillac.

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, “a medieval manuscript never really loses its mystique” (125). There is something in the nature of a medieval book – its physicality (see 214) – which transcends
reproduction (as the author herself says: if this were not so why would the British Library seek to own the Sherborne Missal rather than simply a digital version?): the look of the thing certainly, but also, if it be written on parchment, the unique feel and unforgettable smell of carefully-cured animal. We need not agree with some recent writers, who, taking things quite too far, seem to see in the opening of a medieval manuscript a substitute for sex, but the fact remains that there is a tactile quality about medieval books that transcends any reproduction or facsimile.

Yet medieval books are only the beginning of Siân Echard’s odyssey. She offers us here a study not so much of what medieval books were and are, but of how they were and are used. To my mind, it is a fascinating and timely tale, and I can only recommend it to others as learned, scholarly, erudite, and, above all, wonderfully entertaining.

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Over the past twenty-five years, art historian Janice G. Schimmelman has collected and collated the literature of art and architecture that circulated in the United States during the eighteenth century. She has also made very welcome bibliographic forays into the early years of photography in America. Her bibliographic scholarship is rare among art historians at the turn of the twenty-first century, but its roots run deep in a discipline distinguished for its devotion to the annals of great artists, great ideas, and great works, and where art practices are traced for heritage, influence, and legacy. Artists’ bibliographies are not uncommon, but a bibliographic quest like this is rare, as Schimmelman lays out the range of books available to and consulted by artists and readers alike, shaping taste, expectations, and the dominant genres of visual art and architecture in colonial and post-revolutionary America.

In Books on Art in Early America, Schimmelman constructs the framework of the public circulation history of both seminal and minor