

A Medieval Madwoman in the Attic: Chaucer's Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales*

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Abstract

The literature produced in the male-dominated society in the 19th century England assigned women two certain roles: the angel in the house- pure, dispassionate and submissive- and the monster or madwoman- uncontrollable, passionate, and violent in nature. From the male point of view, madwomen were rebellious women who rejected their submissive roles. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*; restricted by the male-dominated literary circle, women writers of the nineteenth century shaped their heroines in line with the current stereotypes. Yet, the rebellious madwoman in their works represented their rage and struggle to be released from the attic where they have been trapped for years by the pen of the male. Unlike the angel in the house, this madwoman has a story of her own and searches for her self rather than what she is supposed to be, just like another madwoman in the Middle Ages, Wife of Bath in Chaucer's the *Canterbury Tales*. Autonomous and uncontrollable, Wife of Bath has the power to step out the attic provided for her by the author, writes her own story and asks for a say in her own life. Thereby, she turns into a female freak who wants to attempt the pen to put an end to her life of silence. Not bowing to male authority, she flirts with men and boasts about her five husbands. Moulded by her intelligence and experience, her *Prologue* is taken as a revolutionary document for the age it was written. Her fascinating story teaches a knight, one of the most respectable male figures of the time, a universal lesson about the ideal marriage and women's expectations from men. Therefore, this paper aims to portray a medieval madwoman who claims her self through her own story in the 14th century medieval England in which the female self was defined, as wives, widows, mothers and maidens, in a world controlled by men.

Key Words: Female self, female stereotypes, madwoman, middle ages, wife of bath.

As Anne Finch underlines in her poem "The Introduction",¹ a woman attempting the pen is usually taken as an intruder, furthermore; she is associated with madness since to read and to write are accepted as the acts peculiar to men. From Aristotle to Shakespeare, indeed, numerous writers implied in their works that the writer is "like a lesser God";² therefore, the man, as being the author, "a "man of letter" is simultaneously, like his divine counterpart, a father, a master or ruler, and an owner [. . .]".³ As a reaction to the male literary history, the women writers of the nineteenth century, such as Emily and Charlotte Brontë, rewrote the female stereotypes, the angel in the house and the monster or madwoman, and used the latter to reflect their rage and struggle to liberate themselves from the walls of the male-dominated literary circle. Just like their medieval counterpart, Chaucer's Wife of Bath, Alisoun, these mad women having stories of their own claim their selves in their works unlike their foil, the angel in the house.

In fact, anyone interested in Chaucer knows the description of the Wife of Bath in the *General Prologue* by heart, "her gap teeth, her wimple, her hat, her five husbands, her heavy coverchiefs [. . .] her deafness, [. . .] [and] her remedies of love."⁴ In general, there are two counter arguments about what Chaucer did in the portrayal of the Wife of Bath. A group of critics, feminists, post-structuralists and Marxists, support that in the Wife of Bath, Chaucer aims to reflect the "defence of women against the misogamy and misogyny which were so prevalent in medieval culture".⁵ On the other hand, another group of critics argue that "the Wife does not provide a refutation of medieval stereotypes of women but is

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herself meant as the supreme embodiment and confirmation of such stereotypes".⁶ This paper, similar to the former argument, supports that the Wife is a freak, an uncontrollable, rebellious madwoman, who attempts the pen as she crosses the boundaries of her nature by being an author which is taken "not only alien but also inimical to "female characteristics".⁷ Thereby, the woman writer "seems to be anomalous, indefinable, alienated, a freakish outsider"⁸ in male-dominated literature and, as Sexton notes, female creativity, their story telling is associated with "uncontrollable madness".⁹

