directions through indirections – for example, by noting the tactical absence of such commentary or extrapolating perspectives on secular kingship from parallels between other ruling agencies in the poems who might be viewed as comparable to kings. She does not discuss the praxis of kingship in the reign of Richard II other than to point to the failures of Richard as an earthly king as the main reason for what she sees as a ‘turning away from the monarch and [a] restating [of] the importance of individual’ (p. 161) in the work of her four poets. The study concludes that, in their own way, they all responded to the instability of the times by transferring images of good governance from the person of a king and projecting them upwards towards God (in whom the attributes of a good ruler are ultimately realized) or outwards towards the individual citizen who is seen as subject to the same demands of self-rule in his or her personal and civic life as kings should be.

Rayner’s exposition of her chosen texts is commendably lucid and intelligent, but the reader may question whether a different focus and methodology would have served her better. While she generally succeeds in convincing us that her poets share a ‘closeness of response’ (p. 161) to kingship, it is hard not to feel that the study loses more than it gains from her decision to omit any detailed discussion of the kind of historical, political, and philosophical sources we might expect it to draw on to illuminate the evidence from the literary texts. In particular, some close comparison of the advice given to rulers in Mirrors for Princes and the principles for ruling the self which she identifies in Ricardian poetry might have strengthened her conclusions overall, and helped further her argument that book VII of the Confessio Amantis may be seen as a new departure for the genre, a literary Mirror directed at the individual rather than a prince. This and the study’s tendency to give exposition at the expense of critical analysis in places may make it more suitable for a student audience and teachers seeking a quick grasp of what it is that Chaucer and his contemporaries say (and do not say) about kingship than for those interested in how this might be understood in the wider context of Ricardian culture. It is to be hoped that Rayner will add to this study along these lines, as she intends to, at a later date.

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Amanda Holton examines those Chaucerian texts ‘with sustained narrative sources’ which could have yielded the entire ‘target-story’ (p. 5). This methodology allows her to compare and contrast source-text and target-text in detail even though, unsurprisingly, it radically limits the Chaucerian texts upon which she can draw. Holton’s study is contained to a handful of tales from The Legend of Good Women, the Knight’s Tale, the Manciple’s Tale, and a few tragedies
from the unrepresentative Monk's Tale. The dream poems are excluded, as are some fabliaux. Some texts are eliminated on the grounds of being too close to the source-text while others, such as the Franklin's Tale, do not receive treatment due to a dispute about source. Although Holton sees her effort as providing a template of Chaucer's practice and his relationships to his sources, a less ambitious title may have been warranted.

Holton explores four aspects of poetics: narrative, speech, rhetorical device, and figurative language. More choices had to be made, so that in the chapter on figurative language, for instance, treatment is limited to metaphor and simile. Holton sees poetics in scientific terms: 'It seeks objective description that is empirically verifiable and independent of the historical and psychological contingencies of interpretive reading' (p. 4). In pursuit of this dubious grail the author occasionally offers rather brittle explanations for her choices and the kind of poetics to which she would introduce the reader (e.g. p. 117 n. 1).

Nonetheless, within the limits of the project Holton provides a helpful service. Not only does she remind us of those Chaucerian poems which can be sourced in one text, she also provides evidence that Chaucer aligns himself with Boccaccio in preferring chronologically arranged narrative and long, epic speeches, that he reduces the number of inessential events and roles for minor characters compared to his various sources, that he follows Ovid in achieving a pathetic tone through rhetorical figures expressing emotion, and that he distances himself from Virgilian practices, though he takes from the ancient Roman poet the stylistic device of *pronominatio*, or the periphrastic naming of places and people. Holton sees Chaucer as differing from the source-texts in different ways depending on his own proclivities and revealing a fairly consistent pattern across his 'target texts' in doing so. Consistency, or 'almost repressive control', expresses itself in chronological sequencing, separating narrative elements, visual information that 'nets down the imagination', a 'general rejection' of metaphor, and the careful use of 'self-restraining' similes (pp. 148f.). All of this suggests a picture quite different from – taking one of Holton's own reference points – Dryden's notion that the *Tales* differ from one another in many ways, including their poetic.

Holton's conclusions depend upon her premisses. Almost repressive control, netting down the imagination – these are not phrases I would associate with the poet Chaucer, nor would I concede that the numbers speak for themselves. I do not question how Chaucer tends to work with his sources, but I do question the interpretation. Perhaps if we interrogate the formalism we might have better luck. For instance, Holton assumes that Chaucer's use of metaphor is weak because lacking in 'intensity' and originality (p. 121). Yet originality is a very modern preoccupation. One might contrast such an understanding of metaphor with one deriving from Thomistic Aristotelianism, in which metaphors resonate with what is there to reveal that things are more than they seem to conceptual rationality and functional preoccupations. Metaphor, on such an understanding, accords with illumination, in which rationality itself depends on something always already given. Knowledge as participation in the active intelligible life of
an object crossing over into the life of the subject cuts against the grain of a complete separation of form and content, poetics and interpretation. Chaucer's 'repressive' netting down of the imagination can be redescribed in terms of his acknowledgement of working with what is already given, language as our collective and cultural context in which we come to consciousness and self-discovery. The English poet delights in tradition and in the fact that 'out of olde feldes, as men seyth, / Cometh al this newe corn', lines of double indebtedness and embeddedness in sources.

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In this rich, thoughtful, and very interesting study Nicole R. Rice has sketched out what almost amounts to a short history of lay spirituality in late medieval England, a time when its putative dangers were, for a while at least, balanced in some minds by its commendable encouragement of devout aspiration. Focusing on five texts in particular – four anonymous, the Abbey of the Holy Ghost, Fervor amoris, Book to a Mother, and The Life of Soul, together with Walter Hilton’s Mixed Life – she has effectively identified and addressed both the embattled reactions of clerics as they found certain aspects of their formation and their devout practices appropriated by and for a lay audience, and the development of the movement itself. Important teachings of the spirituality that developed, derivative and conflicted as they sometimes were, were also guardedly encouraging, and acknowledge human dignity in distinctly religious terms.

One of the real strengths of this book is its willingness to engage religious attitudes and to consider how far these attitudes respond to late medieval devout practices. Latin psalters and books of hours encouraged devotions rooted in the liturgy, and these were carried into vernacular texts during the course of the fourteenth century, so that devout and literate laypersons enjoyed more or less ready access to a range of religious exercises and practices, ecclesiastical in origin and often focused upon individual salvation. In recent years many of these texts have been subsumed, thanks in no small part to Nicholas Watson, under the heading ‘vernacular theology’; and Rice’s study deepens this approach by further defining the role of theological and personal instruction, often realized in a moral or devout programme. Such treatments abound in Middle English texts – among many, the Chastising of God’s Children lends evident support to the main argument here – but the difficulty is to determine how effective they may have been in practice. Literary texts sometimes reflect these questions, and Rice takes the merchant in Chaucer’s Summoner’s Tale as an example of a layman with a ‘budding desire for spiritual transformation’ which, thanks to his avarice, does