

# UC San Diego

## New Chaucer Studies: Pedagogy and Profession

### Title

The Wife of Bath, Fanfiction Writer: Teaching “The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bath”

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7cf0k7d4>

### Journal

New Chaucer Studies: Pedagogy and Profession, 4(2)

### Author

Wilson, Anna P.

### Publication Date

2023

### DOI

10.5070/NC34262322

### Copyright Information

Copyright 2023 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed



# PEDAGOGY & PROFESSION

---

## NEW CHAUCER STUDIES

---

Volume 04 | Issue 02

Fall 2023

---

## The Wife of Bath, Fanfiction Writer: Teaching “The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bath”

Anna P. Wilson

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5229-9716>

Harvard University, U.S.

---

Wilson. 2023. The Wife of Bath, Fanfiction Writer: Teaching “The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bath.” *New Chaucer Studies: Pedagogy and Profession* 4.2: 9–20.

[https://escholarship.org/uc/ncs\\_pedagogyandprofession/](https://escholarship.org/uc/ncs_pedagogyandprofession/) | ISSN: 2766-1768.

© 2023 by the author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives 4.0 license. *New Chaucer Studies: Pedagogy and Profession* is an open access, bi-annual journal sponsored by the New Chaucer Society and published in eScholarship by the California Digital Library. | [https://escholarship.org/uc/ncs\\_pedagogyandprofession/](https://escholarship.org/uc/ncs_pedagogyandprofession/) | ISSN: 2766-1768.

The editorial staff of *New Chaucer Studies: Pedagogy and Profession* works hard to ensure that contributions are accurate and follow professional ethical guidelines. However, the views and opinions expressed in each contribution belong exclusively to the author(s). The publisher and the editors do not endorse or accept responsibility for them. See [https://escholarship.org/uc/ncs\\_pedagogyandprofession/policies](https://escholarship.org/uc/ncs_pedagogyandprofession/policies) for more information.

# The Wife of Bath, Fanfiction Writer: Teaching “The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bath”

Anna P. Wilson

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5229-9716>

Harvard University, U.S.

---

## Abstract

Fanfiction offers a rich and accessible framework for teaching on topics of adaptation and reception in medieval literature. This article outlines a course that teaches the reception history of two canonical medieval texts—the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—through fanfiction, with a detailed example of a text taught in this course, a 2008 fanfiction short story which reimagines the Wife of Bath as a fanfiction writer.

---

The current course description for “Medieval Fanfiction,” a course I teach within the English department at my university (although it attracts many non-English majors) is as follows:

Fanfiction is a surprisingly powerful tool for examining medieval literature. It sheds light on the dynamics of rereading and transformation that characterize medieval literary culture, which in turn deepen our own understanding of the nature of creativity. In this class we will read some twentieth- and twenty-first-century retellings of medieval stories, including fanfiction, alongside medieval literary texts that rewrite, reimagine, or transform pre-existing stories. We will follow two characters through time who have both transcended their own original contexts: the Wife of Bath, and Sir Gawain. Along the way we will learn what medieval readers and writers thought of questions like, what is an author? What is literature? What is a character? We will also learn how characters move from one text to another, and will think about what medieval characters and stories mean today.

This course is currently structured as a lecture course with discussion sections, although in practice I incorporate seminar-style discussions into lectures regularly. I discuss below the uses of fanfiction as a tool for teaching medieval literature (and vice versa) using this course as a case study, and I give an example of a class on one text, a 2008 fanfiction short story based on Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, published on the digital fanfiction platform *The Archive of Our Own*. The two appendices discuss the ethics of teaching with fanfiction and include a syllabus outline.