Accordingly, in the Middle Ages, in which our story teller the Wife lived, the women did not even have a place in society and their "statuses are determined by their fathers or husbands"¹⁰ as they were accepted physically, mentally and socially inferior.¹¹ Yet, the Wife "refuses to be ousted by patriarchal society" through her economic prosperity, her pilgrimages [and] her five marriages".¹² Apart from the roles assigned her by the male as wives, widows, mothers and maidens, she searches for her *self* because, as Susan and Gilbert suggest, "she has an invincible of her own autonomy, her own interiority; she has a sense", in her own words, she has "the authority of her own experience".¹³ Thus, unlike the angel in the house having no story of her own and "defined as wholly passive, completely void of generative power (like "Cyphers")",¹⁴ the Wife has a story of her own and claims authority over her life by asking a crucial question: "Who peynted the leoun, tel me who?"¹⁵ and argues that if the pen was in the hands of the female, the stories would be different.¹⁶

In fact, supporting the superiority of experience over authority,¹⁷ in her own words *auctoritee*, the Wife "wishes to be known and to "be understood"¹⁸ through her story. "Auctoritee" or "author" in modern English evokes the pictures of "modern playwrights, novelists and poets. [. . .] It is [also] synonymous with power--as it was in the fourteenth century- [. . .] When Chaucer was writing, authorship and authority were far more closely allied to each other and to the idea of writing. Authority, ultimately, came from only one source--the Church--and medieval authorship had more to do with teaching than creativity".¹⁹

Correspondingly, in her *Prologue* and *Tale*, the Wife, married at the age of twelve and having five husbands, deals with the fundamental authorities of the Church and "she claims the authority of [. . .] the experience she has endured in the private realm of marriage".²⁰ "Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me / To speke of wo that is in marriage/ For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age, /Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve, /Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve,"; Of tribulacion in mariage, / Of which I am expert in al myn age".²¹ Starus further underlines that

[. . .] against the discourse of serious, public masculine learning, of the knowledge that goes with writing and books, the Wife invokes her knowledge of her own experience of the private, female, domestic world, a knowledge not considered of the same order as authorized knowledge. Moreover, against the tradition of silence, she insists on her right to speak publicly of this traditionally private world of women's wisdom, the knowledge of women's experience most frequently conveyed (from women to women in secret) through the spoken word.²²

The Bible, indeed, was the sole origin of authority in the Middle Ages²³ which was again parallel to the male authority. Yet, "ambitious, competitive, and assertive [. . .] argumentative and independent, willing to argue freely with authority" [. . .], the Wife has male characteristics; furthermore, she identifies herself with the men mentioned in the Bible such as Solomon and Abraham²⁴ as reflected in her prologue. ²⁵ Additionally, the Wife highlights that authority is subject to interpretation. Since her experience comes from her five marriages, she believes that "[e]xperience is both accessible and transmittable [and] [a]uthority—is at once more elusive, less transmittable [. . .]".²⁶ Accordingly, in her *Prologue*, she discusses "the Bible, its meaning, and its interpreters"²⁷ as in the case of the acceptable number of marriage for a woman: "How manye myghte she have in mariage? /Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age /Upon this nombre diffinicioun. /Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun, /But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye, /God bad us for to wexe and multiplye".²⁸

Having valuable experience in marital issues, the Wife, both in her *Prologue* and *Tale*, gives advice to the women and also to the men who are listening to her story. Indeed, the Wife's "search for sovereignty in marriage is the central theme in both her *Prologue* and in the *Tale* she tells".²⁹ She supports equality in marriage which was, as Berggren

notes, absurd in the Middle Ages.³⁰ The Wife's use of marriage in her argument is also meaningful since "[i]n the Middle Ages marriage happened to be defining role for women".

³¹ Yet, as being a madwoman rejecting the inferior status given to her by society, the Wife gains the upper hand in her marriages and in her story she tells about how she controls her husbands in a proudful manner: "I governed hem so wel, after my lawe, /That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe /To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre".³²

The mad Wife's protest against authority coming from the Church and the male in the Middle Ages can be also traced in her exaggetad coverchief. As Dueck argues, in line with the Pauline doctrine, coverchief is an important theological symbol and the Wife's Sunday coverchiefs signify "a scornful submission to the Pauline pronouncement that women cover their head as a sign of submission. Understood in this way, the Wife's excessive coverchiefs function as a parody of compliance, foreshadowing her theological tirade and her loathly lady tale. The coverchiefs are the representative of the Wife's desire to subvert the ecclesiastical and theological imperatives regarding conjugal hierarchy".³³

