

Rape and Justice in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*"

Carissa M. Harris
(carissa.harris@temple.edu)

An essay chapter from *The Open Access Companion to the Canterbury Tales* (February 2024)

This essay was originally published in September 2017. It was revised in January 2024 to reflect the discovery of new legal documents featuring Geoffrey Chaucer and Cecily Chaumpaigne and to discuss these new documents' implications for reading the Wife of Bath's Tale. Other changes include brief discussions of transformative justice and emotional labor as well as an updated bibliography.

Introduction.

Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* often offends readers' sense of justice. It follows an unnamed knight from King Arthur's court who rapes a maiden, avoids legal punishment, and is ultimately rewarded with a young, fair, obedient, and faithful wife. The victim-survivor never speaks, and she disappears entirely from the tale after her assault, never to be mentioned again. Instead, Alisoun of Bath follows the perpetrator's journey—"This knyght, of which my tale is specially," she says, underscoring her narrative focus (WBT 983)—and details his thoughts and feelings when he has to account for his crime, inviting readers to identify with his perspective. But in spite of its seemingly unjust ending, the tale grapples ferociously with the question of appropriate justice for sexual violence, and it portrays rape justice as a collective endeavor. It forces audiences to contend with important questions about violence, harm, and reparation: How can a rapist atone for their actions? And who determines justice for rape: the victim-survivor, the head of state, the legal system, or the community?

Media representations of medieval rape (particularly those created before the MeToo movement reached widespread prominence in October 2017), exemplified by the brutal and recurring depictions in HBO's fantasy series *Game of Thrones* (2011-17), portray sexual violence as occurring routinely and with impunity during the Middle Ages. This false historical narrative enables contemporary audiences to view rape as a past issue rather than a present concern, and it excuses us from having to grapple fully with the problem of sexual violence in our own culture. Alisoun of Bath, however, challenges readers to acknowledge historical continuities between past and present sexual violence. On one hand, her use of the past undermines nostalgia for the "good old days" of knighthood and chivalry, for she dissuades audiences from romanticizing the past and wallpapering over historical violence perpetrated by respected men. At the same time, she challenges contemporary audiences' sense of superiority regarding the brutality that we often attribute to the Middle Ages, and her tale encourages readers to seek varied and innovative justice solutions to address rape's harms.

Tools

LEGAL AND LITERARY CONTEXTS FOR RAPE JUSTICE

The legal penalty for rape in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* is death by beheading: “[D]ampned was this knyght for to be deed, / By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed,” Alisoun relates (891-92). Fourteenth-century legal terminology for rape—the noun *raptus* and the verbs *ravir* and *rapere*—contained overlapping meanings of forced sex, theft, and abduction.^[1] This overlap between bodily violence and theft is reflected in Chaucer’s tale, where we are told that the knight “rafte” the woman’s “maydenhed,” with Alisoun choosing a verb meaning both “to tear, stab, or split” and “to steal.” In Chaucer’s time, English law viewed rape primarily as a property crime and categorized it as a serious felony. Conviction rates were low. The law prescribed hanging as punishment, although this punishment was very rarely enforced even upon conviction. Instead, the victim-survivor and perpetrator often settled out of court through marriage or monetary settlement. A woman could initiate criminal prosecution of her rapist by raising the hue and cry like the “clamour” [loud outcry] that arises after the assault in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. The hue and cry, in which the aggrieved party raised her voice to declare publicly that she had been assaulted, officially set the criminal legal process in motion much like calling the police does today. Women could also bring civil suits for sexual mistreatment, as happened in 1292, when Isabella Plomet brought a civil suit alleging that her doctor had used a narcotic beverage to incapacitate and rape her.^[2] The jury ruled in Isabella’s favor and required the doctor to pay a significant fine in addition to imprisoning him, demonstrating that medieval society recognized that sexual assault could be facilitated through intoxication as well as physical violence.

