"I HOPE YOU ARE NOT BEING STUPID ABOUT CHILDREN":

TRANSFORMING LITERATURE PEDAGOGY THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

by

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ABSTRACT

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In this dissertation, I assert that children's literature is particularly productive for making the literature classroom a more engaging space for students in any genre or historical period of literature taught because it 1) fosters equity; 2) creates confidence; 3) garners student engagement; 4) is valuable; and 5) is an effective, productive, and accessible conduit for studies of literary theory. This dissertation argues for a paired-texts methodology, and incorporates pedagogy theory and scholarship, as well as cultural studies and literary analysis to explore the productive intersections of themes, topics, and modes of writing found in children's literature that align with other genres of literary studies. In the dissertation, I offer case studies in which I make explicit connections between twentieth-century children's books and medieval modes, themes, and tropes to show how children's literature can be used as a productive pair in an English literature classroom. I use medieval and early modern literature as my entry into the conversation but invite teachers of all genres to consider how they might adapt these examples in their own classrooms. Finally, I discuss the particularly engaging place that both children's literature and traditional college-aged students share as bridges: they are both culturally

important and have the potential to redirect or support cultural ideologies in a way that is unique and valuable. My conclusion is that children's literature is an effective conduit for literature pedagogy because of its flexibility.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom and dad. Without your support, I would not have believed I could succeed. You have encouraged every dream I have had unwaveringly, and I am who I am because of you. I love you.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my faithful support system of dear friends. Your time spent proofreading, listening, affirming, and drinking copious amounts of coffee with me meant more than you know. Thank you.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Kelso Ridge on Torrey's Peak and to my ever-steady guide who led the route. There I learned I had the skills, determination, and desire to persist when things become difficult. It took the perspective of 14, 272 feet to make me believe I had it in me to finish this project. Praise God for perspective, high exposure, and considerable commitment.

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Introduction

Bridges, Rhizomes, Windows: The Pedagogical Possibilities of Children's Literature

"Bridges easily become metaphors. A bridge is a way to get from here to there, but it is also neither here nor there. It connects; it conveys; it carries us; it shoulders burdens. A bridge is a promise of two sides coming together, and a bridge is the thing that stands between. In crossing a bridge, we may be transformed."
—Sara K. Day, "Bridges"[1]

"Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. . . books can also introduce readers to the history and traditions that are important to any one cultural group, and which invite comparisons on their own"
—Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors"[2]

"It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes."
— Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*[3]

Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic concept points to the creation of texts and locates where they might connect and expand. Their plateau challenges readers to follow flows rather than define containers since they "call a "plateau" any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome" (22). They focus their rhizomatic plateau on connections and continuation rather than conformity or stagnation. Children's Literature as a genre thrives on connection. The genre seems to always be in a state of middle-ness: it exists in between readerships and genre designations. Its unique place in literature studies has allowed it to function as an exemplary Deleuzian rhizome.[4] Most

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[1] Sara K. Day. "Bridges." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 46 no. 2, 2021, p. 109. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2021.0028.

[2] Rudine Sims Bishop. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1990.

[3] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. U of Minnesota P., 1987, p. 23.

[4] Deleuze and Guattari's principles of a rhizome are the "principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (7). The principle of multiplicity and asignifying rupture. which suggest that "a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (9). And finally, "the principles of cartography and decalcomania: a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. . . the rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. It fosters connections between fields" (12). While Deleuze and Guattari are talking linguistically here, in the spirit of their considering things from outside the

notable of its adherence to the principles of the rhizome is that, like the rhizome, it is "*a map and not a tracing*. It fosters connections between fields" (12). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's call in *A Thousand Plateaus* to see things from outside the middle opens the door to thoughtful and speculative considerations in children's literature studies of how texts could be related in new ways. Furthermore, their call aligns with the now ubiquitous assertion of Rudine Sims Bishop that books function as new avenues for viewing the world. Paired with the metaphors offered by Day and Bishop, we are invited to reconsider how we see things; with this in mind, I believe that a new perspective presents a compelling opportunity to reassess the use of children's literature in university English departments and that pedagogy studies provides an especially fruitful medium for exploring its possibilities. In this dissertation, I argue that children's literature in the university literature classroom (in classes that are not specifically Children's Literature courses) assists students with learning techniques central to the discipline of English studies: techniques such as close reading, genre studies, character development, and theoretical application. This dissertation begins with the assumption that children's literature is fundamental for audience comprehension of a text or genre or culture. A review of scholarship suggests that children's literature is not much recognized for facilitating these skills, largely being studied only in education and library science contexts as something that will be taught to children *only* to assist them in either literacy or forming the skills central to our discipline, so this dissertation is an attempt to recognize children's literature in a new way.

If we pull our focus out of the middle of things to look at the field of children's literature "from above or up at them from below," we would see that there is a disconnect: English literature and theory scholars are willing to acknowledge children's literature as a valid subject

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middle, I argue that Children's Literature meets these principles of rhizomatic thinking. Its multiplicity and connection-fostering abilities allow it to function and proliferate in many contexts.

for research but not always for rigorous teaching. However, in *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature*, Peter Hunt argues that "Children's literature is a uniquely important testing ground for literary theories" (11). In an important move, his assertion situates children's literature as useful for pedagogy and research and his book outlines contemporary theoretical conversations that use children's literature. If children's literature is useful in this way, why don't more English department instructors include children's literature on their syllabi? Furthermore, more recently, in "The Pedagogical Potential of Children's and Young Adult Literature," Erika Romero asserts that:

> It would be a mistake for college educators to overlook teaching children's literature alongside YA literature and other literary categories, even if the target audience of this literature at first glance seems much younger than the traditional college student. . . If adults of all ages are reading children's and YA texts at [exceptional] rates, then using these texts to engage college students in their English Studies coursework is simply logical. . . (2)

Romero goes on to say that there is a "need for more scholarship arguing for and demonstrating the pedagogical potential of children's and YA literature" (20). Romero highlights a missed opportunity in literature pedagogy. For whatever reason, children's literature has stayed in the shadows of our published pedagogical conversations and resources. This dissertation is a response to Romero's proclamation that college educators should teach children's literature alongside other literary categories. My answer to that call is to outline a method of pairing children's texts with other literary genres to engage college students.

Literature teachers that desire to adopt children's literature in a topics or survey course will benefit from practical and theoretical guidance to assist their course design and to create a

sense of purpose or continuity in the discipline. The perpetual challenge for the more permanent use of children's literature in English departments is ensuring that instructors—as well as their students and mentees—recognize, reflect upon, and share the methods they use in these courses, given the limited scholarship to guide their work. Considering this challenge, I offer a five-part framework[5] of the benefits of children's literature pedagogy from the scholarship that does exist about its use in topics or survey classes:

1. It fosters equity; its familiarity and simplicity make it useful for understanding concepts, theories, and the processes of inquiry and analysis.

2. It creates confidence in students, allowing them to engage in deep learning.

3. It readily garners student engagement.

4. It is a genre that is valuable; these works shed light on contemporary cultural concerns.

5. It is an effective, productive, and accessible conduit for studies of literary theory.

Ultimately, this framework supports my overarching argument: children's literature is indispensable in English department literature courses and not just for preservice teachers or librarians. Though it has value on its own, when paired with other genres or periods of literature, children's literature is essential for promoting meaningful study rather than simply functional literacy. Children's literature courses have the potential to support deep learning, but first instructors must develop a reflective methodology for using content to guide such learning.

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[5] Carl F. Miller offers a similar framework in his paper about the benefits of using children's literature to learn about comparative translation in his undergraduate children's literature and translation courses. Much of the pedagogical benefits he offers, however, deal with translation studies. Notable in his list, though, is that children's literature "offers useful avenues for advanced research, conference presentation, publication submission, and award consideration" (335) which I agree with, but it seems like all literature course student projects have the potential for further research or conference presenting so I did not include it in my list as something new that children's literature can offer to English literature classes. For more, see Carl F. Miller, ""How to Talk about Languages You Haven't Learned: Comparative Translation Pedagogy and Children's Literature." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 45 no. 3, 2021, pp. 332-337.

This dissertation incorporates pedagogy theory and scholarship, as well as cultural studies and literary analysis to explore the productive intersections of themes, topics, and modes of writing found in children's literature that align with other genres of literary studies. I outline a general theory of teaching using children's literature in this dissertation, but to make this project practical, I have chosen to situate my framework in the context of teaching medieval literature. As a medievalist, practically applying my theory of pedagogy means that I should consider the ways that children's literature could be used in a medieval literature classroom. In this dissertation, then, medieval literature serves as my entry point for exploring paired-texts pedagogy. Thus, the case studies for how to use children's literature as a tool in any literature classroom are close readings of texts that are medieval or that invoke medievalism. The examples, though, are meant to be just that—*examples* to prompt other professors of literature to consider looking at their syllabi and course planning in new ways, to consider including children's literature in their own pedagogy.

Children's literature transcends many boundaries, but the audience I have in mind for this project includes experienced professors of literature at the university level, specifically those teaching undergraduate literature survey and topics courses; early career instructors and graduate students in literature studies; professors of graduate literature courses or pedagogy courses; and theorists and historians of children's literature, particularly the pedagogy of it. All teachers of literature may benefit from learning about the liminal life of the children's literature course in our scholarship as we reflect on our own pedagogy and research practices. Many possibilities are available to practitioners, both within and outside of the genre of children's literature. Although courses that adopt children's literature do exist in English departments, the mere precedent for

them is not sufficient for its best use: it is imperative that we document theory and practice of these kinds of courses.

Children's literature has long been considered worthy of its own place in literature scholarship; it was added as an MLA recognized field for study in 1980, giving the field an official place among other divisions of literature studies (Sadler 1). While the scholarly conversation about children's literature has grown over the last forty years and "the dismissal of 'kiddie lit' has certainly abated in academic circles" since the field was first established by MLA as a division of research, "the segregation of children's literature seems to persist as much as before, even though attention to its texts should be of enormous concern to the student of 'adult' classics" (Sadler 3). Children's literature is often overlooked for course adoption in English department courses that teach more 'adult' genres because, as Beverly Lyon Clark argues in *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*, "We value childhood. But we also dismiss it" (1). She goes on to argue that culturally and historically, childhood has mostly existed to "authenticate authority" (59). It is a construction that serves a very specific purpose, then, and as such, children's literature holds an almost invisible space in the minds of some university professors and curriculum designers. While we might expect children's literature to have a clear place in literature pedagogy scholarship and history, it lives in the margins of discussion with little conversation about its possibility for course adoption and uses in English departments. Though celebrated, respected journals exist that publish theoretical scholarship about children's literature, children's literature courses taught in university English departments exist, but not as established, common offerings.[6] Part of university curriculum since the 1980s, children's literature finds its home mostly in schools of education and library science, oscillating

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[6] See *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *Children's Literature*, *Journal of Children's Literature*, and *The Lion and the Unicorn* as examples.

in and out of English departments, mainly existing in courses that are specifically about children's or YA literature or for preservice teachers. When we find them in English department course offerings, their existence and their popularity with students when taught as survey or topics courses prove that children's literature is essential and valuable for literature classes, if we give them the space and attention they deserve; this potential benefits from closer attention, not only to why and how we teach children's literature when we do, but also to the opportunities that arise if we are willing to bring it into the English literature classroom more often.