The Wife's revolt against the authority by telling her story from her own point of view is also apparent in her relationship with her fifth husband, Jankyn, who was once a student at Oxford and beats her.³⁴ As Longworth suggests, "[e]xperience and Authority conflict again in the form of marital discord with her fifth husband. Jankyn, after all, not only commands Authority as a reader and a clerk; but he also enacts Authority in his choice of texts and in choosing what he will read to her. Through the lens of Experience, the Wife of Bath presents the conflict between herself and Jankyn as a struggle between the two of them for power over one another".³⁵ Reading to her, the Clerk tells the stories full of stereotypes about woman: "Women hide their vices until they've trapped a man in marriage. Women love flattery, are unchaste, and their love is like hell".³⁶ By the same token, Thanassoulis argues that the Clerk "represents everything that the Wife has railed against: he is a clerk who delights in quoting from a book of 'wicked wives', a compendium of stories taken from Classical, proverbial and biblical sources exemplifying women's alleged bad behaviour and weaknesses. He is a figure in whom masculinity, literacy and power are distilled [. . .]".³⁷

Tired of hearing stories from the Clerk's "book of wikked wyves";³⁸ the Wife "[r]endered speechless, frustrated and enraged, [. . .] tears pages from the book and punches Jankyn. He in turn strikes her³⁹ which makes her deaf: "By god! he smoot me ones on the lyst, /For that I rente out of his book a leef, /That of the strook myn ere wax al deaf".⁴⁰ Yet, in the end, the Wife takes the lead and they live happily ever after.⁴¹ In other words, as Hanning argues, the Wife "rejects the traditional subservient role of woman, attacks the clerks both for their stereotypic pronouncement about women's wickedness as well as for their unsuitability, due to inexperience, to make pronouncements on women, and attempts to assume the clercky role herself".⁴² About the end of the argument between the wife and husband, Thanassoulis states that "[. . .] the total dominance of the wife is shocking rather than laughable, and the symbolism of her forcing Jankyn to burn his book is radical rather than monstrous".⁴³

In her *Tale*, The Wife, similar to her *Prologue*, tells a story of a knight in the end of which the knight accepts the sovereignty of a woman. Similarly, Brown and Egge state that "three fourths of the Wife's story heretically disrupts sacred medieval hierarchy by giving women maistrie over men".⁴⁴ In other words, attempting the pen, the mad Wife tells her version of the typical knight stories, or romances of the time by highlighting the women's real experience and by expressing their real selves in a male dominated society ironically by the pen of a male, Chaucer: "In th' olde dayes of the kyng arthour, /Of which that britons speken greet honour,"; And so bifel it that this kyng arthour /Hadde in his hous a lusty bachelor, /That on a day cam ridynge fro ryver; /And happed that, allone as he was born, /He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn, /Of which mayde anon, maugree hir heed, /By verray force, he rafte hire maydenhed".⁴⁵ Subverting the traditional knight stories, by the same token, Leicester argues that "[i]n Chaucer the polite knight becomes a convicted rapist who keeps his vow only under duress and in the sulkiest possible manner".⁴⁶

The queen is ready to save the knight's life on the condition that he will find the answer to a question: What do the women desire most?⁴⁷ Searching for the answer for one year and one day, the Knight finally learns the answer from a hag- old, ugly, poor woman. He tells the queen that women desire most being the only authority: "My lige lady,

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generally, quod he, /Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee /As wel over his housbond as hir love, /And for to been in maistrie hym above.”⁴⁸ Yet, the knight has to marry the hag in return for her answer which enrages him as he is the social superior of her: “My love? quod he, nay, my dampnacioun! /Allas! that any of my nacioun /Sholde evere so foule disparaged be! /But al for noght; the ende is this, that he /Constreyned was, he nedes moste hire wedde; /And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.”⁴⁹ In the end, however, the knight submits to the authority of the hag.⁵⁰