The *Wife of Bath's Tale*’s exploration of multiple consequences for its rapist knight reflects the fact that there were many mechanisms of rape justice in medieval England, ranging from marriage to monetary settlement to vigilante justice. In 1405, Isabella Gronowessone and her daughters Johanna and Petronilla ambushed Roger de Pulesdon in a field, tied a cord around his neck, cut off his testicles, and stole his horse, only for all three women to be pardoned shortly thereafter.^[3] Historians have suggested that the women were exacting a brutal form of extralegal justice for rape.^[4] If so, this case shows women banding together to execute violent punishment on a rapist, targeting the body parts central to his crime. It implicitly authorizes castration, theft, and retaliatory violence as a fitting response to sexual violence. While this case is unusual, it illustrates how victim-survivors could take rape justice into their own hands. This medieval view that there are various valid responses to sexual violence both within and outside the legal system is echoed in recent scholarship on rape justice mechanisms that go beyond criminal punishment, including naming perpetrators online or in public spaces, giving victim-survivors an opportunity to tell their stories in a meaningful way, perpetrator education, monetary compensation, public apologies or admissions of wrongdoing by the perpetrator, restorative justice that allows the victim-survivor to confront their assailant directly through a victim impact statement or at a meeting facilitated by counselors, and transformative justice or community accountability that “create[s] experimental and collective practices of safety, accountability, and healing untethered from the existing criminal legal system.”^[5]

I always teach a few lyrics known as pastourelles alongside the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Just as the *Wife of Bath's Tale*’s legal context illuminates its complicated portrayal of rape justice, its literary context sheds light on medieval views of power, consent, and the perspectives of victim-

survivors. Pastourelles are debate poems between a man and a woman who give alternating speeches, and they are centrally focused on the dynamics of sexual violence. In a typical pastourelle, a knight or cleric encounters a young peasant woman in a rustic, secluded location and engages in dialogue with her, with the poem's circumstances reflecting those in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. He attempts to seduce her with compliments, promises of marriage, and gifts of clothing or jewelry. She resists initially, often rebuffing him with harsh language. In some pastourelles, the knight responds by raping or threatening to rape the maiden. About twenty English and Scots pastourelles survive from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries, and sixteen are printed in *Rape Culture and Female Resistance in Late Medieval Literature* for classroom use.^[6] Examples include *As I stod on a day* (circa 1325), copied at the end of the Anglo-French romance *Gui de Warwic* in London College of Arms MS Arundel 27; *In a fryht as Y con fare fremede* (circa 1331-41), from British Library MS Harley 2253, where it is sandwiched between two erotic lyrics voiced by amorous men; *Hey trolly loly lo* (circa 1510-13), copied with music in British Library MS Additional 31922, a lavishly-decorated songbook associated with the court of Henry VIII; and *Throughe a forest as I can ryde, Come over the woodes fair and grene*, and *When that byrdes be brought to rest* (circa 1475), which are copied in a cluster in Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.813, a collection of poems and political prophecies compiled by lawyer and Parliament-member Humphrey Welles.^[7] The pastourelles portray a variety of outcomes to the isolated outdoor encounter between man and maiden—in *As I stod on a day*, the maiden responds with witty retorts; in *Throughe a forest as I can ryde*, the man rapes the maiden, after which she attempts unsuccessfully to negotiate with him for marriage or monetary compensation; and *Hey trolly loly lo* depicts a milkmaid refusing an aggressive man until he finally releases her unharmed, although he promises to assault her if he ever encounters her in the future. The pastourelles' contentious back-and-forth dialogue, which provides insight into medieval ideas regarding sexual difference, power and powerlessness, violence, and resistance, fills in the silences of the *Tale's* sparse five-line rape scene. Unlike the *Tale*, whose maiden never speaks and whose readers are given access to her rapist's thoughts and feelings instead of hers, pastourelles articulate the perspectives of victim-survivors and encourage audiences to empathize with them, portraying rape as a physical and emotional violation. These perspectives frame rape as profoundly damaging at the same time that they articulate a staunch hope in the possibility of survival and recovery. The pastourelles show that, even though the maiden disappears from the *Wife of Bath's Tale* after her assault, other medieval texts vividly depict women's experiences of resisting, suffering, and surviving rape.

Text

RAPE AND JUSTICE, PAST AND PRESENT

Alisoun of Bath's temporal framing of her tale has important implications for how modern audiences can engage with sexual violence. She begins her narrative by setting it "[i]n th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour" (857). Hundreds of years ago, she says, spirits called incubi roamed the land of Britain, raping and impregnating women at will, whereas "now"—a term she uses multiple times (864, 865, 874)—they have been replaced by predatory friars who lurk around every corner. By noting that "Britons speken greet honour" of those bygone days (858), she shows how historical nostalgia can excuse or elide sexual violence. She sets up a sharp contrast between past and present—"I speke of manye hundred yeres ago. / But now..." she says (863-

64)—only to claim that rape is an ongoing problem linking the mythical past with present realities.

