



UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN PRESS

BAD Chaucer

The Great Poet's Greatest Mistakes
in the *Canterbury Tales*



Tison Pugh

DOI: 10.3998/mpub.12090206

6 x 9 | 288 pages

Hardcover | 2024 | \$30.00 U.S.
ISBN 9780472133444

Ebook
ISBN 9780472221257



Bad Chaucer's best features are its provocative starting point and its comprehensive commitment to identifying 'a wider range of lapses and blunders in such topics as thematic consistency, narrative coherency, and character development' in each of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, even the ones that are frequently overlooked by critics. The author has an impressively broad and comprehensive knowledge of Chaucerian texts and criticism. The writing is lucid, lively, and graceful."

—Carissa Harris, Temple University

BAD CHAUCER

The Great Poet's Greatest Mistakes in the
Canterbury Tales

By Tison Pugh

Acclaimed for centuries as the "Father of English Literature," Geoffrey Chaucer enjoys widespread and effusive praise for his classic *Canterbury Tales*—and rightfully so. Still, even the greatest of authors cannot claim perfection, and so *Bad Chaucer: The Great Poet's Greatest Mistakes in the Canterbury Tales* analyzes his various missteps, missed opportunities, and other blunders in this peerless masterpiece. From a vexing catalog of trees in the *Knight's Tale* to the flirtations with blasphemy in the *Parson's Tale*, this volume progresses through the *Canterbury Tales* story by story, tale by tale, pondering the most egregious failing of each in turn. Viewed collectively, Chaucer's troubles stem from clashing genres that disrupt interpretive clarity, themeless themes that undermine any message a tale might convey, mischaracterized characters who act without clear motivation, purposeful and otherwise pleasurable badness that show Chaucer's appreciation for the humor of bad literature, and outmoded perspectives that threaten to alienate modern readers. Badness is not always to be lamented but often celebrated, even cherished, for badness infuses artistic creations with the vitality that springs from varied responses, spirited engagements, and the inherent volatility of enjoying literature. On the whole, *Bad Chaucer: The Great Poet's Greatest Mistakes in the Canterbury Tales* swerves literary criticism in a new direction by examining the provocative question, for too long overlooked, of what this great author got wrong.

Tison Pugh is Pegasus Professor of English at the University of Central Florida. He is the author or editor of over two dozen books, including *On the Queerness of Early English Drama: Sex in the Subjunctive* and *Chaucer's (Anti-) Eroticisms and the Queer Middle Ages*.

**ORDER ONLINE AND SAVE 30%
WITH DISCOUNT CODE UMS24!**

press.umich.edu