Defining Children's Literature

Before I outline my methodology and offer the literature review, I offer a definition for children's literature as it will be understood in this dissertation. As scholars of children's literature know well, determining a definition is difficult. Roger Sale dryly asserts that "Everyone knows what children's literature is until asked to define it" (1). In fact, Jacqueline Rose infamously contested that children's literature is impossible, and thus, impossible to define.[7] In *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (2008), Perry Nodelman devotes an entire book in his exhaustive attempt at figuring out just what children's literature is. He asserts that children's literature is indeed a genre, offers a long list of shared characteristics of children's literature, and concludes that:

> Children's literature might be something more than just an indiscriminate body of quite different sorts of texts grouped together by adults for convenience merely because of their intended audiences. It might, in fact, be a specific genre of fiction whose defining characteristics seem to transcend specifics of time and place, cut across other generic

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[7] See Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, Or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. Macmillan, 1984.

categories such as fantasy or realism, and even remain consistent despite variations in the

ages of intended audiences. (*The Hidden Adult* 81)

Karin Lesnik-Oberstein says that what "'children's literature' means in its most fundamental

sense to every critic who uses the term: books which are good for children, and most particularly

good in terms of emotional and moral values" (15-16). On the other hand, some scholars decline

to define the genre altogether.[8] Sale, for example, draws the conclusion that "we are better off

saying we all have a pretty good idea of what children's literature includes and letting the matter

rest there" (1). Marah Gubar complicates the conversation by making a convincing argument for

a middle ground. She says:

> We can give up on the arduous and ultimately unenlightening task of generating a
>
> definition without giving up on the idea that "children's literature" is a coherent, viable
>
> category. More than that, I contend that we *should* abandon such activity, because
>
> insisting that children's literature is a genre characterized by recurrent traits is damaging
>
> to the field, obscuring rather than advancing our knowledge of this richly heterogeneous
>
> group of texts. (210)

Her reason for absconding from definitions altogether is that both definers and anti-definers

make up "a small albeit vocal minority who tussle over this question while the vast, silent

majority of scholars cheerfully carry on with their scholarship on specific texts, types, and eras

of children's literature as though the lack of an overarching definition constituted no real

impediment to their work" (210). Anti-definers and non-definers find definitions limiting.

However, I agree with Nodelman that refusing to offer any definition:

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[8] See Townsend, John Rowe. *A Sense of Story: Essays on Contemporary Writers for Children*, 1971 for an early example of the move to avoid defining the genre in published children's literature scholarship.

Reinforces an old cliché that hampers criticism of children's fiction mightily. The cliché is that a good children's novel is a good novel, period. That appears to claim too much for children's fiction, but it actually claims too little—like saying a good tragedy is a good play, period. Anyone reading a good tragedy with sensitivity must admit that is simply not true—and so it is with a good children's novel. (Nodelman, "Defining Children's Literature" 189-190)

Providing a definition allows practitioners to have a shared understanding for discussing children's literature. It also fosters legitimacy for the genre, which will be imperative if we want to include more children's literature in English department classrooms. In a practical effort to provide clarity for this dissertation, I define children's literature as texts that 1) are primarily enjoyed by readers aged one to seventeen; 2) offer a child's perspective; 3) offer a linear plot narrative; and 4) use simple language. Generally, I have a fluid understanding of children's literature and allow space for texts to move in and out of the lines; a definition of children's literature is primarily useful when it comes to selecting texts for coursework. Ultimately, I believe that the definition of children's literature is entirely determined upon setting and purpose.

Towards a Reflective Methodology of Paired Texts

In "Teaching Medieval Literature off the Grid," Nathanial B. Smith and Gina Brandolino argue that "Noncanonical texts can shed light on perspectives different from those represented by the culturally authoritative texts of the canon, often can serve the useful purpose of defamiliarizing traditional readings, and may even engage students in ways canonical literary texts simply cannot" (204-205). Their methodology asks that instructors make selections with purposes, which sometimes means placing "lesser-known texts. . . on course syllabi to raise specific questions with students, to introduce specific skills, and, as Annette Kolodny (1985) has

described it, to disrupt, complicate, and make unfamiliar the great literary standards" (206).[9]

Their approach aligns with others' methods of including children's texts on course syllabi as lesser-known texts and pairing texts with more canonical works to make evident difficult concepts.[10] The reflective methodology I am proposing follows suit: I argue that teachers should intentionally and carefully pair children's literature with other genres of literature in university-level topics and survey literature courses.

This methodology is beneficial for anyone teaching a general survey or topics in literature course, whether someone is scheduled to teach more "traditional" or canonical texts, or texts that are already diverse, creative, or new. Using children's literature in the way I am proposing is viable for teachers of any genre or topic of literature. It would be unfair to not acknowledge the work people have done to shift the kinds of classes offered to students, I want to acknowledge that there many teachers have designed creative, culturally unique surveys that adopt works that are new, that incorporate diverse and unheard voices, and that offer nontraditional genres. My framework for using children's literature can be productive in any of these spaces. Considering the pedagogical potential of children's literature is instrumental in creating a course that is equitable and that allows for more student engagement and an overall better student experience. There are various possibilities for pairing children's texts and there are many resources for discovering children's texts that could support all teachers' unique work; I

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[9] Smith and Brandolino are citing Annette Kolodny's "The Integrity of Memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States." *American Literature*, no. 57, 1985, pp. 291-307.

[10] For examples of this: Valerie Estelle Frankel's edited collection *Teaching with Harry Potter: Essays on Classroom Wizardry from Elementary School to College* ends with a section devoted to finding ways to incorporate texts into college classrooms. Subtitled "Meaning in Children's Books Within the University," Frankel includes essays that consider pairing J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books alongside William Blake, Dante, and Shakespeare. The essays also suggest ways for teaching medieval culture and history as well as for introducing Critical Cultural Studies and literary theories. They even offer methods for using *Harry Potter* to teach composition and technical writing, as well as science. Likewise, Gayatri Devi et al.'s collection *Teaching Equity through Children's Literature in Undergraduate Classrooms* devotes its time to considering the ways children's literature can be integrated in university literature classroom to address contemporary issues of social justice.

believe that time invested in finding children's books that are appropriate for one's classes will lead to productive material.[11] Gholdy Muhammad calls these pairings "layering texts" as a way to help students understand multiple communities and "incite social critique" (147). Layering of texts, then, can assist students' comprehension of multiple concepts. In choosing text pairings, consider purpose and aspiration for what students will gain from their readings and class discussions. In choosing my pairings, I paired according to form, content, and mode of writing since the purpose of my class was to consider ways that children's literature can serve as a bridge for university college students for understanding medieval and early modern modes of storytelling.

The Construction of Children's Literature

The following summary of scholarship offers 1) a comprehensive history of the development of children's literature and its study; 2) a synthesis of the variety of ways that children's literature has been and is being used in university classrooms; 3) a summary of the intersections of medieval literature, medievalism, and children's literature.

The construction of children's literature as an established genre is a uniquely western undertaking. I want to acknowledge that the history I offer here of children's literature is situated in how the development of the genre has been viewed in western culture, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom.[12] This history of the development of children's publishing leads to an understanding of how the genre has developed as the commodified and

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[11] For example, the CLA's syllabus repository, the Facebook page "Syllabus Swap: Children's and YA Literature," and their living document, "What Do I Teach With..." are popular places to begin. Additionally, book reviews offered in journals of Children's Literature Scholarship and books such as Gayatri et al.'s *Teaching Equity Through Children's Literature in Undergraduate Classrooms* (2024) are sources of information about contemporary children's books.

[12] It is important to acknowledge that there are children's literature traditions outside of my own cultural tradition. I am working with a history that also engages with English medieval and early modern literature; thus, for the scope of this dissertation, I will be focusing on the western traditions of the field.

marketed product we are familiar with in the twenty-first century. Due to the scope of this dissertation, the history offered is limited culturally and offers only highlights of a much larger conversation and a longer, robust history of oral storytelling and adapting legends, folk tales, and other culturally significant narratives for child audiences.

Children's literature is unique because its audience often has little to say in what is written. Curiously, the children, and the literature itself come second to the editors, printers, libraries, parents, and bookstores that serve as gatekeepers for the stories. In the western world, many publishers, parents, and educators have varying opinions about what exactly children's literature should do or be. Historically, children's books have been published as educational tools, as avenues for cultivating imagination and expression, and as opportunities for entertainment. Within these categories, scholars, parents, and educators have contested what is appropriate for children, especially regarding complex issues such as tragedy, death, poverty, war, grief, and disability, as well as gender and sexuality. Since the late nineteenth-century, parents, teachers, authors, and researchers have attempted to theorize about the ways that these complex issues might be productively offered to children.

Because of children's literature's place as a tool, the study of children's literature as a work of art is a recent phenomenon, especially within medieval studies, as Cindy L. Vitto argues.[13] In fact, according to Leonard C. Marcus, author of *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children's Literature*, "Children's books may well have mattered so little to historians of past generations precisely because the books mattered so much to children. With their place firmly fixed in the foreground of young people's intimate lives, few scholars thought to look further or to ask what the books might possibly mean as

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[13] See Cindy L Vitto, "Deceptive Simplicity: Children's Versions of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 107-121.

commercial or cultural artifacts, much less as works of literature and art" (x).[14] In other words, historically, literature for children was deemed mundane and unimportant; in the United States and the United Kingdom, it was solely created to serve a set agenda (often political or religious). It was not viewed as something worthy of study since it was of practical use. However, since the 1970s, literature theorists have realized the significance of works for children as an indicator of cultural identity and values. For example, Marcus explains that "Children's books are prime carriers of our cultural DNA. Through them, each generation speaks to the next and passes down the ideals and attitudes it cares about most deeply. As Americans' religious beliefs, ideas about education, hopes for the future and understanding of childhood itself have all continued to change, children's books have changed in tandem with them" (x).[15] Therefore, understanding what children are encouraged to read at a given time and how authors approach this framework can help us understand the values and the identities that children are expected to embrace, as well as how adults view childhood; this is important for English scholars if we are interested in teaching our students cultural histories.

To outline the development of children's literature as a genre that entered scholarly conversation and was promoted to MLA status in the 1980s, beginning with the development of the genre in the United States makes sense for the scope of this dissertation because it is where the genre was solidified as a publishable, useful entity. The work of American librarians, teachers, authors, and publishers (notably those that were women) was monumental in establishing the genre that would lead to what we are familiar with today.[16] Starting here, we

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[14] Leonard C. Marcus, *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Making of American Children's Literature.* Houghton Mifflin, 2008.
[15] Marcus, *Minders of Make-Believe*, 2008, p. x.
[16] I begin here with the acknowledgement that people have been creating books and telling stories orally to children well before the development of the genre as an area of publishing.

find that the purpose of late seventeenth-century children's books in America were published and disseminated to perpetuate specifically religious ideas. For example, "The New England Primer," published in 1689,[17] was one of the first books published for children in the United States; it was not even what we might call, "literature" but educational supplement. The book was read in schools and at home, and contained religious maxims, the alphabet, catechism answers, and moral lessons. As access to education spread in the United States, books began to be primarily offered to children for didactic purposes. Americans believed that children needed to learn about religion, cultural norms, and their nation. As education progressed, notions of what children should be taught suggested that children should be shielded from life's harsh realities; thus, children were offered sanitized stories that often focused on teaching morals.

As printing became popular, publishers and the economy largely influenced what children read. Therefore, the values and topics typically offered to children reflected the values of those purchasing books, and often, that was the middle class. As publishers became more prominent, the topics deemed appropriate for children in the nineteenth century focused on imagination, education, entrepreneurship, and morality, reflecting the values of the American middle class. Elizabeth Massa Hoiem discusses this in "Radical Cross-Writing for Working Children: Toward a Bottom-Up History of Children's Literature." Here, she explains that "our modern concept of childhood, as a sacred time preserved for play, improvement, and education, began with the middle classes and spread to everyone else. So did children's literature" (3). Thus, the content of children's literature was curated to allow children to become productive members of the middle class. This meant an emphasis on good citizenship, fun, and adventure,

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[17] This is not the first book for children; it is the first document book published for children in America. See Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter*. U of Chicago P, 2008 for a robust history of works for children.

rather than troublesome reality.[18] However, in the mid-twentieth century, the civil rights movement created a shift in publishing and libraries. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, librarians, activists, and educators worked to champion the goal of racial equality in American books for children. A notable example of someone imperative to this shift was Augusta Baker, who, in 1961, "became the first New York Public Library's—and the nation's—first African American citywide coordinator of children's services" (Marcus 224). She was distressed about the lack of published works for children that made Black children and their cultural heritage visible. In this role, she dedicated her life to improving the situation and her efforts, along with many other activists, would have far reaching significance. Books began to offer diverse characters, as well as diverse subjects. Narratives for children became more realistic, offering subjects once considered taboo. By the early twenty-first century, children could quite literally explore life through literature. Today, it seems that most scholars, educators, and administrators agree that children can handle reality; that children's fiction can offer realistic portrayals of death, violence, love, and growing up, and that reading is a way for children to learn about themselves and the world around them.[19] Furthermore, not only do most scholars believe that children can read books that are not sanitized, but some argue for teaching children how to read critically and radically by questioning and situating what they read as they read it, so that when they encounter texts that are troublesome (for whatever reason), they will have the tools necessary to take power in their reading processes.[20]

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[18] Lucy Andrews explores this phenomenon through the development of detective fiction for children in her book, *The Boy Detective in Early British Children's Literature: Patrolling the Borders between Boyhood and Manhood*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

[19] Ebony Elizabeth Thomas' *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* is an exemplary example. She perceptively explores the implications of portrayals of darker-skinned characters in popular youth and young adult speculative fiction. She employs Black feminism and Afrofuturism to show how readers engage with texts.