The *Tale*'s rapist is a "lusty bachelor" [vigorous young knight] from King Arthur's court (883). By linking him to Arthur's storied Round Table, Alisoun implicitly critiques chivalric masculinity, which entailed military prowess, noble birth, securing women's affections, and competition as well as bonding with other men. She also points to his social power and privilege, and she shows how romanticizing the past can occlude certain harms, for she illustrates the devastating effects of chivalric culture's valorization of masculine violence. The knight encounters the maiden on his way home from hunting waterfowl, an aristocratic leisure activity that emphasizes his courtly status and capacity for violence and links the predation of bird-hunting with the violence of rape. He "rid[es]" on horseback while she travels on foot, a contrast which emphasizes their class difference. The nameless maiden never speaks. Instead, we are given details about her status as a virgin, a point hammered home by the repetition of "mayde," "mayde," and "maydenhed" in three consecutive lines; we are told that the knight attacks her with "verray force," or "brute strength"; and we are informed that the rape happens "maugree hir heed" or "in spite of everything she could do," pointing to her ferocious resistance (886-88). The maiden disappears from the tale entirely after these lines, as the narrative focuses instead upon the rehabilitation of her rapist.

The *Tale* reflects many of the conventions governing medieval rape narratives as well as the expectations for rape outlined in medieval English common law. Much as contemporary audiences think of "real rape" as a crime committed by an armed stranger lurking in a dark alley against an unaccompanied woman who screams and fights back before he overpowers her, medieval texts often portray rape as perpetrated by a socially powerful man against a defenseless young virgin traveling alone in the wilderness who resists through screams and physical struggle and notifies authorities as soon as the assault is over. This stock narrative stretches back to ancient Hebrew law in Deuteronomy 22:23-27, which decrees that a maiden raped in the city be stoned to death along with her rapist because she did not scream loudly enough to summon help but specifies that a woman attacked in the countryside is allowed to live because there was no man around to hear her cries and rescue her, thus claiming that rural assaults are the only ones which count as "real rape." The *Wife of Bath's Tale*'s portrayal of rape as fitting this narrow conventional paradigm depicts sexual violence as something that can be avoided if one "does the right things." It also allows other types of assaults, such as those perpetrated by someone known to the victim-survivor, to go unacknowledged.

The first rape justice solution proposed by the *Tale* is a legal one requiring the knight to pay for the violence he does to the maiden's body with fatal violence to his own body. Of all the rapes and attempted rapes in the *Canterbury Tales*, including the *Reeve's Tale*, *Physician's Tale*, and *Man of Law's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Tale* is the one that most prominently features the language of rape law. Alisoun names the knight's crime as an "oppressioun" [legal term for injury or harm], echoing the language of rape ("*violenter oppressam*," meaning "forcibly violated") in English rape law (889).^[8] Using numerous additional terms derived from Anglo-French legal vocabulary, Alisoun invokes "the statut tho" [the law of the land at that time], claims that the legal process is initiated through the "clamour" of raising the hue and cry, refers to the resulting "pursute" [formal legal charge] made before the king, states that the knight has

been “dampned” [legally condemned] to death, and notes that he faces beheading “by cours of lawe” [in accordance with the law] (889-93). The text overtly emphasizes the legal language of sexual violence and encourages readers to empathize with its rapist-protagonist who is subject to rape law. It highlights his sorrowful sighs and displeasure—“Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh,” Alisoun says (913)—when he is forced to account for his actions.

