

Document Citation

Title	Pasolini's 'Canterbury Tales' is everything it should be
Author(s)	Scott Cain
Source	<i>Atlanta Journal</i>
Date	1979 Dec 26
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	9-B
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	racconti di Canterbury (The Canterbury tales), Pasolini, Pier Paolo, 1971

Pasolini's 'Canterbury Tales' Is Everything It Should Be

By SCOTT CAIN

Journal Entertainment Editor

Code Rating—X. Journal Guide—Sex, a lot; Violence, considerable; Nudity, plenty; Language, bawdy. Theater—Screening Room in Broadview Plaza.

After nearly a decade, Pasolini's "The Canterbury Tales" is being given its American premiere in Atlanta. Happily — and shockingly — the picture is everything we might have imagined.

Let's not forget that Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," on which the movie is based, is an exceedingly lusty saga. Pasolini has only rendered Chaucer into a visual medium, but with a lighter touch than Chaucer had.

Like Pasolini's other films, of which "Canterbury Tales" is one of the most important, passion for life is first and foremost. Here are people, bursting with vitality, who live for the moment and are determined to have a good time about it.

The production is exceedingly beautiful. Pasolini photographed it in locations authentic to the Chaucer work. Aided by cinematographer Tonino Delli Colli, Pasolini arranges one ravishing scene after another. He sees countless landmarks from a great artist's fresh perspective.

It was always Pasolini's gift to make ancient times spring to life. Medieval London, with all its beauty and ugliness, bustles before our eyes. The countryside, serene on the surface and seething with wicked activity underneath, is simultaneously alluring and repugnant.

Pasolini's gift for faces was every bit the equal of Fellini's. He could take people off the street — and often did — and put them comfortably into clothes of a bygone era. In this film, he employs actors who speak a broad range of English brogues. The costumes, designed by Danilo Donati, are wonderful in their grandeur and variety.

The movie opens with a prologue. Pilgrims on their way to Canterbury are challenged by their host to tell a tale, with the best to receive a prize. At the end of each story, Pasolini does not flash back to this gathering, but instead launches directly into the next narrative.

The first is "The Merchant's Tale," in which Hugh Griffith uses his sharpest, bossiest and most lascivious manner as old Sir January. He decides to take a beautiful young

bride, but she is bored with her decrepit husband and soon takes a fancy to a handsome page. Their romance would seem to have a clear path after Sir January is mysteriously afflicted with blindness, but who knows what may happen?

In "The Friar's Tale," a rent collector supplements his income by spying on men who patronize a homosexual brothel. Later, he either bribes them or reports them to corrupt church officials, who burn them at the stake. The Devil (Franco Citti) observes this "summoner" at his insidious activity, then plots a way to capture the man's soul.

A funny sequence is "The Cook's Tale," in which Ninetto Davoli is a young rascal in London. Davoli, who looks and acts very much like the youthful Charlie Chaplin, manages to create havoc in a soup line, causes chaos at a grocery where the owner makes the mistake of giving him a job and disrupts a wedding to which he has not been invited.

"The Miller's Tale" has two young men, unbeknownst to each other, plotting to make love to the same married woman. One of them gets her husband out of the way by warning of an impending flood. Lots of funny shenanigans occur during a subsequent night of romance.

In "The Wife of Bath's Tale," Laura Betti's sexual appetite has just worn out her fourth husband. She casts her eye on a student (Tom Bell, who played Rasputin in "Nicholas and Alexandra"). She is both amazed and dismayed to discover he is more interested in reading books than in making whoopee.