[20] See Khol, Herbert. *Should We Burn Babar? Essays on Children's Literature and the Power of Stories*. The New Press, 2007.

Children's literature as a vehicle for learning about the cultures, histories, and ideologies around them continues today. In "The Child's Understanding of Tragedy," child psychologist Robert Coles explains that "Children come to books prepared by their membership in our species to appreciate this life's ironies, paradoxes, puzzling inconsistencies, and contradictions" (5). This observation from Coles serves as an orienting reminder for why children read and how they approach reading as well as how reading serves as an avenue for understanding life and culture. Because of this, many scholars and authors have asked, "Why do we write for children?" and "What should we write for children?" One answer lies in our understanding of what we believe children need. As we've seen, historically, children's books have been published as educational tools, as avenues for cultivating imagination and expression, and as opportunities for entertainment.[21] These conversations persist because what children read informs who they are. For example, according to Richard Flynn, "identity, including child identity (beyond that which is merely given), is complex. For the child, identity is formed from being in the world and negotiating that world, just as it is for adults" (160). Since literature is one way that individuals establish identity, writers intentionally integrate political and ideological notions and subtexts in narratives in order to instill a sense of collective identity in a specific audience. And, in children's literature, ideological integration becomes even more evident because the genre is carefully controlled as it is disseminated to a readership that is being molded by every book they read. Most writing has a purpose; or perhaps, it might be better to say, we can find implicit purposes in writing as we analyze it. This knowledge has informed the way I consider, not only the way that texts are written, but the ways that they are re-written, in adaptations and retellings. Much of children's literature is a retelling or adaptation—consider the multitude of fairy tales

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[21] See Marcus, *Minders of Make Believe*, 2008.

and legends children read—so one important avenue through which to consider what experience is deemed best for children is through looking at the development of a narrative through adaptation or retelling. Even legends and romances are designed to support a cultural ideology, so when these stories are revised, adapted, or rewritten for new audiences (whether they be specific child audiences or general modern audiences), it is worth examining why these stories persist and what changes are made, especially within the field of children's literature, since the genre is heavily regulated, both in the production and dissemination of the texts.[22]

Consistently circulating within the history of children's literature is the looming question about who children's literature is for and the place of adults in the genre. A pivotal text in this conversation is Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, Or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984). Rose contends that "there is no child behind the category 'children's fiction,' other than the one which the category itself sets in place" and traces adult conceptions of the child. This interesting argument considers our trend to align specific books with specific ages or categories of readers. Notably, according to Rose, the figure of the child works to hide cultural anxieties around sex and identity in children's literature. Rose's argument uses the character of Peter Pan to suggest that the figure of the child works to hide cultural anxieties around sex and identity in children's literature, and that there really is no child figured into the genre at all. Rather, the genre mostly ignores the needs of the child audience to satisfy the needs and desires of adults. Her argument hinges on the notion of accurate representation through language. She argues that the genre should recognize its preoccupation with childish innocence. The book has been challenged and qualified by later theorists, noting that perhaps her argument about the

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[22] Regulation of texts is a regularly occurring conversation in Children's Literature Scholarship, specifically in Europe and North America. Conversations of censorship and book banning abound; however, the extent of that regulation is different in different cultures.

construction of the reader is not limited to children's literature only, but most contemporary scholars agree that it is worth acknowledging the ways that writing for children will always be addressing multiple readers: in addition to the intended child-reader, stories for children must also consciously address an adult reader. More recently, Elly McCausland's *Malory's Magic Book: King Arthur and the Child, 1862–1980* (2019) offers a reading of the adults and children found in Arthurian children's stories. McCausland's argument is situated as being interested not in the children who read Malory's influential *Morte D'arthur* and its adaptations, but in the authors who invent the child-reader for those texts. Her work suggests that:

> Shifting conceptions of the child – as bold and adventurous, socially fragile, magical and innocent – actually manifested themselves in texts that either attempted to engage with these children or were shaped by a profound authorial interest in the realm of childness. It reveals the complexities of interacting with the child as a writer, parent, teacher, or through memory of one's own childhood. (6-7)

Ultimately, both Rose and McCausland's texts suggest that the creation of children's literature is not really about what children need, but what adults need. Together, these works and the work of other children's literature scholars explore the ways that authors construct children for their books and explain that much of children's literature is either written specifically for children with an agenda in mind or not really written for children at all; rather, children serve as a vessel through which to explore human experiences such as one's identity, formative years, and trauma. What we are left with is an understanding that children's literature is a genre of writing that engages audiences and writers viscerally and intentionally. Children's literature's potential for such deep and far-reaching engagement, as well as its flexibility, makes it a prime candidate for inclusion in English department classrooms.

Children's Literature in University Classrooms

Research about children's literature in university classrooms seems to locate itself within three typical fields: English, Library Science and Information, and Education. Within these fields, emphases vary slightly, but the goal of children's literature courses in these fields (including undergraduate survey courses and more specialized graduate courses) is generally a method to prepare K-12 teachers to use children's literature or to create appreciative readers. Within the last twenty years, surveys have been conducted by the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA), a division of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), to determine how children's literature courses are designed for both undergraduate and graduate students in these fields. The two most recent surveys were completed in 1997 and 2022.

The survey conducted in 1997 by Amy McClure and Carl Tomlinson tests the hypothesis that "students taking a general or survey course in children's literature at the undergraduate or graduate levels would have different course emphases." [23] To do this, they sent a survey to CLA members and asked for respondents who were currently teaching children's literature courses (in English, Education, and Library Science programs) to share about their courses; McClure and Tomlinson examined course organization, evaluation methods, and faculty and student concerns. Their conclusion was that undergraduate and graduate courses were not very different at all: course organization, evaluation, and assignments were similar in all courses, with the only notable difference being that undergraduate students were given more structure, while graduate students were given more choice. Courses tended to be organized by genre, used a common textbook (though there was not a consistent textbook listed among respondents), and relied on award-winning children's books as materials. Importantly, they note that "children's literature, as

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[23] McClure, Amy, and Carl Tomlinson. "Polling the Profs: A National Survey of Teachers of Children's Literature in Universities and Colleges." *Journal of Children's Literature*, vo. 26, no. 2, 2000, pp. 40-49.

course content, seems to be holding its own." Though it is not that recent, I include the 1997 survey because the newest 2022 survey is concerned only with the state of children's literature courses in the curricula of teacher education programs; only surveying offerings in departments and colleges of education, so the emphasis is a bit different than previous surveys. [24] Their conclusion, though, is that the survey shows that there is a "compelling argument for the centrality of children's literature courses" in university programs. However, the shift from surveying children's literature courses in all three fields to solely an interest in teacher certification programs and education programs is indicative of the place of children's literature as first and foremost a literacy tool for pre-service teachers. Thus, my project fills a hole by synthesizing the current and previous conversation about children's literature in university classrooms and add to that conversation by offering suggestions for future use.

In addition to those CLA surveys and forty or so published articles about children's literature at the university level in journals such as *Pedagogy*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *Children's Literature*, and *The Lion and the Unicorn*, I have found four notable texts that outline, discuss, and/or survey children's literature courses at the university level: *Teaching Children's Literature: Issues, Pedagogy, Resources* edited by Glen Edward Sadler (a volume in the MLA *Options for Teaching* Series) published in 1992 and *A Master Class in Children's Literature: Trends and Issues in an Evolving Field* edited by April Whatley Bedford and Lettie K. Albright published by the NCTE in 2011.[25] Furthermore, in 2020, MLA published one other

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[24] Graff Jennifer, et al. "Contemporary Children's Literature in Education Courses: Diverse, Complex, and Critical," *Literacy Practice and Research*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2022, Article 3, https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu /lpr/vol47/iss3/3.

[25] In writing this dissertation, one research strategy included combing through the tables of contents of the journals listed and saving every article that discussed the pedagogy of children's literature in university classrooms. Compared to the volume of theoretical research published about children's literature in these journals, the number of articles I found is very low. This is especially true considering that *Children's Literature*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* and *The Lion and the Unicorn*, three of the most respected journals of children's literature scholarship have all been producing peer-reviewed scholarship for almost fifty years.

Options for Teaching Series text entitled *Teaching Young Adult Literature*, edited by Mike

Cadden, et al., so that two of the 51 texts in the MLA's *Options for Teaching* Series focus

specifically on children's literature. In these texts, contributors offer syllabi, course activities,

and course texts. They also discuss critical issues and approaches such as issues in canonization,

periodization, and gender, multicultural, and sexuality studies. Both include reading lists and

resources. The Children's Literature Assembly also includes a section on their website where

members can share their syllabi, with categories such as undergraduate and graduate Children's

Literature Courses as Stand-Alone Courses in Education, Library Science, or English; Children's

Literature Courses as Undergraduate General Education Requirements; Specialized Graduate

Courses; and Children's Literature Content as Integrated into Teacher Education Methods

Courses.[26] Most recently, in 2023, Gayatri Devi, Philip Smith, and Stephanie J. Weaver

published *Teaching Equity Through Children's Literature in Undergraduate Classrooms*. Their

edited collected is pivotal in advancing my argument because they also see the pedagogical

potential and value of children's literature in university English department courses. The essays

offer a series of interventions for the practice of teaching equity in literature courses, concerning

themselves with effective methods for sharing literature "that represent the many faces of

humanity" (9). Ultimately, the contributors believe that children's literature is the best vehicle

for this kind of work. Their work is particularly timely in light of this dissertation; their move to

bring the pedagogical value of children's literature into current scholarly conversations supports

my efforts in building a bridge between theory and practice in the pedagogy of children's

literature and general English literature courses.

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[26] See "Children's Literature Syllabi," *Children's Literature Assembly*. https://www.childrensliteratureassembly.org /childrens-lit-syllabi.html.

Furthermore, other support for bridging theory and practice is the survey of courses offered in the MLA *Teaching Children's Literature: Issues, Pedagogy, Resources* text: under the course descriptions section, of the fifteen courses discussed, nine of them focus solely on preparing educators or those who will work with children as storytellers which is more than half of the syllabi included. The two general education courses listed however, focus on children's literature as literature, emphasizing artistic achievement (147). However, one of the emphases for a course entitled "Literature for Children" offered at Missouri Western State College uses Northrop Frye's theory of literary expression to suggest that "children can study literature in the same way that they study other subjects and can understand basic truths about what literature is" (147). This course has two goals: to teach students that children can study literature and use it to understand the world around them and to teach students how to look for "elements in children's literature that make a book an artistic achievement and that show how literature is part of a search for meaning in our lives" (147). The course moves from picture books to middle grade books and ends with poetry; it is designed to be taught as a general undergraduate course that introduces students unfamiliar with literary analysis to critical theory and textual analysis. While the goal of this course is to prepare elementary educators, its purpose to teach critical theory through children's literature is pivotal for this dissertation because it forms the core of my argument that children's literature should be used more often in this way.

