THE MEDIEVAL GIFT AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

This interdisciplinary study explores how classical ideals of generosity influenced the writing and practice of gift giving in medieval Europe. In assuming that medieval gift giving was shaped by oral ‘folk models’, historians have traditionally followed in the footsteps of social anthropologists and sociologists such as Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu. This first in-depth investigation into the influence of the classical ideals of generosity and gift giving in medieval Europe reveals to the contrary how historians have underestimated the impact of classical literature and philosophy on medieval culture and ritual. Focusing on the idea of the gift expounded in the classical texts read most widely in the Middle Ages, including Seneca the Younger’s De beneficiis and Cicero’s De officiis, Lars Kjær investigates how these ideas were received, adapted and utilised by medieval writers across a range of genres, and how they influenced the practice of generosity.

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THE MEDIEVAL GIFT AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Ideals and the Performance of Generosity in Medieval England, 1100–1300

LARS KJÆR

New College of the Humanities
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ABBREVIATIONS

CLR Calendar of Liberate Rolls
CPR Calendar of Patent Rolls
CCCM Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latinae
Cicero, De legibus M. Tulli Ciceronis, ed. Powell, 155–266.
EHR English Historical Review
OCT Oxford Classical Texts

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List of Abbreviations


