'What rekketh me of youre auctoritees?' John Thorne explores Chaucer's ironic challenges to authority in 'The Merchant's Tale'

The words of Queen Proserpine towards the end of 'The Merchant's Tale' produce more sympathy for her point of view in the modern reader than was probably felt by Chaucer's original audience. Proserpine's contempt for her husband's flimsy arguments and the flaky support his knowledge of the Bible gives them, strikes a chord with modern attitudes.

But the Middle English 'auctoritee' has more positive associations and a much narrower meaning than the modern equivalent 'authority'. In the fourteenth century, authorities were sources of practical wisdom and welcome guidance in a world which was filled with material and spiritual peril. In 'The Merchant's Tale' and medieval writing generally, their presence is pervasive.

Thorne, John


Source Citation

Document URL
http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=SUIC>windowstate=normal&contentModules=&mode=view&displayGroupName=Journals&limiter=&currPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroups=&sortBy=&source=&search_within_results=&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE|A136339236&userGroupName=holl83564&jsid=954727620a953de9b106e0b91c4d209e

Gale Document Number: GALE|A136339236