In addition to using children's literature in general undergraduate courses, it has been and is often used in more specific English classrooms. For example, one syllabus outlines a children's literature course that began in the1980s at San Diego State University that combined children's literature with composition. It is open to all students but designed for elementary teacher students in conjunction with the school of Teacher Education (178). The idea of teaching

a children's literature and composition course is notable here because it aligns with the idea that children's literature is useful in more traditional English course offerings such as theory, composition, pedagogy, and literature. Another syllabus worthy of highlighting in this conversation is the **"**Children's Literature as Social History" course offered at Portland State University in the Women's Studies program in conjunction with the Department of English (175). The course's situation in Women's Studies rather than in the school of Education emphasizes the viability of children's literature in general education classes. The program was "concerned that most children's literature courses focus mainly or exclusively on literary merit, educational value, and/or the use of books in the classroom . . . [and] wished to draw attention to the consciously or unconsciously didactic nature of many children's books" (175). To accomplish its goal, the course focuses on social issues and gender, historical contexts, and explicit or implied attitudes towards race, sex, class, and religion. Overall, the numerous courses listed in this volume supports the MLA's conclusion that "a striking feature of children's literature as a course is its interdisciplinary adaptability and creative potential in the classroom. . . [this reflects the] eclectic nature of the subject both for instruction and research. The range is very widespread in orientation and methodology" (145).

One final syllabus comes from the University of Pennsylvania, entitled "Writing of Children's Fiction," which has been an annual offering since 1980. According to the description, "This course makes two fundamental assumptions: that children's fiction can reach the highest levels of storyteller's art and that college-aged adults have a special advantage, fresh memories, along with objectivity—in writing for children" (191). This notion is pivotal in the context of my dissertation because in addition to my argument about the potential of children's literature in university classrooms, I draw conclusions about the significance of teaching children's literature

specifically to traditional college-aged students. The instructors of the course found that, "over the years, it was observed that many of the best stories coming out of the workshops were about childhood," and noted that their "irresistible" conclusion was that "college-aged writers had an excellent vantage point for writing about childhood" (193). Childhood, children's literature, and college students all exist within liminal, transitional, or boundary spaces, so it makes sense that traditional college-aged students can write effectively about childhood; they are closer to it. While the class offers this useful concept about college-aged students and childhood, one of the conclusions drawn by students during discussion was that "children's fiction should have a moral center" and that writers in the class needed to "strengthen their writing in the area of values" (193). The students' conclusions align with traditional views about the purpose of children's literature and are important for two reasons: scholars, writers, and readers of children's literature do not necessarily argue today that children's literature must have a moral center; and the argument that children's literature must offer moral values suggests that children need to be taught through what they read which is interesting if we consider that children's literature is not a more traditional offering for college students. Does the need for moralizing stories end when one enters adulthood, or in this case (especially within contemporary America), college?

This interest in children's literature course syllabi and instruction is not new and the teaching of children's literature in college English classrooms is common, so it is interesting that there is not more writing about it. In my discussions with teachers of children's literature and other more traditional genres of literature (both within English and Teacher Education programs), practitioners have articulated that at some point or another, they have included children's literature texts in their courses. They acknowledge that there does seem to be a hole in published research about using these kinds of texts; perhaps the field simply takes it for granted

that children's literature is being used or assumes that it is not worth writing about or that its use

is too interdisciplinary and eclectic in nature.

In considering the varying ways that practitioners have used children's literature in the

classroom, I am reminded of Chaucer's call for stories of most *sentence (moral sense) and solaas*

(pleasure) in the *Canterbury Tales*, suggesting that those are the best tales. Children's literature

studies seem to follow those guidelines, but perhaps "The line between purpose and pleasure is

neither static nor simply determined" (Kline 3). Perhaps scholars of all three fields have created a

line between purpose and pleasure in the classifications and uses of children's literature versus

traditional genres of "academic literature." That boundary has created a space where we cannot

look at the purpose of children's literature in a way that is literary; whether or not it is true in

practice, in scholarship it seems like the purpose of children's literature feels very different from

other texts college students traditionally encounter in their English programs.

Medievalism and Children's Literature

Because of the ways that many children's texts are infused with elements of the medieval

or more subtly offer frames, modes, and themes found in the medieval, I find medievalism to be

a productive way to bridge the gap in creating a method for choosing paired texts. Much of

children's literature adapts medieval texts, especially romance. Studying these adaptations are

instructive for revealing what has been valued successively and in relation to specific contexts,

which is one technique that we encourage English students to learn. Therefore, in addition to

considering the current scholarship about children's literature at the university level this project

is also situated within conversations about medievalism. While developing this argument, I am

working within the disciplines of medieval studies and children's literature studies; however, as I

mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this approach is useful for survey courses of varying

topics. The methodology does not have to be bound in medievalism to be effective. Thus, I would challenge readers to imagine their own fields and to consider how they might begin to establish a methodology for choosing children's literature to pair with texts in their own specialties as they read the rest of this dissertation.

My purpose is to engage in a reflexive methodology for making connections between and teaching what many students might deem seemingly disparate genres. Since I spend some time analyzing the ways that children's literature reiterates, repeats, or uses tropes, themes, and forms found in medieval texts to support my argument that pairing texts can help students with comprehension and understanding, defining what medievalism is and how it functions will be important. Medievalism, as defined by Tison Pugh and Angela Weisl, "refers to the art, literature, scholarship, avocational pastimes, and sundry forms of entertainment and culture that turn to the Middle Ages for their subject matter or inspiration, and in doing so, explicitly or implicitly, by comparison or by contrast, comment on the artist's contemporary sociocultural milieu" (1). Because of this overlap, my project is also interdisciplinary in nature. I am interested in exploring how the studies of medieval literature and children's literature connect with studies of childhood, pedagogy, and identity; I make connections between fields and play with and cross traditional boundaries. Recent scholarship also acknowledges the importance of the bridge between medieval literature and children's literature. Clare Bradford's *The Middle Ages in Children's Literature* (2015) and the Children's Literature Association's decision to publish an entire issue on the "The Medieval in Children's Literature" are some examples of other scholars who have looked at children's literature in Deleuzian spirit—from above or up at them from

below, or from left to right or right to left—and have been open to crossing disciplinary and generic boundary lines.[27]

Finally, I emphasize adaptations, retellings, and intertextuality. In "Writing Homer, Reading Riordan: Intertextual Study in Contemporary Adolescent Literature" Amy Bright discusses the tension between canonical and classical autonomy. Bright argues that "Encouraging adolescents to use a form of intertextuality as a tool for creating interest in canonical texts prompts teachers and researchers to re-cast adolescent literature as worthwhile and important" (37-38). Bright essentially argues for a method of pairing texts through adaption and notes that finding intertextuality is a way for readers to make connections. Bright notes that:

> Rather than representing intertextual links, these are direct interpretations of Shakespeare's [for example] source texts. Critical thinking is not as necessary to make connections between these mediums; they demonstrate nearly direct translations. It is therefore important to supplement Shakespeare's texts with intertextual study to insinuate the themes, characters, and plot through indirection. The responsibility is placed on the reader to make concrete and meaningful connections. (41)

Intertextuality in this way becomes more than passing reference and integral to understanding a text. I argue that elevating discussions of intertextuality in classrooms through the bridge of children's literature can lead to a deeper reading of texts and an avenue through which professors can reconsider the ways that we use children's literature in classrooms. This framework is specifically effective for my conversation about medieval literature and children's literature because both genres are heavily intertextual, relying on networks of oral stories, retellings, and adaptations.

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[27] See *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 4, Winter 2020.

Methodology

The purpose of this dissertation is to prove that children's literature can be a productive addition into a university English classroom. While one goal of the dissertation is to outline my pedagogical framework, the other is to show how the use of children's literature works in practice, not just theory. One major component of English literature classrooms is the application of literary theories to texts, so I perform that technique through readings of the children's literature offered in this dissertation as an example.

I began this introduction with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizomatic thinking and will return to it here. One prominent discussion in children's literature studies is the place of orality, connectivity, and adaptation in the genre. Rhizomatic thinking will be fruitful for promoting the consideration of texts in new ways and the tracing of connections between genres.[28] Deleuze and Guattari's metaphoric consideration of a model of knowledge as rhizomes suggests that within a knowledge hierarchy, there exists a network in which ideas can create new growths or offshoots anywhere at any time, and are not subject to a centralized, rigid structure (thus, eliminating the hierarchy).[29] Children's literature is often based on a network of underlying knowledge from many knowledge sources (as is medieval literature). The network produces innumerable offshoots, going in countless directions and spinoffs; narratives can be

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[28] Other scholars of children's literature have set a precedent for using Deleuze and Guattari's frame in their analysis of children's literature. See Kathleen Burnett and Eliza T. Dresang's "Rhizomorphic Reading: The Emergence of a New Aesthetic in Literature for Youth" (1999) and Jane Newland's *Deleuze in Children's Literature* (2022) as examples.

[29] Markus P. J. Bohlmann discusses the elimination of hierarchies through rhizomes, noting that "Deleuze and Guattari favor the rhizome and the horizontal; yet this is not so much to be read as an introduction of another linearity, but rather as a mode that disrupts arborescence as that which shuts down movement and that which builds hierarchies and organizations, and as a mode that yields extensive and intensive movement that is connective to and creative of the plenitude around us within open-ended, evolving space and time" (408-409). Bohlmann's description of the function of the rhizome describes the work of children's literature, which often functions as an intermediary between hierarchies of knowledge. For more, see Bohlmann, "In Any Event: Moving Rhizomatically in Peter Cameron's *Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You." Children's Literature Association Quarterly,* vol. 39, 2014, pp. 385-412.

made richer when a reader is familiar with the network of narratives, but that does not make the reading any less enjoyable or productive for readers that are unfamiliar with the deeper network and are simply engaging with the most recent offshoot. In this way, rhizomatic thinking is a productive framework for considering the fluidity of adaptation, as well as the fluidity of the genres of medieval literature and children's literature themselves. Furthermore, rhizomatic thinking as presented by Deleuze and Guattari is interested in the fluid act of *becoming*, rather than the stricter sense of being, which is precisely what children's literature could be said to be concerned with doing. The theoretical ideas offered by Deleuze and Guattari create a robust way of considering the intertextual, bridge-like potential of children's literature.

Chapter Outline

In the following chapters, I offer case studies in which I make explicit connections between twentieth-century children's books and medieval modes, themes, and tropes to show how children's literature can be used as a productive pair in an English literature classroom. I use medieval and early modern literature as my entry into the conversation but invite teachers of all genres to consider how they might adapt these examples in their own classrooms. Chapter One outlines my experience teaching a paired texts sophomore literature course, offers a sample syllabus for a paired texts course, potential texts, and sample assignments, discussion topics, and activities for a general literature course (either intended for English majors or general students). The problems explored in this chapter include: 1) Students: student buy-in for both medieval literature and children's literature. Their biases about both genres. 2) Instructor: resources for this kind of pedagogy (teaching children's literature to university undergraduates) are not abundant except for teaching preservice educators or library science professionals.

Chapter Two considers the ways that children's adaptions of early texts might be productive for instruction. Because children's literature and adaptations are flexible and interconnected, that feature of the works can be its most important use—as a flexible source, it allows writers and readers to explore numerous themes, truths, and identities within a familiar framework. Even though an adaptation might not remain entirely faithful to the original, the intertextuality that the adaptation is built upon allows for a dense, deep reading. To tease this out, I primarily focus on the numerous adaptations of the *Gawain* poem for children. In doing so, I examine one medieval text rewritten many ways for children. Research about children's literature and medieval adaptations suggests that romances are the most readily and popularly adapted, so the *Gawain* text functions as a case study for this process of rhizomatic intertextuality.

In Chapter Three, I analyze one Newbery award-winning children's author who has written many medieval-themed texts for children. Here, I examine Karen Cushman's middle grade chapter books: *Catherine, Called Birdy* (1994),[30] *The Midwife's Apprentice* (1995),[31] and *Matilda Bone* (2000).[32] These texts offer medieval themes and imagery and many of the same structural patterns as the medieval romances they sub-textually engage with.

In Chapter Four, I explore the mode of contemplative journaling and thinking as a bridge between my previous two chapters: it is one way of expression for medieval writers, as well as a mode of storytelling for children, and a method of pedagogy for university students. Thus, examples of this kind of literature can serve as models for students so that they can imitate the

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[30] Cushman, Karen, *Catherine, Called Birdy*. Clarion Books, 1994.
[31] Cushman, Karen, *The Midwife's Apprentice*. Clarion Books, 1995.
[32] The edition I will use is the exclusive teacher's edition: Cushman, Karen, *Matilda Bone*. Dell Yearling, 2002, though the first edition was published by Clarion in 2000. The only difference in the editions is that the Dell Yearling version includes a discussion and contexts section for teachers at the end of the book.

journal writing in their own assignments and engagement with texts and with their own ideas. I outline productive connections apparent in all three situations of journaling.

