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Alison, the Woman behind the Wife of Bath:

When Fiction is as Complex as Reality

### **Abstract**

Arthur Lindley, in his 1992 article “‘Vanysshed was this Daunce, He Nyste Where’: Alisoun’s Absence in the Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale,” states that the Geoffrey Chaucer’s Wife of Bath is a character constructed by a male author, and based on what other men have said, therefore she is absent in *The Canterbury Tales*. Lindley proposes that enclosing the Wife of Bath into one category, such as feminist, misogynist, or battered wife is a fallacy, and his analysis leads to the conclusion that her character is not a real woman, and she is not based on real women’s words. For him, she is non-existent outside her own Prologue and Tale. The aim of this paper is to prove, through reader-response textual analysis of her tale, prologue and other characters’ tales and prologues, that the Wife of Bath is actually a vivid interpretation of womanhood and that she exists within and outside her own tale. In her prologue, her words are analyzed to close the gap in meaning, when she refers to her age, her husbands and experience in life as a wife and woman. Other characters’ tales, such as the Miller, the Man of Law, and the Clerk, are also analyzed to find in them the influence or existence of the Wife of Bath. Finally, Lindley’s arguments

are refuted in order to prove that Alisoun, the Wife of Bath, is present within her story and the stories of others, as she is the most influential pilgrim in Chaucer's tales.

### **Preliminary bibliography:**

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Edited by Larry D. Benson, Houghton

Mifflin, 2000, Boston.

Lindley, Arthur. "‘Vanysshed was this Daunce, He Nyste Where’: Alisoun's Absence in

the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale." *ELH*, vol. 59, no. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 1-21.

### **Biography:**

Alejandra Giangiulio Lobo is an English profesor at Universidad Nacional. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's degree in English Literature, both from Universidad de Costa Rica. She has experience in teaching English and Literature in the Costa Rican educational system, in private enterprises and at higher education levels. She is the author of several articles and papers related to English Literature, and to the implementation of technology in education.