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**Recommended Citation**

Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol12/iss1/13

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apotcaries) would prevent the injury and debilitation caused by quacks and
ill-trained medical personnel. Not surprisingly, though, the results were somewhat
different from those anticipated.

If followed strictly, the provisions of the Furs would have kept all Jews,
Muslims, and women from medical practice, since they were not able to attend
a university for training and would usually not know Latin. In general, however,
the laws seem only to have applied to the treatment of Christians. Jews and
Muslims were left largely to their own devices, although several documents do
contain recommendations that Jews be granted medical licenses. Women were
forbidden to practice medicine, but there is much evidence to show that they
did practice in the area for a long time. Despite attempts to force unlicensed
medical personnel to cease practice, the reality of life was that there were too
few doctors to serve the needs of the population. The authors’ estimate that only
six to seven licensed personnel existed (five if only physicians are counted) for
every 10,000 inhabitants of Valencia. This number is comparable to the medical
care available in the least developed portions of today’s world, so it is obvious
that a great demand for other healers would remain, despite royal and municipal
attempts to control medical practice.

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Robert R. Edwards, The Dream of Chaucer: Representation and Reflection in

Readers of Chaucer have long known that his early poems are cast as dream
visions, while his later works offer a strong realism. In The Dream of Chaucer,
Robert R. Edwards, chair of the Department of English at the State University
of New York at Buffalo, argues that the seeds of this admirable realism lie
deep in the ethereal world of the early dream visions. The Dream of Chaucer
examines with considerable care, in the usually accepted chronological order,
the Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame, and the Parliament of Fowls.
The early poems, explains Edwards, are linked together not merely by style,
convention, or structure, although certainly all are there, but also by Chaucer’s
strong adherence to a poetically imaginative approach toward the nature
of love, art, and the interpretation of experience (23). Chaucer depended
on the poets and rhetoricians whom he read less for pieces and fragments
to be reworked (although he did indeed rework pieces and fragments) and
more for symbols of meaning. The result is a sophisticated courtly narrative,
which is a cerebral improvement over the attempts of earlier continental writers, to the point where continental writers were soon imitating Chaucer.

Although some realistic pragmatism is evident in the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, it is not until Chaucer reaches the Parliament of Fowls that the real transition to realism begins. While exploring how language itself can demonstrate meaning in the Parliament, Chaucer moves to a new knowledge based on realistic particulars. He rarely looks back. From this point on, Chaucer's depiction of meaning is rooted in the realistic behavior of characters and sequences of events offered by his narrators. The realism of the war-torn world of Troilus and Criseyde, the various problematic explanations of the Boethian answer to freedom of the will, and the mundane social intercourse of the Canterbury pilgrims all give additional meaning to Chaucer's message, to his presentation of truth. The result is a much more sophisticated Chaucer, one who has taken all he can from his predecessors and become the Chaucer of the major poems.

Edwards's conclusions will probably meet little opposition from the Chaucer community. The more we learn about the development of Chaucer's art the better. But the Dream of Chaucer is not an easy book, and its writing could have been more lucid. Granted that the subject is complex, that an intense critical analysis always brings its own built-in intricacies, some of Edwards's theoretical positions still might have been presented less enigmatically. That, however, is a minor problem. This book is a valuable source of good information for those with the patience to find it.

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Embracing recent critics who see Chaucer's art as "‘contrastive,' ‘exploratory,' a repository of 'partial truths,' ‘pluralistic,' ‘inconclusive,' ‘plurivalent,' and ‘disjunctive' '" (169), Paul Strohm develops a complementary social dimension by asking: What are the social implications of a plurivalent and disjunctive art of the late fourteenth century? After examining the structure of the late fourteenth-century social relations, Chaucer's position as a courtier, his audience, and his work, Strohm offers an answer thoroughly congenial to our own times. Of the Canterbury Tales, for example, Strohm concludes: "The hospitality of Chaucer's ‘framing fiction' to the varied styles and genres and forms in which his tellers express themselves, and to the ultimate irreconcilability of their voices,