The concluding chapter of this project is exploratory and reflective in nature. Here, I pan out to look at the map of children's literature studies broadly, returning to my goal of considering how we can use children's literature outside of its regular boundaries—from outside of the middle, as Deleuze and Guattari say—but rather different contact zones. I assert that including children's literature more regularly in all English literature courses is an important endeavor due to its flexibility. Finally, I discuss the particularly engaging place that both children's literature and traditional college-aged students share as bridges: they are both culturally important and have the potential to redirect or support cultural ideologies in a way that is unique and valuable.

Chapter One

Meeting in the Middle: Reconstructing Children's Literature Pedagogy

> "To teach off the grid is to teach outside the comfort zone of the canon, without the built-in
> validations and pedagogies that literary tradition provides."
> —Nathanial B. Smith and Gina Brandolino, "Teaching Medieval Literature off the Grid"[33]

Children's literature courses exacerbate the typical challenges encountered by teachers of survey courses: when the point is to offer comprehensiveness, a genre that is as densely populated by books as children's literature is makes it almost impossible to offer a comprehensive survey. Even though there is somewhat a canon of classic children's literature, the largeness of it makes planning a course in children's literature feel a bit like a "free-for-all," which might make one wonder if what they are teaching is effective or good, or even appropriate. Nathanial B. Smith and Gina Brandolino call this experience "teaching off the grid," explaining that when doing so, "You are certainly off the beaten path, without much assistance or advice from textbooks, teachers' manuals, online resources, or other scholars' work; there is little, if anything, to vouch for or justify your lesson plan" (205). Instructors find themselves, as Smith and Brandolino suggest, outside of the comfort zone of typical literary traditions. Their observation means that those teaching off the grid are often tasked with locating texts they deem significant and determining why, writing supplemental lecture and teaching materials from scratch, and creating a framework for engaging with the texts that they choose. While these tasks sound like the work one does when designing any course, seasoned professors can attest to the fact that when one teaches a more "traditional" or "standard" genre to university students, especially at the 2000- or 3000-level, there is a certain amount of work already done for them if

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[33] Nathanial B Smith and Gina Brandolino. "Guest Editors' Introduction: Teaching Medieval Literature off the Grid." Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture, vol. 13, no. 2, 2013, p. 205, doi 10.1215/15314200-1958404.

they wish to use the materials available to them. For example, courses on Shakespeare, American Modernism, Long Nineteenth-Century British Literature, and African American Literature (this list could go on), have fairly standardized canonical texts for adoption. Whether or not one uses those texts is up to the instructor, but they have the option of pulling almost any syllabus from their university's records for a previous course taught on that genre and teaching it as is without worrying about whether the texts they have chosen are "correct," appropriate, or a good representation of the field. In contrast, at this point in their development, courses in children's literature are not that predictable and incredibly varied.

To address the problem that comprehensiveness presents for literature survey instructors, Desirée Henderson advocates for pedagogical methods that enable "faculty to set aside the unreachable goal of comprehensive coverage in favor of other attainable and equally valuable goals" (49).[34] Taking Henderson's advice, I employ a paired-texts method that advocates for including children's literature in tandem with other literary genres to teach the survey course. As I mentioned in the introduction, paired-texts pedagogy is an instructional strategy that uses a series of related texts to explore a concept or theory. Paired-texts pedagogy relies on the theory of intertextuality, which makes it a suitable method for working with children's literature, a genre that regularly influences and is influenced by other texts. In this chapter, I describe the paired-texts method I employed in a 2000-level literature survey course and make the case that paired-texts are particularly suited to addressing the overarching problem in Children's Literature studies: a lack of children's literature on literary studies syllabi. I show that a paired-texts methodology effectively achieves the benefits of teaching children's literature outlined in

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[34] Henderson's pedagogical approach is Team-Based Learning (TBD) which meets specific attainable goals such as "the development of problem-solving skills, the cultivation of interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of the joyful and playful aspects of learning" (49). Even though her approach differs from mine, the sentiment behind her decision to explore new pedagogical approaches to teaching the survey aligns with my own pedagogical goals.

the introduction of this dissertation: fostering equity, creating confidence, and garnering engagement, as well as offering avenues for discussing contemporary cultural concerns and literary theories.

Furthermore, a paired-text methodology for teaching children's literature addresses another problem in children's literature pedagogy: resources for this kind of pedagogy (teaching children's literature to university undergraduates) are not abundant except for teaching preservice educators or library science professionals. The resources that do exist offer a dizzying array of methods, adoptable texts, frameworks, assignments, and goals; as a whole, because the corpus of children's literature as a genre is incredibly large and varied, the teaching of it seems to be as well. This is not a bad thing; in fact, I believe that it can lead to fresh, productive methods and possibilities for its pedagogy. Ultimately, though, I believe that one way for a genre to feel like it is an established area for teaching university students in English department classes is for it to have a standard starting point at least for course adoption. A paired-texts methodology is one way to address this problem.

As a practitioner who has designed a course that adopts children's literature, I have encountered this problem personally. At the university where I teach, instructors who are assigned survey courses have room for creativity in their class design and course adoption. The first time I was assigned a British Literature survey course, I considered the ways that I could incorporate children's literature into my syllabus. To support my course design, I examined previous syllabi from my university for sophomore literature courses, but I could not find many that were designed as courses in children's literature for undergraduates. I widened my search outside of my university and found syllabi for sophomore-level children's literature courses but there was very little consensus about what was taught and how it was taught. Furthermore, as I

have already spoken at length about in the introduction, many of the materials available were for courses that taught children's literature to students who were pre-service teachers or library science students. Sometimes, these courses were designated as English courses, but offered through or in conjunction with Colleges of Education or Library Science and designed for students in those departments; most often, they were designated as Education courses, and the goals of the class were different than the goals of a literature course. The focus of these classes tended to be on teaching students how to teach or choose appropriate children's books for young readers, focusing mostly on literacy and appropriateness rather than the techniques we emphasize in our field. At this point, I felt that I would be designing my course "off the grid" to return to Smith and Brandolino's term and this was indeed uncomfortable for a first-time literature teacher. This problem, for me, was one that drives this dissertation project: the need to create more resources for university English instructors who want to adopt children's literature in their courses. Thus, while the objective of this dissertation as a whole is to serve as a resource for teachers, this chapter in particular will aim to be a practical guide for one method of text adoption.

From a pedagogical standpoint, educators can approach designing children's literature courses in innumerable ways. After reviewing numerous surveys of the discipline, including MLA's *Teaching Children's Literature: Issues, Pedagogy, Resources* edited by Glen Edward Sadler, *Teaching Young Adult Literature*, edited by Mike Cadden, et al. (both volumes in the MLA Options for *Teaching Series*), *A Master Class in Children's Literature: Trends and Issues in an Evolving Field* edited by April Whatley Bedford and Lettie K. Albright published by the NCTE in 2011, and two seminal Children's Literature Association Educator Surveys (1997[35] and

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[35] McClure, Amy, and Carl Tomlinson. "Polling the Profs: A National Survey of Teachers of Children's Literature in Universities and Colleges." *Journal of Children's Literature*, vo. 26, no. 2, 2000, pp. 40-49.

2022[36]), I found that course design for university educators was largely up to the instructor and that there was little consensus between how courses about children's literature were executed and little consensus between texts assigned (both primary texts and supplemental textbooks). Courses ranged from historical introduction to the field, traditional literary analysis, teacher education courses, training in the composition of children's fiction, storytelling techniques, and social/cultural histories. There was little overlap in courses surveyed (which differs from more "traditional" literature courses; for example, a survey of African American Literature courses, Nineteenth-century British Literature courses, Victorian Literature courses, or even traditional Medieval Literature courses taught by different professors at different institutions would likely have some overlap in design and text adoption). According to the surveys, most of the children's literature courses surveyed are housed in education and library science programs (which might simply be indicative of the membership of the surveying bodies and not necessarily a comprehensive indicator of the number of children's literature courses in other programs). Overall, the amount of research discussing options and methods for teaching children's literature (specifically in English departments) would not suggest that there is actually an abundance of scholarship in English Studies about children's literature theoretically. This discrepancy is interesting. I would posit that because this genre has many audiences and many uses, and is so large, it sits in a middle ground or liminal space in which those in English feel it is useful for research and those in Library and Education Studies feel it is useful for practical teaching, but the two do not cross the boundaries of their uses; thus, there is a gaping hole left in the middle for those that desire to have resources for teaching it as a body of literature that is useful for

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[36] Graff Jennifer, et al. "Contemporary Children's Literature in Education Courses: Diverse, Complex, and Critical," *Literacy Practice and Research*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2022, Article 3, https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu /lpr/vol47/iss3/3.

theoretical and cultural analysis. While it is evident that children's literature courses are taught in English Studies classrooms, the documentation of this practice is not sufficient. This hole left in the discourse about children's literature pedagogy is one reason for my Deleuzian attempt at looking at children's literature from outside of the middle. Re-considering the potential of children's literature from above or below instead of where it is stationed allows for creative course design and enhanced student engagement.

When designing my course, I looked to the courses outlined in the MLA, NCTE, and CLA courses surveyed as examples, as well as to other sophomore literature courses offered within my department and in English departments at other universities. Even though this was a survey class, I considered paired texts to be an avenue for moving outside of the comprehensive constraints of a survey course for sophomore literature. My decision to teach a paired-texts class arose while spending time reading texts typically categorized as children's literature as well as medieval literature. I found that there were numerous connections between the genres; both sets of texts included quests, pilgrimages, otherworldly characters, elements of magic, poetry, song, young characters, and even specific linguistic details. The connections I was making between the texts allowed me to deeply understand and reconsider both genres of texts in new ways. I hoped that reading both kinds of texts would also allow my students a richer experience and a fresh point of entry into both fields. The rest of this chapter will outline my experience teaching that paired-texts sophomore literature course, will offer a syllabus for a paired-texts course, discuss problems encountered, include options for assigned readings, and offer assignments for an undergraduate literature course (either intended for English majors or general students).

In summary, this course examines children's books of the twentieth century alongside the medieval and early modern literature that could have informed them or that they mirror. The

cultural work these children's texts do by refracting the Middle Ages through their contemporary concerns (such as gender, nationalism, identity, war, and trauma) is interesting and worthy of examination; children's literature has the potential to allow college students an accessible point of entry into the study of medieval literature by inviting them into a space that might be familiar and comfortable. In doing so, we can help college students break down barriers they might encounter between children's literature and canonical texts and between reading for pleasure and reading critically. Furthermore, just as with any literature course, we can invite students to think critically about literary expression, analyze representations of culture through literary mediation, and learn the traditions of the field. I agree with Erika Romero that children's and young adult texts are "more beneficial not only because they increase student interest and engagement, but also because they provide a more equitable experience" (19). This course was an exercise in making the study of medieval literature more accessible and equitable through children's literature. See Appendix A for complete syllabus with specific outcomes.

Introduction to the Course

This literature course was offered at the University of Texas at Arlington in Spring 2023 and designated as a 2000-level course. According to the UTA university catalog, the aim of this course is to focus on a particular genre, theme, or issue to enable comparison and analysis of several texts. It should emphasize critical thinking, reading, and writing.[37] Titled "Medieval Literature and Twentieth-Century Children's Literature," this course examined popular children's books of the twentieth century in concert with the medieval literature that they mirror. Many popular children's books have intertextual resonances with medieval English literature. From the narrative structures of their plots (modeled after sagas, quests, and romances), their modes of

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[37] *The University of Texas at Arlington*. "University Catalog – English Undergraduate." The U of Texas at Arlington, p. 1712, https://catalog.uta.edu/pdf/2023-2024.pdf.

writing (allegory and satire), the fantastic nature of their characters, and even the linguistic details of the books themselves, these novels model medieval texts. Texts assigned were Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy* paired with Peter Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*; *The Book of Margery of Kempe* paired with Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* paired with Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth*; and Marie de France's *Bisclavret* paired with J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

Enrolled students ranged from freshman to seniors and majors include English, Interior Design, Architecture, Nursing, Engineering, and General Studies. At the beginning of the course, my students were mostly apprehensive; in an early reflective (ungraded) survey, I asked students how they felt about the course content and about reading, as well as what their expectations for the course were. Many students noted that they were nervous about the reading load because they described themselves as nonreaders (some even saying they had not read a whole book since middle school); not really interested in the medieval works (either due to content or perceived difficulty of text; answers varied); concerned that the children's works would be ruined for them if they analyzed them; and worried that they would seem "dumb" in front of their classmates and teacher during discussion because they felt like they were not prepared to talk about literature. Conversely, students also said that they were: excited to have the opportunity to re-read texts they had enjoyed as children; looking forward to reading "easy" books; and interested in potential connections between "old stories" and children's works. Their answers led me to one problem to consider as the class developed; while from the instructor-facing side of the class, there seemed to be insufficient material to draw from for course planning, from the student-facing side, student buy-in for both medieval literature and children's literature was going to be challenging. Students seemed to hold biases about both genres.