King Arthur follows the law of the land and condemns his knight to death by beheading, only for the queen and other ladies to argue that justice belongs in their hands instead. We can read this as a community response to rape by the specific population who has been wronged: the knight attacked the maiden because she was a woman walking by herself, vulnerable due to her age, gender, and the fact that she was alone. In response, the kingdom’s most powerful women unite to claim that women should determine rape justice collectively. In contrast to the law’s penalty of beheading, the women claim that perpetrator education is a more fitting form of justice. The women’s takeover of the justice process, with “the queene herself sittynge as a justise” (1028), raises important questions about who ought to determine rape justice. The presence here of “many a mayde” (1026)—the same term twice used to name the victim-survivor earlier—suggests that the women whose status aligns most closely with hers now have a central role in determining how her assailant will be held accountable. The women sentence the knight “to seche and leere” [to investigate and learn] what women most desire (909) in response to his refusal to consider the maiden’s desires. “Seche,” naming the knight’s new sentence, means “to investigate, study” and also “to assault a woman,” implicitly linking the knight’s crime with its consequences. The knight now must listen to and learn from women, as his life now depends upon their kindness, generosity, and knowledge. Alisoun repeatedly uses pedagogical language to characterize the knight’s educational quest: he travels the country “to lerne” (921, 994); he asks the old woman to “wisse” [instruct] him (1008); and she promises to “teche” him the information that he needs (1019). When the time comes, the knight gives the correct answer by declaring that women desire sovereignty, and the lothly lady takes credit for her successful pedagogy: “I taughte this answe unto the knyght,” she announces to the queen after he passes the test (1050). One oft-overlooked element of this rape justice solution of perpetrator education is the emotional labor that it requires: members of the group whom the knight has harmed must give him their time, energy, and attention to educate him and to help him save his life. The cost of the knight’s perpetrator education is worth considering, as is whether his education is truly effective or is instead merely an answer that he learns to repeat by rote without internalizing its meaning.

The tale proposes a third form of rape justice in addition to beheading and perpetrator education: the knight is denied physical agency first by the queen and her women and later by the old woman much as he denied the maiden the right to govern her own body and being. After the elderly woman has “taughte” him the correct answer and saved his life, she requests that he uphold his end of the bargain and marry her. He is horrified, and his response echoes the responses to sexual violence by maidens in the pastourelles, who cry out with woeful lamentations, call upon God or Christ for aid, and attempt to negotiate their escape from their armed assailants. He exclaims, “Allas and weylawey!” in an echo of the hue and cry and “clamour” raised after he rapes the young woman (1058). Like a pastourelle maiden who calls upon God’s help to no avail, he begs the old woman to release him “for Goddes love” (1060). He pleads, “Taak al my good and lat my body go” (1061), attempting to use his wealth to bargain for

bodily sovereignty. However, like the maidens in many pastourelles whose pleas are ignored by their assailants, his desperate protests are “al for noght” (1070). The queen decrees that the knight must keep his promise to the old woman, and he is “constreyned” to “wedde / And...gooth to bedde” with her (1071-72). The verb “constreyned” connotes physical force, compulsion, and sexual coercion, its meanings ranging from “to compel someone to do something” to “to violate (chastity), force, ravish.” By positioning the knight rhetorically as a pastourelle maiden attempting to negotiate control over his vulnerable body and escape unwanted sex, Alisoun forces him to experience his victim-survivor’s fear of violation of bodily sovereignty, if only for a fleeting moment.

But at the same time that the knight occupies the structural position of a victimized maiden, this depiction of him as “constreyned” [forced, compelled] by his own promise to the old woman demonstrates how the suffering of rape can be minimized and co-opted for other purposes. This portrayal of the knight as ostensibly powerless erases the fact that he is in this position solely as a result of his own actions. The passage’s repeated emphasis on his “wo” (1083, 1084) encourages empathy for the knight instead of his victim, while his desperate attempts to bargain his way out of fulfilling his promise indicate that he still believes he possesses the power to escape the consequences of his choices. Alisoun’s decision to place the rapist-knight in the structural role of victim-survivor illustrates the problem of using metaphors of rape and its attendant harms for things that are not rape, like a student comparing a challenging exam to rape or celebrities comparing photo shoots or the paparazzi’s invasiveness to sexual violence, for these comparisons betray a lack of empathy for victim-survivors and trivialize rape’s harms.

The Wife of Bath’s Tale’s sustained engagement with the language of rape law, jurisdiction over bodies, and questions of justice is particularly significant in the context of Chaucer’s own legal entanglements. In October 1379, a London man named Thomas Staundon sued Chaucer and a woman named Cecily Chaumpaigne for allegedly breaking the Statute of Laborers, legislation passed in 1349 to address labor shortages caused by the Black Death pandemic. Staundon claimed that Chaumpaigne had been his servant until Chaucer illegally hired her himself, breaking her preexisting contract with Staundon. Staundon further claimed that Chaucer had refused to return Chaumpaigne to his service when asked to do so. Chaucer hired lawyers to defend himself and Chaumpaigne against Staundon’s charges. These documents regarding Staundon’s lawsuit, discovered in 2022 by Euan Roger and Sebastian Sobiecki, detail a legal struggle between two men over who possesses rights over a particular woman’s body and her labor, each claiming he has the exclusive right to “retain” (*retentam*) Chaumpaigne in his “service.” When considered in the context of Chaucer’s legal conflict with Staundon over Chaumpaigne, the *Wife of Bath’s Tale’s* legal language and emphasis on bodily constraint, ownership, and liberty is striking. When the queen commutes the king’s death sentence into a quest to learn about women’s desires, she emphasizes that his body is not his own: she reminds him that he must return in a year and a day, “Thy body for to yelden in this place” (912).