The “Medieval Fanfiction” course tends to attract students who have extensive knowledge of fanfiction. They are often active writers and participants in fan communities, but most have never taken a class in medieval literature before or even an English class; students in this class are often seniors majoring in the social sciences or STEM who have chosen a ‘fun’ elective before graduation. For these students, fanfiction is the primary appeal, and offers a productive framework through which to approach a range of subjects they would never have encountered otherwise in the course of their studies, and certainly not in a single course: we read Middle English poetry, medieval and modern literary theory, an eighteenth-century broadside ballad, twenty-first-century fanfiction, contemporary poems and short stories, and we usually watch at least one movie or play. The final assignment includes options for a research paper or a creative writing piece including a reflection in which they discuss their approach to writing a fanfiction of a medieval text.

We spend the first two weeks developing the intellectual tools we will use through the rest of the class, first by constructing together a definition of fanfiction based on our shared understanding of the term, then refining this by reading some fan studies scholars, and finally comparing fanfiction with alternative models of adaptation from modern and medieval literary theory through some short, accessible articles and extracts (see Appendix 2). During this process, the students come to articulate for themselves the ideas that drive this course: that adaptations include interpretations; that adaptations are created within particular contexts and for particular audiences; that adaptations serve the needs and wants of those audiences, but also play a role in shaping those audiences; that for this reason, when studying adaptation, authors and audiences cannot be easily treated separately. Students also interrogate the monolithic model of literary authorship, and conclude in the course of our

discussions that literary authorship is not a single, transparent construct even today, but is and has been moveable, multiple, and contingent.

When we write a series of definitions of fanfiction on the chalkboard on the first day, the students often start by describing what fanfiction *does*—transform, rewrite, supplement, and reimagine previous texts—before expanding outwards into the way fanfiction is circulated on digital archives and through social media, its ‘unauthorized’ status and relationship to copyright, its reputation as ‘bad,’ and its overwhelming popularity with women and LGBTQ+ people, especially under-25s. They bring up test cases and exceptions: what about novels based on texts that are out of copyright? What about published spin-off novels? What about parodies? What about fanfiction based on the lives of celebrities that does not adapt ‘texts’ per se? This discussion allows the students to share their own knowledge and become comfortable with being ‘authorities’ on fanfiction in the classroom—they rarely have been invited to share this part of their reading in a formal setting—before we enter into the medieval literary theory in week two. I invite the students to draw comparisons between our understanding of what fanfiction writers do to source texts, and medieval metaphors of literary adaptation and influence, including Augustine’s Israelites who melt down gold from the Egyptians (*De Doctrina Christiana* II. 40), and Seneca’s bees who take pollen from multiple flowers to create honey (*Epistolae* 84). We read excerpts from Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation*, and from several scholarly studies of fanfiction.<sup>1</sup>

I have taught the class a few different ways, but currently its syllabus is roughly divided into two sections (see Appendix 2): in the first half of the semester we follow the Wife of Bath, from *The Canterbury Tales* through to Zadie Smith’s 2021 play *The Wife of Willesden*, and in the second half, Sir Gawain, from his appearances in several late medieval Gawain romances (including *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [henceforth *SGGK*]) through to Kat Howard’s 2016 short story “The Green Knight’s Wife” and David Lowry’s *The Green Knight* (2021). After our first two weeks, in which we also dedicate some time to learning to read Middle English in discussion sections, the students are well prepared to think in complex ways about the treatment of gender, textuality, reading, desire, and interpretation in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale* and its adaptations. By the beginning of the second half of the semester, the students are well practiced in thinking about interpretation and audience together; the two shorter Gawain romances with which we begin our Gawain section allow them to both look back to how the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* transforms the loathly lady plot which *Ragnelle* shares, and to look forward to how *SGGK* (which we read in modern translation) reworks the elements from which both *Ragnelle* and *The Carle of Carlisle* are built for a knowledgeable medieval romance audience, while also extracting comedy from Gawain’s uncomfortable encounter with his own ‘fandom’ (Florschuetz 2019). Contextualizing *SGGK* within Gawain romances in this way allows students to appreciate its playful self-awareness and metatextuality (which I have found difficult to convey in a survey course context). Our journey through Gawain adaptations allows us to compare and contrast their treatment of gender, sexuality, genre, character, and, in contemporary adaptations, the uses of the Middle Ages. We spend several sessions on medievalism and pop Arthuriana, including a feminist modern reimaging of *SGGK* in a short story by Kat Howard. Sexual violence is a theme running through the class, explored from different