In light of that problem, one goal of teaching this course was to consider ways that children's literature can serve as a bridge for university college students for understanding medieval modes of storytelling (whether oral or written). This goal upholds my first assertion that children's literature can create equity for college students. Children's literature functions as a method for comprehension of potentially difficult readings and concepts that might be foreign or different to students. I aimed to introduce students to important medieval texts and their conventions. Therefore, the texts chosen as children's literature for the course were not representative of children's literature history or the "golden texts" of the genre but were instead chosen as mirrors or models of the form, genre, and/or content of the medieval texts. The function of the children's text was to help students understand critical concepts they might encounter in the medieval pairing. In this way, all the students had a more level starting place for entry into texts they might have had trouble with because of this difference or unfamiliarity. The texts were paired according to form, content, or mode of writing and students read the medieval text before reading the children's text. Each reading was supported by relevant historical and cultural context through a brief introductory lecture to the text covering author (if known), genre, themes, and form. The medieval texts were assigned in order from oldest to newest; the texts chosen offered a mix of male and female authors and consisted of religious texts, pilgrimages, romances, and poetry. In addition to considering genre and form/structure, students were encouraged to consider ideas about gender and class representation, religion, style, censorship, and authorship. This goal supports my assertion that one benefit of children's literature is its potential for discussing contemporary cultural concerns and literary theory.

My goal was not necessarily to include children's books that were infused with medievalism. While some might, I also included texts that are not medieval in nature, but that

offer similar forms, genre conventions, themes, or modes. My aim was to suggest that books that engage with medievalism can be chosen in tandem with the traditional medieval texts but also that non-medieval children's novels use the same modes and themes (pilgrimage, saint's lives, etc.) of writing and that the mode and themes can be useful for discussion and analysis in courses such as this one. Daniel Kline argues that "What we find in many medieval works, whether sermons, school texts, saints' lives, romances, fabulae, lyrics, or plays, is a mixture of morality and mirth, teaching and delight—something, I dare say, we still value in present-day Newberry or Caldecott Award winners" (3). Kline's assertion was true for this course as well; I focused on medieval literature because that is my field of study and what I find interesting, but I do believe that this frame could be applied within other specializations. Furthermore, I am sure that this is not the first class of its kind in existence; but it might be the beginnings of a unique study that outlines the outcome of a course like this and shares it with other scholars, teachers, and students.

As I was teaching this class, my goal was to align with the course outcomes for sophomore literature at the University of Texas at Arlington. I also wanted to create a course that students would find interesting, enjoyable, and memorable. Like many professors, I wanted to motivate my students to care about their assigned readings. I believe that children's literature is an effective avenue for doing so; one benefit of its use is its potential to easily garner student engagement and attention. Furthermore, I knew that most of my students would be non-English majors and that they might be unfamiliar with traditional literary studies or analysis or techniques, so my goal was to offer an introduction to the techniques of literary analysis and to give my students the tools with which to have a conversation about literature or art while also giving them tools and skills they might find useful as they continued in their own coursework

outside of the humanities or literature courses. In "The Pedagogical Potential of Children's and Young Adult Literature," Romero explains "student assumptions about the simplicity of children's literature versus adult literature can make them more willing to complete reading assignments, as well, as they are less likely to enter the reading experience with the mindset that it will be an intellectually challenging experience" (23). This was mostly true for my students; they believed that the children's readings would be easy homework. However, like Romero found, I also discovered (and hoped) that "the lessons and discussions that follow reading the texts can prove that this content is not as conceptually simple as anticipated, but at this point, students will have accomplished the essential step of actually reading the assigned text" (23). Thus, the problem of student buy-in for the children's texts was abated as students began to read the children's fiction and realized that it offered nuance, complexity, and depth that they had not anticipated. Their engagement also created confidence. Because my students could quickly and adeptly navigate the assigned children's texts, they were confident in class discussions. Our conversations were able to quickly move beyond questions of comprehension into deep inquiry and connection.

Furthermore, Romero goes on to note that "As accessibility is a high-value concern when designing equitable course content, instructors assigning these texts provide students with a strong foundation for their learning experiences, whether students are developing knowledge and skills tied to basic concepts or advanced course objectives" (22). As I mentioned earlier, the foundational and accessible or familiar nature of the children's texts would allow students to recognize that reading and analyzing texts was not as scary or difficult as they imagined it was and prepared them to engage other texts—in this case, the medieval literature—with an open

mind. Thus, with these goals in mind, I believed that the paired-texts methodology would lead to a course that students found accessible and useful.

Structure and Methods

This course was designed as a lecture course that met twice weekly for eighty minutes for sixteen weeks. The course is guided by "essential questions" about the work literature can do creating critical insights about social issues, and literature's ability to create empathy and affective understanding across identities and experiences. The course is heavily discussion based and discussions are interspersed with mini-lectures, 15-minute presentations that introduce students to key ideas in theory and history to prompt critical thinking about the texts studied. Additional lectures explore relevant historical context, literary terms, and movements influencing the literature scene. Typically, class would begin with a brief reflection, followed by lecture, and end with discussion (either small group or whole class). All discussions were facilitated by the instructor, but students were encouraged to lead conversation. The course readings are separated into unit pairs, with each pair covering a specific literary form or concept.

Unit 1. The first unit briefly introduces students to the history of children's literature as a genre, the major tensions and conversations in the field, and a discussion of literary elements that can be found in fiction.

Unit 2. The second unit includes the textual pair Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*. Students are introduced to elements of medieval philosophical writing, allegorical writing, historical sources, fantasy writing for children, and issues of collective identity.

Unit 3. The third unit pairs *The Book of Margery Kempe* and *Catherine, Called Birdy*. Students are introduced to medieval religious texts and religious writing, saint's lives, the form of diary/self-writing, and issues of gender, authorship, and censorship.

Unit 4. The fourth unit includes the textual pair of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Students are introduced to the hero's journey, questing, medieval chivalric romance, and revisit the mode of allegory and the use of symbolic language through riddles and wordplay.

Unit 5. The fifth unit pairs *Bisclavret* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Here, students are introduced to medieval lais, the symbol of the medieval werewolf, and fables, and revisit issues of gender and authorship.

Unit 6. The final unit of class encourages students to reflect on their reading and the pairs and to make connections across genres and fields. It asks students to consider or reconsider overarching course concepts such as censorship, writing for children and adults, and enjoyment of texts.

Each unit begins with a lecture (often supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation) and a brief discussion of the explicit connections between the unit and the course objectives.

Assignments

Students were tasked with weekly reading and were required to take notes and submit summaries of their reading. The major assignments included three short reading reflection journal papers, a midterm exam and a final exam, as well as one final research paper. In addition to the major assignments, students were required to submit discussion cards. The reading assignments were paced at about one text per two weeks. Students were required to read the primary course texts in the following order: Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*; Peter

Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*; T*he Book of Margery of Kempe*; Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth*; Marie de France's *Bisclavret*; J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.* In addition to primary texts, students were assigned short supplemental reading assignments. The supplemental reading offered background information about the genres in each unit covered.

Discussion cards (submitted on index cards) were required to include a summary of the assigned reading and at least one question about the reading that would lead to effective peer conversation; the questions needed to cover issues related to overall course concepts or the genre, theme, or form of the reading (or its connections to other course readings). The purpose of the discussion cards was to ensure participation and reading engagement/comprehension, as well as to support class discussion. The discussion cards were used either for small group or whole class discussion. In course evaluations, students noted that they found the discussion cards helpful because the assignment kept them accountable and engaged with the assigned reading and allowed them an avenue to ask questions without having to speak up directly in class (for students that were shy or that were worried their questions were too "simple" or "basic"), as well as was an effective starting point for their own discussions and writing.

The first major assignment, the reading reflection journal, is designed to allow students to develop strong close reading skills and promote individual engagement with the course content. Each journal must include at least one quotation from the reading with a discussion of its significance to the student, observations about the key themes addressed in the reading, questions or predictions, or connections to current events and issues. These are opportunities for students to explore ideas they find significant and interesting; the topics are up to the students and they can take the papers in any direction they wish. Students are asked to avoid summarizing and instead

provide detailed, thoughtful responses unique to their experience of the text. Students are encouraged to explore personal connections and to use these reflections as pre-writing for the final research paper if they desire to do so. See Appendix C for assignment instructions.

Two exams are given to address student comprehension and ensure reading participation. Each exam (midterm and final) covers previous untested material. The exams contain a long-essay portion in addition to short answer questions. Students are given a list of possible essay topics prior to the exam, but only one essay exam prompt from the list will be offered. Grading criteria for the essay portion is an assessment of the paper's ability to (1) focus arguments on the exam questions, (2) construct logical arguments, and (3) support claims with relevant examples from the text(s). For this course, I allowed students to use their texts in class while taking the exams. See Appendix D and Appendix E for the exam prompts.

The final research paper (the Signature Assignment) is a more traditional researched argument assignment. Students are asked to write a well-organized, effectively developed, three-to-five-page analysis of at least one of the course texts. For this course, students are encouraged to think about the texts in pairs and allowed to use up to two of the major course texts. Students are required to anchor the paper with a clear argumentative thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims. See Appendix B for assignment instructions and rubric.

Evaluation

Particularly useful for determining course effectiveness are the specific standards of a department's catalog. Thus, I aligned my efficacy with the outcomes of the University of Texas at Arlington's English Department sophomore literature courses: 1) To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature, as students engage with ideas

and beliefs in ways that extend beyond the English classroom; 2) To help students recognize that literature emerges out of complex cultural and historical contexts; 3) To equip students with vocabulary and terms that will help them to read literature closely and carefully; and 4) To give students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of literature. Furthermore, literature courses should not only encourage literacy, but should encourage critical thinking and integrate writing skills; these skills were also evaluated using the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) rubrics for Critical Thinking and Written Communication.[38] As a flexible resource and genre, children's literature can serve to meet core objectives such as these in literature courses.

Student Feedback

Overall, student feedback was positive, with comments noting that they enjoyed the course, found it useful and engaging, learned course concepts, and were even inspired to read more on their own. The major weakness apparent from student feedback was pace of the course—students stated that they thought the course moved too fast—which was not surprising.

The most notable positive aspects noted by students were about assignment type, course structure, one text pairing, and enjoyment of assigned reading. First, students noted that they most enjoyed the reader reflection journal prompts. They appreciated the opportunity to spend time exploring their own connections to the texts and to receive feedback on their observations. Students also particularly enjoyed the small group discussion in class. Many students noted that they were able to understand the reading and concepts more effectively after small group discussion. Many also said that they appreciated hearing their peers' outside perspectives about

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[38] See American Association of Colleges and Universities, "VALUE Rubrics," https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/value-initiative/value-rubrics.

the readings. Furthermore, almost every student mentioned at some point in the semester that they found they were enjoying reading more; and about half of those said that this reading was some of the first full reading they had finished since primary or secondary/middle school that they had enjoyed and wanted to continue. A few of the comments from the student evaluation noted:

- "The texts have helped me in my own creative process and with understanding effective communication as a whole."

- "I have been reading a bit more on my own. Reading these books, I remembered how much I enjoy reading."

- "Balancing the extremely formal medieval literature with the more relaxed children's literature has made me get better at interpreting its themes."