In May 1380, Chaumpaigne filed a much-discussed legal document known as a quitclaim releasing Chaucer from liability “regarding my *raptus*” [*de raptu meo*], using a capacious and very loaded Latin term whose senses of violation and unlawful taking echo the verb “rafte” that Chaucer uses to name the knight’s rape of the maiden in his *Tale*. Later that year, Chaucer’s friend John Grove paid Chaumpaigne a sum of ten pounds; Chaucer subsequently repaid him.

For nearly a century and a half after scholar Frederick J. Furnivall discovered Chaumpaigne's quitclaim in 1873, scholars puzzled over the meaning of "*raptus*" in the document and its connection to Chaucer: did it imply that Chaucer had raped Chaumpaigne and that she was releasing him of criminal liability in exchange for an out-of-court monetary settlement, as was frequently the case in rape cases?

Now, the recently discovered documents resituating Chaumpaigne's "*raptus*" claim in the context of labor law encourage us to think about bodily sovereignty, justice, and legal jurisdiction over gendered bodies: on what grounds can one individual claim jurisdiction over another's body? What are the gendered and sexual implications of these claims? And how can we read Staundon and Chaucer's dispute over Chaumpaigne's body in relation to the contested role of the knight's body, whose violation of the maiden renders it subject first to the king and "cours of lawe" [legal procedure], then the queen, and finally the lothly lady? In what ways do an employment contract or a marriage contract curtail one's bodily sovereignty?

Chaucer uses fiction to encourage audiences to think through the issue of rape justice. The *Tale*'s conclusion, in which we are told that the rapist-knight and his beautiful, subservient wife live happily ever after, often strikes readers as maddeningly unjust. The knight seems to give the lothly lady the choice over her own body not because he cares about her sovereignty but because both options are equally undesirable to him: "I do no fors the wheither of the two," he declares in exasperation when she asks whether he wishes her to be old and loyal or young, beautiful, and unfaithful. He is then rewarded with a "fair" and "yong" wife who "obeyed hym in every thyng / That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng" (1251, 1255-6). This infuriating outcome nonetheless serves a twofold purpose: it illustrates the reality that justice for sexual violence is often unsatisfactory and elusive, and it challenges audiences to contemplate new justice mechanisms. While there is ultimately no form of justice that can fully rectify rape's harms, the *Wife of Bath's Tale* demonstrates the pressing need for multiple, varied, and creative forms of justice to address those damages, facilitate collective healing, and prevent future violence.

Transformation

NEGOTIATING THE PAST, UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT, CHANGING THE FUTURE

1. What can we do with this text that proposes multiple forms of rape justice but ends on a seemingly unjust note? How is it useful?
2. How does the *Wife of Bath's Tale* reinforce, revise, or challenge present-day ideas about rape in the Middle Ages?
3. How effective is the knight's perpetrator education? Does he truly "lerne" the lesson that the queen assigns to him?
4. Alisoun shows how nostalgia for the past can occlude the past's attendant harms in the same way that many Americans still refuse to acknowledge that Thomas Jefferson was a serial rapist of Sally Hemings, a Black woman whom he enslaved, beginning when she was fourteen or so. Instead, news outlets like the *Washington Post* as recently as 2017 referred to Hemings as Jefferson's "mistress." Can you think of other ways that present-

day audiences overlook, excuse, or rationalize histories of sexual violence, particularly when they involve famous or well-respected men?

5. What do you make of the fact that this tale about gender violence is narrated by the Wife of Bath, who is herself a survivor of spousal abuse, as we learn in her *Prologue*? How does it shape her portrayal of the knight, his actions, and their consequences? What connections do you see between her *Prologue* and her *Tale*?
6. How does this tale's portrayal of rape compare to other depictions of sexual violence in the *Canterbury Tales*?
7. If the nameless "mayde" had narrated the tale, how do you think she would have written it? What details do you think would remain the same, and what would be different?
8. What do *you* feel is the most apt and appropriate justice in the *Wife of Bath's Tale's* particular situation? What might a [transformative justice](#) approach look like?