Cornelius states that, similar to Alisoun and Jankyn's relationship, the knight's submission to the hag contradicts the Pauline coverchief theology underlying a woman's being surrender to male authority⁵¹ as reflected in the knight's final words to the hag.⁵² Thus, “[h]is submission is now complete [. . .] And now she yields all that she has won. She rewards him not only by turning herself into a young and beautiful woman but also by becoming an obedient wife.”⁵³ According to David Wallace, the Wife's challenge is more radical than the open revolt of the Miller: “The first and most *overt* rebellion of the *Canterbury Tales*, that of the Miller, has long been recognized as an artisanal rewriting of the Knight's magnate world. But the second, that of the Wife of Bath, effects a more radical repudiation of the *Knight's Tale* script”.⁵⁴ Similarly, Leicester points out that “the sovereignty argument” [. . .] is obviously a reversal of ordinary male-female power relations”⁵⁵ in the Middle Ages [as] the Wife “assum[es] male roles, both sexual and, as she becomes the clerk of marriage, intellectual as well. [. . .].”⁵⁶ Additionally, about Chaucer's portrayal of a madwoman in the Middle Ages, Sandra and Gilbert comment that Chaucer foresaw what would happen five centuries later:

When he gave the Wife of Bath a tale of her own, he portrayed her projecting her subversive vision of patriarchal institutions into the story of a furious hag who demands supreme power over her own life and that of her husband: only when she gains his complete acceptance of her authority does this witch transform herself into a modest and docile beauty. Five centuries later, the threat of the hag, the monster, the witch, the madwoman, still lurks behind the compliant paragon of women's stories.⁵⁷

Likewise, Ann S. Haskell “sees the Wife expressing Chaucer's own social beliefs, especially concerning women's issues. [. . .] Through the Tale Chaucer is able to raise the issues of rape, class superiority, physical beauty, masculine superiority and constriction of choice, all in order to question older social values and to propose contemporary ideas which are more appreciative of women and their rights”.⁵⁸ By the same token, Straus underlines that the Wife 's having a say in her story with “her uncontrollable voice”⁵⁹ is “Chaucer's remarkable insertion of a female voice-something rarely heard not only in *The Canterbury Tales* and medieval literature, but in the literary canon [. . .] [as] from the opening lines of her Prologue, the Wife does not simply speak; she insists on asserting her right to speak.”⁶⁰

To conclude, it can be argued that attempting the pen in the Middle Ages where the authority comes from only the Church and the male, the Wife turns into a rebellious and uncontrollable madwoman who claims her self through her own story. In fact, it can be also supported that the Wife's *Prologue* and *Tale* stand for, as Sandra and Gilbert suggest for the nineteenth century women writers, “the woman writer's quest for her own story; it is story, in other words, of the woman's quest for self-definition”.⁶¹

Notes

¹ Alas! A woman that attempts the pen
Such an intruder on the rights of men,
Such a presumptuous Creature is esteem'd
The fault can by no virtue be redeem'd. (9-12). Anne, K. Finch, *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchelsea*, Ams Pr Inc: Brooklyn, 1993.

² Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic : the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1984, p. 5.

³ Ibid., p.7.

⁴ Peter G. Beidler, ‘Chaucer's Wife of Bath's “Foot-Mantel” and Her “Hipes Large”’, *The*

Chaucer Review 34. 4, 2000, p. 388.

⁵ S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages. Class, Status and Gender*, London: Macmillan, 1995, p.133.

⁶ Ibid., p. 134.

⁷ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic : the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination*, p.8.

⁸ Ibid., p. 48.

⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁰ S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages. Class, Status and Gender*, p. 245.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 251.

¹² Verna De Jong Lindscoog, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath: Critical Approaches in the Twentieth Century' (PhD diss., University of Arkansas, 1983), p. 194.

¹³ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic : the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination*, p.16.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁵ A man and a lion see a representation of a man overpowering a lion. The lion questions the truth and accuracy of this picture: clearly a man and not a lion had produced it, he said; if lions could paint or sculpt, the representation would be totally reversed. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 1957, p. 30.