- "I do enjoy reading more because I know how to make connections now in a stronger way."

- "I think this is a great class to take if a student hasn't been able to engage with books since childhood, as is the case with me. Before this class, I didn't quite have a full grasp on what books I enjoyed reading - I only knew what I enjoyed from the past. In this class, I am encouraged to return to the avid readership of my childhood, pick up where I left off, and form opinions to carry with me as I make more "mature" decisions in the future. And even if I only end up reading children's books, I am finding that there is a mature way to enjoy them - and a defined purpose."

Overall, student enjoyment and engagement with course reading was the objective I was most pleased with as the instructor of this class. It was apparent through student writing and class

discussion that students began to engage with the children's narratives in new ways, seeing them as useful for their own mature lives; they also enjoyed and engaged with the medieval texts in a manner that was more enthusiastic than expected. The course texts that seemed to be most enjoyed were *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the text pairing of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Phantom Tollbooth*. In the course evaluations, one student specifically noted that "*Sir Gawain* and *The Phantom Tollbooth* were the best pairing in my opinion," and this was echoed verbally by over fifty percent of the class at the end of the semester. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Phantom Tollbooth* was the pairing that most obviously offered a tangible, clear-cut outline of similar structure. The goal of reading that pair was for students to consider the hero's journey and elements of a quest. A class activity for this pairing was to write out the elements they could find of these structures using the texts, which produced a physical representation of the structure. Students said that this activity was productive, and they could most easily see the connections between these texts than the other texts.

The major weakness was that the reading pace was too fast and/or there was too much reading/too many books covered. As the instructor, I also found this to be true and would either assign one less pair, shorter texts, or allow more time per reading. The pace of the course included reading one complete text every other week (longer novels were separated into chapter sections, with 3-5 chapters required before each meeting) which did not leave extended time for discussion of all the particulars of a text; students felt a little rushed both in discussion and in reading, and this was a challenge for some students who were not native English speakers and students who struggled with reading generally. A few of the comments from the course evaluations stated:

- "More time between readings or less books to read over all would improve understanding of each. Just having a week to focus on a book was a quick turn around and didn't allow in depth discussion."

- "I believe there should be more time given for the reading. It was difficult to finish the reading on time, along with being able to take notes. I wanted to take notes for each chapter or page, but because of the time, there were times that I had to stop to save time."

- "The pace at which the work is given could be revised. It felt really fast at times."

- "I would say one thing that made it hard for me to really engage with the material was the amount of chapter readings for the book in a day, It was very intensive for me which meant that sometimes I couldn't go back to understand what I just read because I felt pressured to finish all the chapters for the day."

In light of this feedback, the next time I taught a course like this for general education sophomores, I would consider using one less text pairing so that discussion could be effectively in depth and so that students would feel like they had time to adequately engage with the text and spend time with it, rather than rushing to the next pair. This would help with student buy-in, engagement, and enjoyment.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified the productive uses of paired-texts as a methodology for using children's literature in a survey course as a beneficial adoption option. Student outcomes and experiences were improved by the inclusion of children's literature in the medieval survey course. My students began the semester a bit bewildered at the prospect of making connections between what the deemed formal and inaccessible literature and literature that was "silly." This

bewilderment was exacerbated by the fact that many of my students had never taken a literature or literary analysis course, so their confidence levels (and often reading and analysis levels) were low. Beginning the semester with the hefty *Consolation of Philosophy* did not help this matter, but I encouraged students by telling them it would only get easier from there. Students struggled with the language of Boethius' text but were able to find points of entry into the text through conversations about allegory and knowledge. They immediately jumped from *The Consolation* to *The Last Unicorn* and quite obviously seemed more comfortable in dealing with the language. Reading the children's text gave them confidence to speak up about what they found in the text and allowed them to revisit notions of allegory, collective identity, and philosophy originally discussed using the medieval text. In our conversations about the unit themes, students often confidently, insightfully, and adeptly made explicit connections between both texts. In teaching this class, I was reminded that non-English/humanities major students tend to enter literature classrooms wary of the difficult language, themes, and ideas they anticipate encountering; they did not seem to feel that way about the children's books. Students felt more confident to read the other texts after they read the children's books. Thus, when teaching the class again, it might be worthwhile to consider beginning each pair with the children's text rather than the medieval text. This would allow students to gain confidence in their ability to talk about literature, to engage in productive discussion, and to develop confident reading habits before wrestling with a text they anticipate being difficult. Overall, the benefits of children's literature as equitable, engaging, and confidence building were met. The course was rewarding both for the students and the professor. Mediating the problem of student buy-in was achieved once students discovered that the 1) children's texts offered a depth of meaning and opportunity for analysis that they had assumed was unattainable, and 2) medieval texts are not as frightening or inaccessible as they had

imagined. Overall, this course was an interesting experiment in what connections could be made between seemingly disparate genres. The potential for connection here invokes the Deleuzian rhizome: I believe that children's literature is so effective in a paired-texts methodology because of its rhizome-ness. The flexibility and fluidity of children's literature allows it to create, continue, reproduce, and re-direct conversations about texts, genres, and cultures in ways that other literary genres perhaps cannot.

Chapter Two

From Left to Right: Transforming Literature Pedagogy Through Adaptations for Children

In the Introduction to the Fall 2022 issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Sara K. Day discusses road trips as a metaphor for navigating stories in children's literature, noting that "the questions that launch a fictional road trip also resonate with us as scholars looking across the landscape of texts for and about young people, thinking about connections, locating ourselves in relationship to what has come before, setting out to find something and help others who will come after" (248). Day's metaphor aligns with the purpose of this dissertation project—to consider the landscape of children's literature in relationship with other genres of literature and in relationship to the teaching landscape of university English departments. Continuing with my goal of answering Deleuze and Guattari's call to consider new perspectives, I want to begin this chapter by suggesting that Day's metaphor can be applied effectively in conversations about children's literature generally. When writing literature aimed at younger audiences, authors might navigate the boundaries of tradition and cultural beliefs, as well as new lines they want to cross. The landscape of children's literature is large and varied, and crosses into many genres, modes, and styles of writing. Traversing the landscape is useful for young readers and adult readers alike, as well as educators, researchers, and writers. Day's metaphor, then, is also productive for discussing adaptations, which comprise a large portion of children's literature; it can be particularly useful for considering the relationship of adaptations for children with the traditional texts they interact with, such as medieval poems, romances, and legends. When working with source material, authors must navigate the context and intention of the original text and its traditions as well as the new contexts in which their adapted work must fit. By considering adaptions, we can examine the ways that authors find value in keeping and

crossing textual and cultural boundaries as they embark on their journey to make the stories easier to navigate for younger audiences. The boundary crossing work of adaptation allows authors to make connections between genres and modes of writing explicit, as well as play with reforming them and making them useful practically. Adaptation, then, becomes an important tool for educators who wish to incorporate children's literature in their classrooms.

Continuing my conversation about the significance of intertextuality, we can locate the usefulness of adaptations. In Chapter One, I made an argument for using a paired-texts approach to incorporate children's literature into English department course offerings. If practitioners want to incorporate children's literature more often in the classroom, they are inevitably going to encounter adaptations: this will be a universal phenomenon for educators as they consider potential children's texts for adoption. Adaptations, then, are a uniquely productive source for teaching values, themes, and motifs of other genres of literature because adaptations are based upon a network of texts, cultures, and histories and tend to engage with universally thematic material.[39] Because of their potential usefulness, in this chapter I argue that children's adaptations of classic texts can be productive pairs for use in the English literature classroom. Using children's adaptations of texts that professors normally include on their syllabi can create a deeper, more enjoyable learning experience for students; as children's literature, the adaptations offer the benefits outlined in the introduction of this dissertation (equity, confidence, engagement, and value). However, adaptations are also innately productive for student

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[39] Because children's literature routinely deals with adaptation studies, there exists a large canon of scholarship that specifically addresses children's literature and adaptation. See, for example, Isaac; Hulbert, Wetmore, and York; Miller; Richmond; Chedgzoy, Greenhalgh, and Shaughnessy; Hateley; and Lefebvre. Specifically, Anja Müller focuses on adaptations of classic texts for children in her collection, *Adapting Canonical Texts in Children's Literature* (2013). There, she asserts (like Linda Hutcheon) that children's adaptations are valuable on their own as artistic creations, not only in relationship with their adapted texts.

comprehension of potentially difficult or simply *different* subject matter or contexts.[40] I believe

that adaptations have the potential to make the strange familiar.[41]

To make the potential of adaptations evident, I again will enter the medieval literature

classroom by making an argument for the ways that adaptations of the fourteenth-century

alliterative poem*, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, can support student comprehension of the

potential strangeness of the poem. In this chapter, I examine four modern adaptations of the *Sir*

Gawain and the Green Knight poem for children: Ernest Rhys' *The Green Knight* (1907), James

Yeames' *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Play* (1911), Constance B. Hieatt's *Sir Gawain*

and the Green Knight (1967), and Michael Morpurgo's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

(2004).[42] All of these versions explicitly note an intended child audience, either in the

introduction, notes, or prologue of the texts. While two of these texts have been examined by

Cindy L. Vitto[43] for their fidelity, none have been considered in the context of useful tools for

the paired-text method of teaching children's literature with other genres of literature.

Because the scope of this chapter is not close readings of every deleted or revised

element of the *Gawain* adaptations but focused more so on the pedagogical potential of

adaptations in the classroom, I will briefly describe general variations in the texts and then

analyze one scene in all of the adaptations to offer an example for pedagogical purposes. One

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[40] I am not necessarily arguing that the inclusion of adaptations is the *only* avenue for student comprehension of older texts, nor that students *require* some kind of paraphrase or translation to understand; I am arguing though, that adaptations paired with older texts can make it much easier for students to quickly comprehend potentially difficult language or concepts, and that that efficiency can lead to confidence, equity, and space for deeper discussion.

[41] I want to emphasize that when talking about adaptations, I am also discussing intertextuality, which is a key component of my overall argument about the usefulness of children's literature in the classroom, as I mentioned in the introduction and in Chapter One.

[42] Hieatt's adaption does not have page numbers or act/line numbers. All references from her work will simply be enclosed in quotation marks.

[43] See Cindy L. Vitto, "Deceptive Simplicity: Children's Versions of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children* (2004) for Vitto's comparisons of the adaptations of Constance B. Hieatt and Michael Morpurgo (two I will be analyzing—though she examines an earlier version of Morpurgo's adaptation), as well as adaptations from Selina Hastings, Neil Philip, and Mark Shannon.

interesting avenue into this reading is Gawain's interactions with Lord Bertilak's wife, the lady of castle Hautdesert in which Gawain is staying. In the tempting scenes, students will encounter an idea that might be foreign or difficult since it is so different from their own contemporary cultural ideas. The temptation scenes between the lady and Gawain are fodder for class discussion about tropes in medieval romance relative to chivalric codes and characteristics of knights.

Adaptations are a useful pedagogical move for instructors of medieval literature and early modern literature specifically because students will have easy access to many of the original texts in translation through the Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (TEAMS) editions, which are available as inexpensive paperbacks or as freely available texts online.[44] With children's adaptations and the TEAMS texts at hand, instructors and students will be equipped to grapple with potentially difficult subject matter or contexts. Adaptation in the context of medievalism is a large part of what instructors will encounter when teaching paired texts of children's literature. While there are a myriad of medieval texts and romances I could have chosen for this case study, I have chosen to examine *Gawain* because it is perhaps one of the most ubiquitously taught texts in the medieval literature classroom. The text is inherently tricky, both in the literal and the metaphorical sense. Readers continually have the rug pulled out from underneath them as they navigate the poem, and the text is littered with tricks, wordplay, and games. This unfamiliar quality makes it a productive candidate for the paired-texts approach in the classroom. Furthermore, *Gawain* is so ubiquitous that it needs no introduction: anyone who has taken a British or medieval literature course will know something of the story of Sir Gawain, and the story seeps into Western cultural consciousness. Almost everyone in Europe or

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[44] Available at www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/tmsmenu.htm.

the United States has engaged in one way or another with the *Gawain* plot, whether that is through film, satire, adaptation, or retelling. However, my conversation isn't really about *Gawain*; it is more so about how we can use one text to understand other texts. The texts could be anything. In this example, *Gawain* simply serves as the conduit through which we can talk about teaching in this context of children's literature. My hope is that by choosing a text that is so often taught, this chapter will be useful not only for all practitioners in considering how adaptations of children's texts can be useful in their literature classrooms, but also specifically for the professor of medieval literature.