---

<sup>1</sup> See Hutcheon 2006; Derecho 2006; Stasi 2006; Busse 2017; Wilson 2021.

perspectives and with different valences and symbolic functions in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale*, in the commentary of scholars on the Cecily Chaumpaigne case, and in the uncomfortable, titillating predations of *SGGK*.

It is towards the midway point of the course, then, that I teach the only self-declared piece of fanfiction on the syllabus “The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bathe,” by Beth H.<sup>2</sup> In its brief 1620 words, it packs in a host of witty references for an audience highly familiar with both medieval literature and fanfiction.

The story begins with a gathering of women friends at the house of Alisoun, Wife of Bath. This group, known as the Bath Narrative Fellowship, meets regularly to hear Alisoun tell stories, under the pretext of discussing devotional literature. Several of the women bring for the group’s enjoyment a new manuscript containing (as becomes clear, although it is never named) Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*. On a quick initial scan of the text, Alisoun immediately becomes convinced that its author does not know his business, and in her retelling for the group, she transforms it according to the clichés of fanfiction. Emilye joins Diana’s huntresses, and Arcite and Palamon consummate their love in Venus’ glade; Alisoun’s version provokes a rapturous response from her friends. The story ends with a short epilogue: far away on a Greek hillside, the real Arcite, in the arms of his lover Palamon, reflects on their recent encounter with a “bard from Albion,” whom they had paid off to conceal their love by transforming their tale.

“No readers of poetry, he thought, would ever now be able to discern the true nature of their relationship, not unless the gods willed it to be so . . .  
 . . . or, perhaps, unless there lived a woman in Bath with a special gift for seeing sub-text.”

“The Seconde Tale” thus functions as a metacommentary on both fanfiction and *The Canterbury Tales*. Its full title, “The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bathe,” positions the story as a partial fulfillment of Chaucer’s original ambitious scheme as it is laid out by the Host (four stories per pilgrim, two on the way to Canterbury, two on the way back); as a supplement to *The Canterbury Tales*’ unfinished project, it bridges the literary conventions of fanfiction and of late medieval texts which positioned themselves similarly. In class, we compare this authorial self-positioning with John Lydgate’s “Prologue to the Siege of Thebes,” in which Lydgate literally and figuratively takes the place of Chaucer in the pilgrimage for the return journey, and with the less conspicuously self-authorizing editorial attempt to ‘fix’ *The Canterbury Tales* in Northumberland MS 455, which includes *The Canterbury Interlude* and *The Tale of Beryn* (Bowers 1992).

The “Seconde Tale” also cannily invites comparison between authorship in medieval literature and fandom in still a third way, not obvious at first glance, as its original readers would have encountered it as an anonymous work. The story was written for ‘Yuletide,’ an annual fanfiction gift exchange festival; such ‘fests’ are one of the communal, collaborative practices through which fanfiction is written and circulated. For the Yuletide gift exchange, participants register their willingness to write fanfiction in several fandoms and submit requests for several others, and are then

---

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent citations will not give line or page references to the story, as it is hosted on a single webpage without line numeration or chapter divisions.