¹⁶ By God, if women hadde written stories/As clerkes han withinne hir oratories,/They wolde han written of men more wikednesse/Than all the mark of Adam may redresse. Ibid., 693-696.

¹⁷ Experience, though noon auctoritee/Were in this world, is right ynogh for me. Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁸ Robert Longworth, 'The Wife of Bath and The Samaritan Woman', *The Chaucer Review* 34. 4, 2000, p. 372.

¹⁹ Rachel Thanassoulis, 'Medieval authorship and authority in The Canterbury Tales: Rachel Thanassoulis discusses 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue' in the light of medieval ideas of authority', *The English Review* 17.4, 2007, p. 34.

²⁰ Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Subversive Discourse of the Wife of Bath: Phallogentric Discourse and the Imprisonment of Criticism', *ELH* 55. 3, 1988, p.530.

²¹ Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me / To speke of wo that is in marriage/ For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age, /Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve, /Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve," ; Of tribulacion in mariage, / Of which I am expert in al myn age. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1-6;173-74.

²² Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Subversive Discourse of the Wife of Bath: Phallogentric Discourse and the Imprisonment of Criticism', p. 530.

²³ As Thanassoulis notes, "[i]t is interesting to note that the Wife spends the first 233 lines of her prologue tackling some of the biblical arguments--mainly stated by St Paul--that were used to promote virginity and condemn marriage. This underscores the fact (since she feels obliged to deal with them first) that written, theological arguments were the most inescapable and significant obstacles to her way of life". Rachel Thanassoulis, 'Medieval authorship and authority in The Canterbury Tales: Rachel Thanassoulis discusses 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue' in the light of medieval ideas of authority', p.34.

²⁴ Verna De Jong Lindscoog, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath: Critical Approaches in the Twentieth Century', p. 208.

²⁵ Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye? /Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun salomon; /I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon. /As wolde God it were lefeful unto me /To be refresshed half so ofte as he! Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 34-38.

²⁶ Robert Longworth, 'The Wife of Bath and The Samaritan Woman', p. 372.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 381.

²⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 23-28.

²⁹ Colin A. Ireland, 'A Coverchief or a Calle': The Ultimate End of the Wife of Bath's Search for Sovereignty', *Poetry Criticism* 58, 2005, p. 150.

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³⁰ Verna De Jong Lindscoog, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath: Critical Approaches in the Twentieth Century', p. 202.

³¹ Ibid., p. 205.

³² Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 219-221.

³³ Ervin Cornelius Dueck, 'The Wife of Bath's coverchiefs and conjugal sovereignty in four Chaucerian marriage tales' (MA. Th., Simon Fraser University, 2007), p. 4.

³⁴ Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle. /God lete his soule nevere come in helle! /And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe; /That feelee I on my ribbes al by rewe, /And evere shal unto myn endyng day. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 503- 507.

³⁵ Robert Longworth, 'The Wife of Bath and The Samaritan Woman', p. 382.

³⁶ Kevin J. Burke, 'Chaucerian Representations of Human Behavior: Determined and Free Action in the *Knight's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*' (Phd. Diss., University of Delaware, 2011), p. 116.

³⁷ Rachel Thanassoulis, 'Medieval authorship and authority in The Canterbury Tales: Rachel Thanassoulis discusses 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue' in the light of medieval ideas of authority', p.34.

³⁸ To quote the Wife, "He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves/Than been of goode wyves in the bible. For trusteth wel, it is an impossible /That any clerk wol speke good of wyves. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 685; 686-689.

³⁹ Kevin J. Burke, 'Chaucerian Representations of Human Behavior: Determined and Free Action in the *Knight's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*', p. 128.

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 634-636.

⁴¹ But atte laste, with muchel care and wo, /We fille acorded by us selven two. /He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond, /To han the governance of hous and lond, /And of his tonge, and of his hond also; /And made hym brenne his book anon right tho". Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 811-816.

⁴² Verna De Jong Lindscoog, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath: Critical Approaches in the Twentieth Century', p. 200.

