Interventions: New Studies in Medieval Culture
Ethan Knapp, Series Editor

"Chaucer’s (Anti-)Eroticsisms and the Queer Middle Ages is exhaustively researched both in the theoretical works that underpin its arguments and in the practical criticism of the various Chaucerian works under examination. With its careful and thoughtful readings, this book is a convincing expansion of the fields of both Chaucer studies and queer medieval studies."

—Robert Sturges, Arizona State University

"Tison Pugh’s interest in the anti-erotic, and in the contradictions of medieval discourses about chastity and married love, promises to solve some of the problems inherent in Chaucer criticism. Pugh’s Chaucer is queer because he’s aware of his culture’s contradictions and writing through them, and Pugh’s careful thinking and reading opens up many new avenues for study and research. Chaucer’s (Anti-)Eroticsisms and the Queer Middle Ages is, without a doubt, an important contribution to the fields of Chaucer studies, medieval literary studies, and queer literary studies and to the study of the history of sexuality."

—Masha Raskolnikov, Cornell University, author of Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowklede in Middle English Allegory

Using queer theory to untangle various nonnormative sexual identities in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and other works, Tison Pugh explores the ongoing tension in the Middle Ages between an erotic culture that glorified love as an ennobling passion and an anti-erotic religious and philosophical tradition that denigrated love and (perhaps especially) its enactments. Chaucer’s (Anti-)Eroticsisms and the Queer Middle Ages considers the many ways in which anti-eroticsisms complicate the conventional image of Chaucer as a defining love poet of the Western tradition. For Chaucer, erotic pursuits establish the thrust and tenor of many of his narratives, as they also expose the frustrations inherent in pursuing desires frowned upon by the religious foundations of medieval culture. One cannot love freely within an ideological framework that polices sexuality and privileges the anti-erotic Christian ideals of virginity and chastity, yet loving queerly creates escapes from social structures inimical to amour and its expressions in the medieval period.

With chapters addressing such topics as mutual masochism, homosocial brotherhood, necrotic erotics, queer families, and the eroticsims of Chaucer’s God, Chaucer’s (Anti-)Eroticsisms and the Queer Middle Ages will forever change the way readers see the Canterbury Tales and Chaucer’s other masterpieces, proving that Chaucer is not just England’s foundational love poet, he is England’s foundational queer poet as well.

Tison Pugh is professor of English at the University of Central Florida.

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