secretly assigned another participant's request. They produce a gift in the form of tailored fanfiction for their recipient by the deadline, to be publicly revealed on 25 December. The secrecy of assignments is closely guarded, and the identities of authors are not revealed until 1 January. The circumstances of Alisoun's composition of her fanfiction are similar to those of this festival: she is asked to reimagine a specific text within certain time constraints, tailored to the pleasure of a specific audience of friends and to the generic expectations of fanfiction more broadly. "The Seconde Tale" thus invites a comparison between the fanfiction gift exchange and the competitive story exchange of *The Canterbury Tales*, and invites its fan readership to see Alisoun's 'medieval' narrative fellowship as an ancestor to their own in the history of communal storytelling. It also invites a reflection on the historical relationship between anonymity and the invisibility of women's writing and literary cultures; within the story's fiction, the Wife's "Seconde Tale" is a product of a kind of oral improvisation, akin to the "flyting" attributed to her by Satan in the longer variant of *The Wanton Wife of Bath*, and hence of a kind of authorship unrepresented in the literary tradition (Bowden 2017, 315). The detail about the women meeting under the guise of discussing devotional works opens up the potential for the class conversation to range back to our earlier readings on medieval literary communities, and in particular to an expansive understanding of literacy in the Middle Ages to include women like Margery Kempe, widely and deeply read but apparently illiterate in some modern senses.

"The Seconde Tale" also picks up on themes of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* such as women's writing, women's storytelling, and women's adaptation, reading them through the lens of fan history. Its portrayal of the Wife of Bath's storytelling draws on a feminist theory of fanfiction that was widespread and conventional within fandom and in fan studies in the 1990s and early 2000s, which emerged from feminist cultural studies.<sup>3</sup> This theory understands fanfiction—whose readers and writers are overwhelmingly women—as an embodied, empowering form of reclaiming patriarchal media texts for female audiences. Critics who have described fanfiction this way have often done so by situating it within a *longue durée* of women's creative work. "The Seconde Tale" imagines fanfiction as part of an alternative lineage of storytelling associated with women's crafts by emphasizing Alisoun's professional success as a weaver and clothier.

The Bath Narrative Fellowship is itself a remarkable collective. It includes Alisoun and Dame Alys, her friend and confidante mentioned in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, but also Griselda, Constance, and Cecily Chaumpaigne, making up a community of women abused by Chaucer, as author and possible rapist, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Chaucer's only mention in the story comes in a curious exchange between these women:

"Right in front of the Abbey, he was," said Alys excitedly, handing the newly purchased—and as yet, unread—parchment to Alisoun. "Such a fine speaker—and so very handsome!"

---

<sup>3</sup> See Bacon-Smith 1992; Penley 1997; Busse et al. 2009; for critiques of this model, see Wanzo 2015; Stanfill 2018; Pande 2018.

<sup>4</sup> At the time this story was written, the only archival document widely known from the Chaumpaigne case was the deed of release absolving him of Chaumpaigne's "raptus"; the inclusion of Cecily offers an arch commentary on scholarly treatment of the Chaumpaigne case.



“I wouldn’t say handsome, exactly,” sniffed Cecily, the only one of the four who appeared not to have been taken in by the stranger’s charms. “Truth to tell, he looked a bit too much like that reprobate Geoffrey for my liking.”

Alys rolled her eyes. “You think all bards look like Geoffrey!”

“How can you say that?” Cecily asked, her lower lip quivering. “You know full well that I ...” Beth H (2008)

‘Geoffrey’ is not named as the author of the tale contained in the manuscript, nor is he even the ‘bard’ who has sold the story to the women; he instead appears as a template or paradigm for “all bards.” In this moment, the specific ambiguities of the Chaumpaigne case (as it was understood in 2008) collapse into the mistreatment of any woman by any man; Chaucer represents, in his brief appearance in this story, the twinned patriarchal literary and legal institutions which subject women to male violence. In this context, Alisoun’s retelling of the *Knight’s Tale* is recuperative as well as subversive.

“The Seconde Tale” also highlights the selective reading practices that the Wife demonstrates in Chaucer’s *Prologue* to the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*, together with her self-interest and unapologetic sexuality, all of which inform her powerful interrogation of the relationship between misogynist literary institutions and misogynist literature. These are all here folded into an imagined history of fanfiction, so that Alisoun becomes a sort of ur-fanfiction writer. Her retelling of the *Knight’s Tale* becomes a project of female resilience and mutual pleasuring: “It was, Alisoun told herself firmly, the story as it *should* have been—and it appeared that her friends felt the same way, at least judging by the happy sighs....” Fanfiction is here imagined as a communal practice which includes both perceptive reading and imaginative transformation, in which women’s pleasure and women’s desire are the primary movers of textual interpretation.

