

## ABSTRACT

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Virtuous and Sinful Minds: An Analysis of Thomist Cognition Theory in Geoffrey Chaucer's *House of Fame* and John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*.  
(Under the direction of Professor Jim Knowles.)

Since the Reformation of the sixteenth century, John Lydgate has received much negative criticism by literary scholars. The reason is because many of them have either dismissed or marginalized his poetic abilities when compared to Geoffrey Chaucer's. However, the emergence of New Historicism in the 1980s and the increased acknowledgment of Lydgate's extensive publishing record and popularity among a diverse range of readers in the Middle Ages have caused some modern scholars to take fresh eyes to his work. In light of that new perspective, this study investigates Lydgate's motivation for imitating Chaucer. In particular, Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* are analyzed using the intellectual and theological framework of St. Thomas Aquinas. With specific emphasis on the devotion each of their narrators employ in their pursuits of understanding their dream worlds, I argue that Lydgate reimagines Chaucer's text in order to demonstrate how efficient and virtuous Chaucer's narrator is as a contemplative.

Specifically, I argue that the narrators from both poems experience different difficulties when attempting to comprehend their environments. The Chaucer narrator's difficulty is a result of his earthly empirical limitations while Lydgate's is from a lack of attention being paid to his environment due to his willful obsession with corporeal desire. Because Chaucer's narrator is better able to comprehend and identify the objects in his environment despite his earthly empirical limitations, I posit that such ability allegorically illustrates his love for God and desire to be close to him. Lydgate's inability to do the same, in a like manner, indicates how his priority is his love for his lady, which keeps him intellectually and spiritually distant from God. By using Thomist psychology to argue those ideas, I suggest that Chaucer's poem is the ideal model for contemplatives whereas Lydgate's is the anti-model.