Suggested Readings

Baechle, Sarah, Carissa M. Harris, and Elizaveta Strakhov, eds. *Rape Culture and Female Resistance in Late Medieval Literature*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022.

Cannon, Christopher. "Chaucer and Rape: Uncertainty's Certainities." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 (2000): 67-92.

Cannon, Christopher. "Raptus in the Chaumpaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer." *Speculum* 68.1 (1993): 74-94.

Dunn, Caroline. *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100–1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Edwards, Suzanne M. *The Afterlives of Rape in Medieval English Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Fein, Susanna. "'The Thyng Wommen Loven Moost': The Wife of Bath's Fabliau Answer."

In *Medieval Women and their Objects: Essays in Honor of Carolyn P. Collette*. Edited by Jenny Adams and Nancy Mason Bradbury. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. 15-38.

Goldberg, P. J. P., editor and translator. *Women in England, c. 1275-1525: Documentary Sources*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Goldberg, P. J. P. "Women in Later Medieval English Archives." *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 15 (1994): 59-72.

Harris, Carissa M. "800 Years of Rape Culture." *Aeon*. May 24, 2021.
<https://aeon.co/essays/the-hypocrisies-of-rape-culture-have-medieval-roots>.

Harris, Carissa M., and Fiona Somerset, eds. "Historicizing Consent: A Colloquium." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 44 (2022): 268-367.

Henry, Nicola, and Anastasia Powell, eds. *Preventing Sexual Violence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Overcoming a Rape Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Henry, Nicola, Anastasia Powell, and Asher Flynn, eds. *Rape Justice: Beyond the Criminal Law*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Karras, Ruth Mazo. "Mail Bonding: Knights, Ladies, and the Proving of Manhood." In *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 20-66.

Lipton, Emma. "Contracts, Activist Feminism, and the *Wife of Bath's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 54.3 (2019): 335-351.

Robertson, Elizabeth, and Christine M. Rose, eds. *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. See especially Christine M. Rose, "Reading Chaucer Reading Rape," 21-60.

Roger, Euan, and Sebastian Sobiecki, eds. "Special Issue: The Case of Geoffrey Chaucer and Cecily Chaumpaigne: New Evidence." *The Chaucer Review* 57.4 (2022).

Saunders, Corinne. *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001.

Skalak, Chelsea. "The Unwilling Wife: Marital Rape in the *Canterbury Tales*." *The Chaucer Review* 55.2 (2020): 119-46.

Seabourne, Gwen. "Rape and the Law in Medieval Western Europe." In *A Companion to Crime and Deviance in the Middle Ages*. Edited by Hannah Skoda. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023. 342-57.

Seabourne, Gwen. "Drugs, Deceit, and Damage in Thirteenth-Century Herefordshire: New Perspectives on Medieval Surgery, Sex, and the Law." *Social History of Medicine* 30.2 (2017): 255-76.

Vines, Amy N. "Invisible Woman: Rape as Chivalric Necessity in Medieval Romance." In *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*. Edited by Amanda Hopkins, Robert Allen Rouse, and Cory James Rushton. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014. 161-80.

^[1] On this terminology see Dunn (below) and Cannon (1993, below).

[2] Seabourne includes the full legal record in “Drugs, Deceit, and Damage in Thirteenth-Century Herefordshire: New Perspectives on Medieval Surgery, Sex, and the Law” (below).

[3] See Goldberg (1995) (below).

[4] See Goldberg (1994, 70 n. 26) and Dunn (below).

[5] Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie, *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2022), 5.

[6] See Baechle et al. (below), 181-246.

[7] *In a fryht as Y con fare fremede* is printed in *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. Susanna Greer Fein with David Raybin and Jan Ziolkowski, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015), 2:148–52 (<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/fein-harley2253-volume-2-article-35>); *As I stod on a day* in *Medieval English Lyrics and Carols*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 73-4; *Hey troly loly lo, Throughe a forest as I can ryde, Come over the woodes fair and grene*, and *When that byrdes be brought to rest* are in *Rape Culture and Female Resistance in Late Medieval Literature*, ed. Baechle et al., 186-98, 203-6.

[8] Henry de Bracton, *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. G. E. Woodbine, trans. Samuel Thorne, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968-77), 2:414.