This project of feminist rewriting in “The Seconde Tale” is also firmly aligned (again in ways that reflect conventional understandings of fanfiction at the time) with queer ‘reparative reading’ and with recuperative literary, archival, and historical projects (Sedgwick 2003). Alisoun’s tale, a translation of the *Knight’s Tale* from the generic conventions of medieval romance to those of fanfiction, turns out to be a perceptive and accurate intuiting of a queer happy ending that Chaucer has intentionally concealed.

‘Slash,’ romance fanfiction which focuses on same-sex eroticism (the term ‘slash’ was mainstream in the 1970s–2000s but is now falling out of use), has had an exemplary quality for theories of fanfiction as subversive feminist or queer praxis.<sup>5</sup> Slash has been imagined to resist the marginalization of women in homosocial narratives—such as the *Knight’s Tale*, whose tragedy focuses on the homosocial bond between Palamon and Arcite to the exclusion of Emilye’s agency—by queering these masculine bonds for women’s desiring gaze. Slash—the argument goes—reclaims the texts that privilege male homosociality and reorients them towards a (presumptively heterosexual) women’s desiring gaze. However, this is not an isolated, individual pleasure, but communal, and characterized by gifting and mutual pleasuring between women. By reading the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue* and *Tale* through this theory of fanfiction, “The Seconde Tale” effectively offers a queer reading of the loudly

---

<sup>5</sup> See Penley 1992; Cicioni 1998; Willis 2006; Busse and Lothian 2017.



heterosexual Wife of Bath by imagining her as situated within and oriented towards women readers. It draws attention to the way her reading strategies adapt and repurpose misogynist texts for women's pleasure.

It is important to note here that the understanding of fanfiction reflected in “The Seconde Tale,” predicated on the presumptive heterosexuality of most fanfiction writers, does not resonate with many of today's undergraduates' experience in fanfiction communities in the 2020s, which often have a far more complex and varied sense of queer experience and a vocal and prominent contingent of LGBTQ+ fans. Teaching “The Seconde Tale” to students involves situating it in its own moment of fanfiction history, which is in itself a valuable exercise; taking this approach, at this point in the course, offers students a richer sense of fanfiction as a historically situated practice which has changed over time, rather than a monolithic ‘modern’ which we can compare with an equally monolithic ‘medieval.’

Finally, “The Seconde Tale” opens up a way to revisit the question of whether Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* offer a satiric or sympathetic portrait of women's reading. Beth H reconciles the two by making her Alisoun available to be laughed at as well as with; she does this by incorporating parodies of fanfiction into the tale-within-a-tale. Alisoun's fanfiction of the *Knight's Tale* revels in clichés of bad fanfiction erotica:

The ‘smaller knight,’ with eyes cerulean [4]  
 Gazed up in adoration at his man.  
 ‘Dear Arcite,’ he sighed, “You are my love,  
 And this I swear upon the gods above:  
 That all my heart and soul belong to you  
 And whilst I live, I ever will be true.  
 His love then carried Pal'mon to a bower –  
 A shaded recess strewn about with flowers –  
 Then gently Arcite did lay him down  
 Amidst the flower petals on the ground.  
 And after they had shared a kiss or two,  
 They did what Nature maketh them to do.

[4] If fanfiction.net had been in existence in the medieval period, I think we all know where the Wife of Bath would have been posting her stories.