⁴³ Rachel Thanassoulis, 'Medieval authorship and authority in The Canterbury Tales: Rachel Thanassoulis discusses 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue' in the light of medieval ideas of authority', p.34.

⁴⁴ Carole K. Brown and Marion F. Egge, 'The Friar's Tale and the Wife of Bath's Tale', *PMLA* 91. 2, 1976, p. 291.

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 857-858; 882-888.

⁴⁶ H. Marshall Leicester, 'Of a Fire in the Dark: Public and Private Feminism in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Poetry Criticism* 58, 2005, p. 160. Leicester further suggests that [b]oth the Public world of storytelling and the story itself are by definition male-dominated, and the Wife, as we know, has strong feelings about that. Combative and competitive as ever, she takes an aggressively feminist public position in structuring the world of the *Tale* and pointing its moral. She may be said to *womanhandle* the traditional story, which, as a chivalric romance, is in its original form an instrument of the dominant ideology and its values, such as loyalty and courtesy that demonstrate male superiority. p.161.

⁴⁷ I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me /What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 904-905.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1037-1040.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1067-1071.

⁵⁰ As Malone notes, the Wife "succeeds in doing this by establishing an intellectual and moral dominance over him. First she puts him in the wrong, pointing out that she saved his life and that he has a husband's obligations to her besides, obligations that he is not fulfilling. Then she goes on to ask him why he is not treating her as a husband ought to treat a wife. He tells her why: because she is so old and ugly and comes of so low a kindred. He has told the truth, but his answer delivers him into her hands. It gives her the opening she needs for con-vincing him of her superiority and his own inferiority. At the end of her sermon on gentility, when she tells him to choose between having her old and ugly but faithful and having her fair but not safely his, he has become another man, no longer resentful at this forced marriage, converted to her way of thinking, and aware that she knows best". Kemp Malone, 'The Wife of

Bath's Tale', *The Modern Language Review* 57. 4, 1962, p. 484.

⁵¹ Ervin Cornelius Dueck, 'The Wife of Bath's coverchiefs and conjugal sovereignty in four Chaucerian marriage tales', p. 4.

⁵² My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,/ I put me in youre wise governance;
/Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance, /And moost honour to yow and me
also. /I do no fors the wheither of the two, /For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me. /Thanne
have I gete of yow maistrie, quod she. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1230- 1236.

⁵³ Kemp Malone, 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', p. 485.

⁵⁴ Kevin J. Burke, 'Chaucerian Representations of Human Behavior: Determined and Free Action in the *Knight's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*', p. 91. Burke further states that "Whereas the Miller replicates the basic narrative structure of the Knight—two young men compete for one young woman—the Wife strikes out not for replication or translation, nor even "wreke" (revenge), but "redresse" (III.696) [. . .] Beginning by speaking of herself, she will end with a knight's tale of her own devising. The only knightly *aventure* allowed in this story will be a year-long quest, initiated by a queen, in search of female, and particularly wifely, eloquence [. . .] The Wife, of course, does not resemble the ladies, but rather, with her hat as broad as a buckler, her spurs, and her wanderings she resembles a mock knight. Also, she fights: The physical struggle between Alice, a mock knight, and Jankyn, a real clerk, is a burlesque comment on the clerk-knight rivalry, which both conceals and illustrates a deeper human truth: the difficulty confronting a medieval woman who wants to preserve her identity in a world dominated, on the one hand, by men and their anti-feminist prejudices, and, on the other, by stereotypes", p. 91, 92.

⁵⁵ H. Marshall Leicester, 'Of a Fire in the Dark: Public and Private Feminism in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*', p. 161.

⁵⁶ Verna De Jong Lindscoog, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath: Critical Approaches in the Twentieth Century', p. 200.

⁵⁷ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic : the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination*, p.78.

⁵⁸ Verna De Jong Lindscoog, 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath: Critical Approaches in the Twentieth Century', p. 197.

⁵⁹ Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Subversive Discourse of the Wife of Bath: Phallogentric Discourse and the Imprisonment of Criticism', p.550.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.528.

⁶¹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The madwoman in the attic : the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination*, p.76.

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