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## Review Essay: Peter Nicholson, *An Annotated Index to the Commentary on Gower's Confessio amantis*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

and conversion. By way of contrast, we see how Chaucer uses allusions to the *Divine Comedy* and figurative language, in particular to proverbs, to challenge Dante's assumption that poets can "escape the deceptions of human language" (201). For Chaucer, language must inevitably share the instability and mutability of earthly existence.

This is a provocative and incisive study of Chaucer's reading of Dante. The notes are thorough, the references and index helpful, and the book itself handsomely bound and sewn. In all ways, this is a valuable text.

Sandy Feinstein  
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Peter Nicholson, *An Annotated Index to the Commentary on Gower's Confessio amantis*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 62, State University of New York, 1989, 593 pp., \$35.00.

This annotated bibliographic index lists each "significant" reference, with a short summary, of twentieth-century commentary to lines and passages in G. C. Macaulay's 1900–1901 edition of Gower's *Confessio amantis*. The *Index* covers criticism through 1986 and a few items published early in 1987; it does not cover linguistic or textual studies, unpublished dissertations, or studies published in Japanese. Nicholson includes much material on the relationship between Gower and Chaucer, especially when such material aids in the study of the *Confessio*. As far as Gower's influence on other writers is concerned, Nicholson limits commentary to those items that contribute directly to an understanding of Gower's poem. In compiling the *Index*, Nicholson used approximately 330 books and articles, more than 100 of which are recorded here for the first time.

The entries are arranged according to book and line number as they appear chronologically in the *Confessio*; thus it is possible to locate instantly all the significant commentary on a particular line or passage, including the Latin verses. Cross-references in the entries direct readers to related passages in the *Confessio* and to other pertinent literary works. The *Index* also covers significant topics and figures not directly related to specific passages (for example, Amans, Venus, Genius, the Confession frame, and Pride).

The *Index* complements but does not replace Robert F. Yeager's *John Gower Materials: A Bibliography through 1979* (New York: Garland, 1981), which contains close to 800 entries and is therefore more comprehensive, but which does not refer to specific lines. The *Index* does, however, replace Macaulay's notes, now nearly a century old. The valuable 28-page Introduction to the *Index* provides

an overview of twentieth-century *Confessio* criticism and is a strong critical piece in its own right, containing useful information on new directions in Gower criticism.

The *Index* will be unusually valuable for scholars who wish to focus their research on topics and passages that have been neglected. Such unplumbed areas can now be found in a matter of minutes rather than in the many hours it once took.

The information in the *Index* seems accurate: a solid spot check revealed that the author's information was correct and that he had summarized his sources impeccably. And Gower scholars will probably concur with Nicholson's decisions about which criticism was important enough to include.

Scholars may wish that the list of Works Cited had included cross-references to lines and passages: it would be useful to know which passages a specific scholar had referred to. It would also be useful to have a list of Gower's sources (Ovid, for example) with cross-references to passages. But to include such cross-references might have made the *Index* too costly and cumbersome. As it stands now, the *Index* is an excellent tool for Gower scholars: its publication will assist incalculably in expediting and broadening the base of scholarship on the *Confessio amantis*.

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María Jesús Fuente Pérez, *La ciudad de Palencia en el siglo xv: Aportación al estudio de las ciudades castellanas en la Baja Edad Media*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1989.

Rafael Sánchez Saus, *Caballería y linaje en la Sevilla medieval: Estudio genealógico y social*, Diputación Provincial de Sevilla and Universidad de Cádiz, 1989, 531 pp., 2500 pesetas esp.

While treating different cities in widely separated regions, the distinctive approaches of these two books allow them to serve as companion studies. Fuente Pérez provides a detailed examination of the often tangled internal affairs of Palencia, a seignorial city. The bishop, lord of Palencia, was responsible for guaranteeing its citizens (*vecinos*) effective judicial administration under the provisions of the charter (*fuero*) of 1180 in exchange for certain economic benefits. Lordship was particularly complex in Palencia because the cathedral chapter was lord of the village of La Puebla, which had been incorporated into Palencia as