Beth H (2008)

Footnote [4] is original to the story, one of several in “The Seconde Tale,” whose use of footnotes also invites comparison with the critical editions in which students often read medieval literature. Fanfiction.net, still in existence at time of writing, in the 1990s and 2000s was a digital archive notorious for attracting a younger and less experienced population of writers (and hence, for containing a great deal of bad writing). The quotations around ‘the smaller knight’ gesture towards a widely-criticized cliché of slash in the 1980s and 1990s in which one character in the romantic pairing would inevitably be feminized through being described as smaller and more delicate, regardless of the physiques of the actors portraying the characters in the source text. The use of this cliché, combined with describing Palamon's eyes as “cerulean,” characterizes Alisoun as an enthusiastic but unskilled

writer who relies on cliché and purple prose, all typically associated with young writers. This characterization subtly reflects the Wife's anxieties about her own aging. "The Seconde Tale" offers a sophisticated reading of Chaucer's poem, inviting students to reflect on the relationship between teller and tale, on the pilgrims' interjections, and on the nature of parody, and could be paired well with *Sir Thopas* or *The Squire's Tale* as well as other adaptations of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* that read her in a tradition of women's storytelling.

A common question I receive about working with the analogy between medieval literature and fanfiction regards anachronism: how does one prevent the distortion of medieval literature in the minds of students by offering fanfiction as an analogy? I have found that the answer, for me—perhaps paradoxically—is to insist upon fanfiction's own historically situated, unique qualities. Rather than offering fanfiction as a universal 'kind of literature' of broad applicability and utility within which some medieval literature can be enfolded, approaching fanfiction from the outset as a literature of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, intimately bound up with the digital revolution and modern celebrity culture, and written and circulated primarily among women and LGBTQ+ people, draws attention to analogous nodes in medieval literary culture. Comparison with fanfiction enables students to see literary adaptation as a practice in which cultural politics, technologies of reading, educational institutions, individual self-expression, and community formation all play a role.

"The Seconde Tale," as one of the few pieces of twenty-first-century fanfiction I teach in this class, plays an important role here, enabling students to revisit their initial ideas about fanfiction midway through the class. Because it is slightly 'dated' for current undergraduates while still being contemporary, it is both accessible and requires some contextual explanation. Teaching it at this point in the class actually defamiliarizes fanfiction to an extent for the students, encouraging them to retheorize their own understanding of fanfiction as a modern subculture of shared storytelling which is itself continuously subject to historical change. "The Seconde Tale" also refuses to strip away the distinguishing features of fanfiction in the service of comparison with medieval literature. While the story makes its own argument for a continuous tradition connecting medieval literature and fanfiction, it does so playfully, incorporating a loving parody of fanfiction into its portrait of Alisoun as fanfiction writer, reflecting her own half-parodic nature. In this way, the story does not attempt to legitimize or elevate fanfiction by comparison with medieval literature, and instead embraces the funny, the weird, the erotic, the playful, and the queer, as perhaps more unexpected shared qualities of medieval literature and fanfiction.

### **Appendix 1: The Ethics of Teaching Fanfiction**

While much fanfiction is publicly available online and accessible to anyone who knows where to look, there is a growing consensus within fan studies that teaching or research with fanfiction should adhere to guidelines developed by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) for working with online content produced by private individuals, and should be informed by an ethics of care (Busse 2018; Kelley 2016; Pande 2020). Fanfiction is self-published pseudonymously in online archives, where it can expect to find a closely delimited audience of like-minded people who understand the conventions and expectations of the genre and its readers; fanfiction often explores deeply personal topics, including experiences of disability, disordered eating, mental illness, gender dysphoria, and sexual assault, while frequently also including sexually explicit content. As a source for research, fanfiction is

thus more akin to a post on a Facebook page or a Twitter feed than it is to published fiction. Fan writers are vulnerable both to intentional or unintentional violation of their pseudonymity (“doxxing”), and to painful humiliation through exposing their deeply personal work to a critical or uninitiated audience. When I decided I wanted to teach “The Seconde Tale,” I approached Beth H through the public comments section on her story, and after an exchange of emails in which I explained the context in which I wanted to teach the story, she kindly agreed for me to do so. I also include an ethics statement as part of my syllabus (shared below). The ethics statement or equivalent in the classroom functions not only (to the best of my ability) to ensure that students unfamiliar with the norms of fan communities do not cause discomfort or alarm to the authors of the stories we may discuss in class—whom they can contact easily by leaving comments on the stories—but also to implicitly reassure students in the class who themselves write fanfiction that they themselves are worthy of equivalent respect and care.

