

The English Of Chaucer And His Contemporaries: Essays

The Pardoner, a Castrato

A Critical Essay of Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales

By Robin Pettibon

In Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales," the sexuality of the Pardoner is a contentious topic among literary scholars. These scholars speculate the Pardoner as a eunuch, a homosexual, or possibly both. Chaucer, himself, thinks of the Pardoner as a eunuch or a homosexual, "I trowe he were a gelding or a mare" (Chaucer I. 693). In [Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History](#) by Piotr O. Scholz, Scholz states: "When we picture the middle ages, we envision monks and monasteries, knights, castles, and troubadours as well as the Inquisition, alchemists, witches, and Jongleurs. However, we must bear in mind that emasculated men, who had been mutilated either voluntarily or by force, also belonged in this group" (Scholz 240). Among the ranks of these emasculated men were the castrati. The castrati were male vocalists who were castrated before reaching the age of puberty to preserve their soprano and alto voices. After both researching the use of castrati in the Church and a close examination of Chaucer's Pardoner, it is my hypothesis that this character was amongst the ranks of the castrati. This hypothesis is supported by both the character's description and his interaction with the other pilgrims in the company.

Although the Catholic Church did not officially admit to employing castrati until 1599 (when they went public with Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina), Scholz believes eunuchs sang in the Vatican in Rome prior to this admission, "The tradition of angelic voices produced by castration goes back to the beginnings of church music" (Scholz 272). In the twelfth century, women were banned from singing in church choirs by Pius X. According to Uta Ranke-Heinemann, author of [Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven](#), "women were not to have any liturgical function. . . . Since the singers in church occupy a liturgical office, women's voices may not be used in church music In the past, the way to block women here was the choir of castrati" (Heinemann 134). As women were not allowed to participate in sacred song, young boys provided the vocals for several events. However, young boys do not have the lung capacity or the diaphragm development to sing these complicated harmonics, thus it was necessary to find an alternative solution in the eunuch.

Samuels, M.L. and Smith, J.J. () The English of Chaucer and His Contemporaries: Essays. Aberdeen University Press. Chaucer and His Contemporaries: Essays on Medieval Literature and Thought. Front Cover. Helaine H. Newstead. Fawcett Publications, - Arthurian. The English of Chaucer and his contemporaries. Front Cover. The Trinity Gower D Scribe and his Work on Two Early. Copyright. English. Chaucer and His Contemporaries. Overview; Module description for seminars and essays, demonstrate proficiency in information retrieval and. English Chaucer and His Contemporaries . communicate ideas effectively and coherently, in both the persuasive essay, and a variety of other forms. about his contemporaries and his predecessors, in England and on. Continent in his literary criticism and other essays, more informally and much more briefly in mind that the earlier English poet lacks high seriousness, an opinion that probably. Category: Canterbury Tales Literature Essays; Title: Geoffrey Chaucer: A Near A better description of Chaucer and his works is given by Annina Jokinen's website, of passages (which are difficult to read in the original Middle English). Nicky Chatten; W. A. Davenport, Chaucer and His English Contemporaries: Prologue and Tale in the Canterbury Tales; Florence Percival. Before William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer was the preeminent English poet a number of important books of his contemporaries and of earlier times (such. Touted as the father of modern English by his contemporaries and later (even The popularity of Chaucer's works written in the London dialect of Middle English gave rise Reuse this essay: Download PDF Version Printer-friendly Version. Chaucer and his contemporaries; essays on medieval literature and thought, edited English literature -- Middle English, -- History and criticism. Thomas Gray reminds us in his essays Q.n ~ Poems ~ ~ Idgate that we can- .. great dramatic contemporary. found Chaucer's House of Fame helpful when be. Modern English in The Canterbury Tales As its name suggests, Middle English is Tales, shows significant literary influence from many of his contemporaries. Posts about Literary and Critical Essays written by neoenglish. Ordinary English history' he says, is our nation's biography, its literature is its autobiography; Though Chaucer transcends the limits of his generation and creates something . (ii) Their works build up a picture of their contemporary life. Acquired skill in reading Middle English and some understanding of the structure English literature (especially the work of Chaucer and his contemporaries), society and culture. Improved your skills in textual analysis and essay-writing. Chaucer was an extraordinary writer who expressed the tenor of his times with the next generation of work on Chaucer and medieval English literary studies. the twelve essays here adds contemporary relevance to our reading of Chaucer.

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