of that of Helen Cooper, one of the foremost Chaucerian scholars of our age, whose laudatory blurb graces the back cover.

Written and published in the midst of a resurgence of nationalism across the globe, of which Brexit is a single example, *Chaucer: A European Life* is an utterly timely book. Much of Chaucer's reception history was national in nature, figuring Chaucer as a proto-Protestant court poet who was the father of English literature. Turner's work serves as a corrective to this history: "In death, Chaucer came to represent Englishness, patriarchy, authority. . . . In life, Chaucer did not represent the canon; he certainly wasn't a figure of Englishness; nor was he monumental or grandiose" (508). Turner recovers the human and humane Geoffrey Chaucer, a man whose identity was fundamentally international and European. Turner's groundbreaking work has done justice to Chaucer, and her accomplishment should solidify her place within the Chaucerian house of fame.

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Chaucer's Prayers: Writing Christian and Pagan Devotion. Megan E. Murton. Chaucer Studies 47. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020. viii + 170 pp. $99.

Megan E. Murton's book takes a reader-response approach to the study of Chaucer's major works. This critical approach has often proved to be a productive one in Chaucer scholarship, and such is often the case in *Chaucer's Prayers*. Murton argues, in fact, that her method is not just useful to understanding Chaucer's use of prayer throughout his poetry, but essential to his aim with that poetry to create a participatory space for his readers that "can be both devotional and literary: at once a stance before a deity and a stance in relation to a poem" (3). Emphasizing the poetry's "participatory, performative qualities," Chaucer creates "public interiorities for readers to inhabit" (9, 57).

In her first chapter Murton reads Chaucer in the Marian prayers in the "ABC" and the Prioress's "Prologue" as a sincere writer of "devotional" poetry: "the 'ABC' scripts a devotional performance that aims to provide not comfort, as in the source [Deguileville], but transformation" (30). Indeed, she constitutes Chaucer's responding reader as "both a penitent and a reader" accustomed to the performances of liturgical practice and primed, in turn, to perform the poet's "prayer scripts" (10, 24). In her second chapter, however, she examines how in "The Knight's Tale," "The Franklin's Tale," and "The Man of Law's Tale," "Chaucer invites [those same] readers to engage with the unfamiliar religious worlds of these tales not by evaluating truth-claims but by participating in devotional practice" (60). Murton hears Chaucer in these tales challenging the way that philosophy constitutes "innocent suffering . . . as a problem to solve," as something that needs to be "reconciled with the fact of divine providence" (68). Custance, of course, occupies a Christian perspective so that her prayers provide "an

experience to embrace" because "it enables an encounter with Christ and the saints that leads to salvation." Palamon, Arcite, Emelye, and Dorigen, however, "invite readers inside the devotional interiority of pagans, enabling an intimate encounter with religious difference . . . without stipulating where those experiences must lead" (82).

Murton's third chapter turns to the "religion of love" in *Troilus and Criseyde* and, therefore, to Troilus, love's only true disciple: "both [Pandarus and Troilus] are fluent in the discourse of the religion of love, but only Troilus speaks it with true devotion" (103–04). Criseyde, Murton insists, is an atheist. Troilus, moreover, provides access to the deepest emotional levels of the story, and the "sharing" Chaucer offers his readers "goes beyond mere sympathy with Troilus's beliefs, for readers are invited to re-voice those beliefs as they inhabit his songs and prayers to Love" (106). Chaucer himself becomes the focus of Murton's fourth chapter on the dream visions as she examines how he "repeatedly turns to prayer to effect transitions in these texts, such as the transition into the liminal space of the dream, a crucial moment that marks the beginning of the process of poetic creation" (127). This is Murton's most complex chapter as she traces how the poet challenges Dante's vatic poetry and probes Chaucer's anxieties concerning his readers' response to "a vision that is his own, grounded in nothing outside himself that could provide a framework for, or a constraint upon, interpretation" (142).

As her subsequent analysis of "The Retraction" and her conclusion make clear, her Chaucer is ultimately a poet of the earnest more than of game. Her argument about Chaucer's use of prayer is also one with critics who overemphasize the critical detachment "this most apparently secular of Middle English poets" takes from his poetry (162). She claims that "Chaucer's comedy gestures toward a deeper discomfort" (141) with the very phenomenon of reader response. Those arguments, and especially her readings of Chaucer's prayers, deserve thoughtful consideration by Chaucerians. But I suspect most of Murton's own readers will respond skeptically and perhaps coolly to this serious Chaucer. And while I, for one, welcome a scholar who takes Chaucer's Christian faith seriously, I also think she too easily dismisses, or at least misses, the Christian humility that also inhabits his brilliant self- and reader-directed use of comic irony.

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Entertaining the Idea: Shakespeare, Performance, and Philosophy.
Lowell Gallagher, James Kearney, and Julia Reinhard Lupton, eds.
UCLA Clark Memorial Library Series. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. x + 240 pp. $65.

Born out of symposia held at UCLA in 2016–17, *Entertaining the Idea* collects an impressive array of perceptive, humane, and frequently scintillating essays centered