### **Sample Ethics Statement (Appended to Syllabus)**

*Fanfiction is unlike most texts read in classrooms, in that although these days it is mostly publicly accessible, it is published and circulated for free, for love, within living, active communities. Its authors often, for various reasons, choose to protect their identity. Many are minors. Moreover, fanfiction is not generally intended for non-fan consumption. Studying fanfiction from an academic perspective requires respect and consideration for the privacy and safety of the fan communities we study. For this reason, any fanfiction readings will generally be printed stories or downloaded files, not live links. The instructor has spoken to the authors of these fanfictions and gained their consent to teach their stories in this class. Please show respect for the fan community and the authors when you are in their online spaces. Please do not contact authors or leave comments on stories we study in class unless you yourself are very familiar with fandom etiquette. Nobody in this class is required to disclose their fandom pseudonym, if they have one, nor should you reveal anyone else’s fandom pseudonym without their explicit permission.*

### **Appendix 2: Sample Syllabus for “Medieval Fanfiction”**

*The class meets twice a week. Discussion sections begin in week 2, and are largely at the discretion of the teaching assistant.*

Class 1: Introductory session: “What is fanfiction” exercise.

Class 2: Medieval ideas of authorship. Two short essays on medieval authorship & readers: Scase, “Reading Communities” (from ed. Walker and Treharne, *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*), and Bale, “From Translation to Laureate: Imagining the Medieval Author” (*Literature Compass* 5/5 [2008]: 918–93).

Class 3: Selections from Hutcheon, “Chapter 1: Beginning to Theorize Adaptation” (from *A Theory of Adaptation*) and from Wilson, “Fan Fiction and Premodern Literature: Methods and Definitions,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 36 (2021).

Class 4: Introduction to *The Canterbury Tales*; selections from the *General Prologue*, including the description of the Wife of Bath.

Class 5: *Wife of Bath's Prologue*.

Class 6: *Wife of Bath's Tale*.

Class 7: "The Wanton Wife of Bath," short and long versions (from Bowden, *The Wife of Bath in Afterlife*).

Class 8: Minkel, "Mary Sue" (pub. March 23, 2017 @ Fansplaining.com); Beth H, "The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bath" (pub. December 25, 2008, @ The Archive of Our Own); Walker, "A Conversation with Paula Smith and 'A Trekkie's Tale,'" *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 6, 2011.

Class 9: John Lydgate, "Prologue to the *Siege of Thebes*."

Class 10: Selections from Northumberland MS 455, "The Canterbury Interlude" (aka *Prologue to the Tale of Beryn*), TEAMS online edition.

Class 11: Selections from John Dryden, *Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern*; selections from Trigg, *Congenial Souls* (2001).

Class 12: Selections from Bryant, *Geoffrey Chaucer Hath a Blog: Medieval Studies and New Media* (2010).

Class 13: Selections on the Cecily Chaucer-Chaucer legal case.

Class 14: Zadie Smith, *The Wife of Willesden* (2021).

Class 15: Selections from Caroline Bergvall, *Alisoun Sings* (2019), and Patience Agbabi, "The Wife of Bafa" from Agbabi, *Telling Tales* (2014).

Class 16: *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (TEAMS edition).

Class 17: *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* (TEAMS edition).

Class 18: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Part 1 (in translation).

Class 19: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Parts 2 and 3.

Class 20: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Part 4.

Class 21: *The Green Knight* (dir. Lowery, 2021).

Class 22: Kat Howard, “The Green Knight’s Wife,” *Uncanny Magazine* (2016) (URL: <http://uncannymagazine.com/article/green--knights--wife>); Yvor Winters, “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” (from ed. R. L. Barth, *The Selected Poems of Yvor Winters*).

Class 23: Selections from *Chaucer for Children: A Golden Key* by H.R. Haweis (1882).

Class 24: In-class exploration and discussion of picture-book children’s adaptations, including *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by Michael Morpurgo, ill. Michael Foreman, and *The Canterbury Tales* by Geraldine McCaughrean, ill. Victor G. Ambrus.

Final classes: creative project presentations.

### Works Cited: Printed

- Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bowden, Betsy. 2017. *The Wife of Bath in Afterlife: Ballads to Blake*. Studies in Text and Print Culture. Bethlehem, MD: Lehigh University Press; Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.
- Bowers, John M., ed. 1992. *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions*. TEAMS Middle English Text Series. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- Busse, Kristina. 2017. “Intimate Intertextuality and Performative Fragments in Media Fanfiction.” In *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by C. Lee Harrington, Cornel Sandvoss, and Jonathan Gray, 45–59. New York: NYU Press.
- . 2018. “The Ethics of Studying Online Fandom.” In *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, edited by Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott, 9–17. New York and London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Busse, Kristina, Francesca Coppa, Abigail Derecho, Karen Hellekson, Alexis Lothian, and Julie Levin Russo. 2009. “In Focus: Fandom and Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Fan Production.” *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4: 104+.
- Busse, Kristina, and Alexis Lothian. 2018. “A History of Slash Sexualities: Debating Queer Sex, Gay Politics and Media Fan Cultures.” In *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*, edited by Clarissa Smith, Feona Attwood, and Brian McNair, 117–29. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cicioni, Mirna. 1998. “Male Pair-Bonds and Female Desire in Fan Slash Writing.” In *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture, and Identity*, edited by Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander, 153–77. Cresskill: Hampton Press.
- Derecho, Abigail. 2006. “Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction.” In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 61–78. Jefferson: McFarland & Co.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 2006. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge.

- Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve. 2003. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You." In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, edited by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 123–51. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Pande, Rukmini. 2018. *Squee from the Margins: Fandom and Race*. Fandom & Culture. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Penley, Constance. 1992. "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture." In *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, 479–500. New York: Routledge.
- . 1997. *NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America*. New York: Verso.
- Stasi, Mafalda. 2006. "The Toy Soldiers from Leeds: The Slash Palimpsest." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 115–33. Jefferson: McFarland & Co.
- Willis, Ika. 2006. "Keeping Promises to Queer Children: Making Space (for Mary Sue) at Hogwarts." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 153–70. Jefferson: McFarland & Co.

#### Works Cited: Online

- Beth H (bethbethbeth). 2008. "The Seconde Tale of the Wyf of Bathe," *The Archive of Our Own* (December 25, 2008). <https://archiveofourown.org/works/90161>.
- Florschuetz, Angela L. 2019. "'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,' Canonicity, and Audience Participation." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 30 (September). <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2019.1631>.
- Kelley, Brittany. 2016. "Toward a Goodwill Ethics of Online Research Methods." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 22. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0891>.
- Pande, Rukmini. 2020. "How (Not) to Talk about Race: A Critique of Methodological Practices in Fan Studies." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 33 (June). <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2020.1737>.
- Stanfill, Mel. 2018. "The Unbearable Whiteness of Fandom and Fan Studies." In *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, edited by Paul Booth, 305–17. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119237211.ch19>.
- Wanzo, Rebecca. 2015. "African American Acafandom and Other Strangers: New Genealogies of Fan Studies." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 20 (September). <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0699>.
- Wilson, Anna. 2021. "Fan Fiction and Premodern Literature: Methods and Definitions." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 36 (September). <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2021.2037>.