Adaptation as a Pedagogical Tool

The process of adapting texts requires knowing the source material inside and out, as well as understanding the needs of the new, intended audience. Often that involves understanding the cultural conversation that the adaptor is entering, as well their purpose in the adaptation. Negotiating the needs of a new audience with one's purpose and the purpose or context of the adapted text creates layers. Those layers can be productive for study of a text: the variance in the layers make evident changing cultural preoccupations, illuminate fundamental aspects of the adapted text, and allow room for new interpretation. In the context of teaching adapted texts and their adaptations, when students navigate the layers of textual production between texts, they can generate a deep understanding of the concepts, literary elements, and historical contexts of the original text. I argue that this layered reading allows students to engage more deeply with the source than if it were studied on its own. When adapted texts are paired with their adaptations, students are invited to oscillate between the layers of textual production. Students, then, become involved in the production of meaning. That agency will benefit students' comprehension of all of the texts because it will foster equity and confidence: students will be more likely to find an

accessible point of entry into a text when it is told more than one way, using different narrative modes, language, and forms.

In talking about adaptations, I must first address the term "adaptation" itself and offer a definition so that practitioners know what they are looking for when they begin to search for course adoptions. Though we all inherently feel like we know what an adaptation is, just like with children's literature, defining it proves to be challenging. In her seminal work on adaptation studies, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon explains that adaptations are difficult to define because "we use the same word for process and product"(15).[45] Ultimately, Hutcheon defines adaptation as: "An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (8). Her definition is what I will use when referring to adaptations in this dissertation: those works that have an overt (and often announced) relationship with another work. What follows is a theoretical framework for adaptation that will be relevant here to understand how adaptation functions.[46] For Hutcheon, adaptations are not simply reproductions, but involve interpretation and creativity while keeping the fundamental aura of the adapted text, and in doing so creates a duality[47] in the new text. Hutcheon explores diverse forms of adaptations, and her overarching argument is that we should not denigrate adaptations in favor of the original; the adapted text and adaptations are unique entities in their own rights and should be

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[45] Interestingly, Hutcheon then goes on to define adaptation as both "a product (as extensive, particular transcoding) and as a process (as creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality)" using the same pair of terms that make it so difficult to define the genre (22).

[46] Hutcheon's approach will be familiar to readers of Richard Burt (2002), Christy Desmet (1999), Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (2000), who have also developed practical and theoretical theories of adaptation.

[47] Hutcheon uses Michael Alexander's term "palimpsestuous" works, meaning that the adaptations are "haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (6).

appreciated as so.[48] Adaptations, then, have something new and potentially different to offer

readers. I believe that this is the case in the context of children's adaptations; the child audience

often requires that the text be different in some way. That difference can be illuminating for

literature students because in their doubleness, adaptations can lead to different interpretations.

This is especially true if the adaptation involves a transposition of form, medium, or context.

Overall, Hutcheon's theory focuses on "adaptations as *adaptations*; that is, not only as

autonomous works. Instead, they are examined as deliberate, announced, and extended

revisitations of prior works" and this makes them appealing (xvi). Their appeal, Hutcheon

argues, "comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with

the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of

experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (4). In this chapter, I desire to highlight

Hutcheon's definition of adaptations as "deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of

prior works" and to emphasize the flexible, yet comfortable characteristics of adaptation that

Hutcheon defines here. That characteristic of adaptations is where I believe teachers can find

value in incorporating children's adaptations in the classroom. Once students have interacted

with the adapted text, encountering the paired adaptation (or vice versa) will be an exercise in

recognition, remembrance, and recording as they consider the other version(s). Once students

have interacted with one, interacting with others will be a comfortable (and potentially

surprising) experience as they navigate the choices made by the authors and consider what might

have influenced those choices.

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[48] Hutcheon uses the term "adapted text" instead of "original" or "source" to show that one version is not superior to the other and goes on to explain that "There are many shared lessons taught by Kristevan intertextuality theory and Derridean deconstruction and by Foucauldian challenges to unified subjectivity and the often radically egalitarian approach to stories (in all media) by both narratology and cultural studies. One lesson is that to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative" (xv). The texts function in different ways and should be equally valued.

Finally, Hutcheon suggests that determining the success of an adaptation in the twenty-first century might involve devaluing fidelity and instead considering "popularity, persistence, or even the diversity and extent of dissemination for criteria of success," in other words, in the same way that "biology thinks about adaptation: in terms of successful replication and change" (xxvi). Hutcheon's assertion about determining the success of adaptations invokes Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic theory which is one reason I believe that adaptations and children's literature are useful for interacting with texts of other genres, as outlined in the introduction. Their fluidity and ability to replicate and interact with other texts in rhizomatic ways makes them useful readings in any literature classroom because there are various entry points into the texts. Furthermore, because adaptation is not text-bound, there are several options for course adoption; educators can choose from more traditional textual works or from other forms, such as graphic novels, films, television shows, plays, videogames, and music. The variety of adaptations available for adoption means that almost all university literature teachers who want to find a children's adaptation to pair with their typical course readings have high chances of doing so.

Adapting *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Adaptation studies have infiltrated medieval literature studies and scholarship as well. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is established within a body of Arthurian legend that had circulated in England for a couple of centuries. It is an outlandish ghost story, a gripping morality tale, and a weird thriller. There have been dozens of translations of *Gawain* over the years. J.R.R. Tolkien and Marie Borroff completed alliterative versions. Ted Hughes translated key sections, available in his "Selected Translations." In 2009, Simon Armitage wrote an energetic, free-flowing translation to much acclaim. Adaptations also proliferate, with the most recent being David Lowery's film, *The Green Knight* (2021). Interest in translating and adapting

this narrative reminds us that *Gawain* still wields an uncanny power after over 500 years. The poem's power and merit has made it ubiquitous in the university medieval literature course: ask anyone who took a course in medievalism or British Literature in college in the United States and they will likely have read *Gawain*.

Vitto explains that even though the Arthurian legend has led to innumerable retellings for children, many medieval scholars have found no value in children's versions. However, Vitto calls for scholars to pay more attention to "simple" versions for children. She writes that the "apparent simplicity" of children's adaptations can be used as a "tool for tackling the most sophisticated medieval texts" (107). Adaptations can function as an entry point for students and scholars into original texts. The practice of adapting Arthurian narratives for children is a long-standing tradition.[49] Significant adaptations make evident prevailing cultural dialogues about gender, death, sexuality, heritage, and genre as they reimagine the narrative. From J. T. Knowles' adaptation of Malory's *Morte D'arthur* for children in 1892, a deep well of adaptations for children has grown. The desire to reimagine and recount the deeds of Arthur and his knights might be due in part to its place in a tradition of cyclicity. This practice extends to many characters found in the Arthurian tradition, such as Lancelot, Gawain, and Mordred, who have been retold, reimagined, and adapted as much as King Arthur himself. One answer for this obsession with recounting the deeds of Arthur's court is that the stories are naturally crafted to be retold. According to Simon Gaunt, in *Retelling the Tale*, medieval narratives, whether offered orally or not, are composed in a manner that defies hard conclusions. In doing so, they problematize authorship and allow room for other storytellers to pick up where another left off. Gaunt explains that:

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[49] For more about adaptations of Arthuriana for children, see Barbara T. Lupack's *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia*, Palgrave, 2004.

…[W]hat makes medieval texts different is the way they overtly trouble the boundaries

that are erected about them. To compose a text as part of a sequence of other texts by

other writers is an obvious way to signal a commitment to a body of narrative material.

However, different writers may treat the same material in different ways and broadly

speaking there seem to be two modes of compilation and what medievalists sometimes

call cyclicity (conceiving of and/or arranging texts as part of a cycle of other texts):

repetition and reorientation. (73)

Thus, tales such as *Gawain and the Green Knight* are inherently welcoming of revision,

imagination, and adaptation. In fact, the *Gawain* legend seems to desire to be retold. Gaunt hones

in on this flexibility when he notes that *Gawain* resists narrative closure because he must always

return to Arthur's court "unscathed and unmarried in order to enable another adventure," thus,

"rather than heading towards resolutions, texts like Gauvain romances. . . respond to different

expectations of story-telling. They do not move in straight lines, but rather always bring a story

full-circle, ready to start again" (74). The flexibility of the *Gawain* poem is significant for my

study because it is literally making room for imagination to flourish. The space that *Gawain*

offers storytellers is wide and has been taken advantage of again and again, especially in the

realm of children's literature. Vitto's observation about the significance of the *Gawain* poem is

worth quoting in full:

The number of available children's versions should cause us to ponder just why this story

remains so popular—because it tells the story of a young knight's testing, his *rite de*

passage? Because it links sex and danger, even death? Because it is at heart a family

romance, a retelling of every child's need to break away from home and ultimately return

again? Because it upholds the moral value of keeping one's word at any cost, no matter

how tempting the alternatives? In fact, the array of modern children's versions indicates that we will never fix the complete truth of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and condense it into a compact, universally agreed-upon package. That is precisely what constitutes the ongoing appeals of the original—and why children's authors will continue to find this a tale worth retelling. (119)

Vitto's exploration of the *Gawain* poem and its adaptations makes room for considering why we continue to adapt the tale. Her answers to why the story remains popular are compelling and worth considering in the context of pedagogy. What can we teach students about the text as it is in its original form, in translation, and in adaptation? Essentially, I would argue that all of her answers are correct, and that ultimately, the story is worth retelling, reworking, and reimagining because humanity finds something inherently valuable in it and because of that, teachers have found value in including it in their medieval literature classrooms. Patricia Clare Ingham discusses this usefulness of texts through a concept she calls "narrative of value" which is the notion that a collection of narratives can suggest the values of a culture at a given time and can suggest what a culture might have deemed worthy of use.[50] Paying attention to the narratives of value crafted through *Gawain* adaptations can allow us to determine what writers deem to be fundamental to the original version of the text as well as what is useful or not useful for bringing into their own cultural moment. Elements that persist tend to be fundamental to the text; analyzing adaptations allows literature students to locate the persistent elements and engage with them in various forms, which might offer more opportunity for comprehension.

It is in this space—this narrative of use value—that we can merge the fields of medieval studies, children's literature, and adaptation. According to Ann F. Howey, "Recent adaptation

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[50] See Patricia Clare Ingham, *The Medieval New: Ambivalence in an Age of Innovation*, U of Pennsylvania P, 2015.

scholarship theorizes repetition, alteration, and fragmentation—important strategies in the production of Arthuriana" (36). Thus, the reimagining and reusing of *Gawain* to fit a particular cultural moment and perpetuate notions of identity for children is a perfect fit for this turn in scholarship. Adaptation as such has been explored in other medieval works, such as in studies offered by Barbara Tepa Lupack,[51] Fiona Tolhurst,[52] and Roberta Davidson.[53] These studies consider the interconnectedness of medieval source material and the ways that modern authors engage in reflexive and collective authorship. Significantly, Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner's study, "Chrétien Continued," outlines the process of reading through "collective authorship," which is a "sometimes haphazard process of reading an immense and non-totalizable cycle of romances with many different versions, multiple states reflected in a manuscript tradition that cannot be pinned down and placed, given the constancy of variation" (25). Interestingly, Bruckner writes that reading in such a way offers "a lesson in humility, in fact multiple lessons in getting lost, remembering (but perhaps inexactly), forgetting and rediscovering, trying to figure things out, trying to find the right questions, as well as the right paths, heroes, authors" (26). Bruckner's process itself describes a work of imagining and is the way that many readers, authors, and scholars of adaptations might engage with medieval retellings. Significant here is the notion that "original" medieval works and their subsequent adaptations are imbued with a dense network of material underlying reading practices by both medieval and contemporary audiences.[54]

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[51] See Barbara Tepa Lupack, "The Girl's King Arthur: Retelling Tales." *Arthuriana*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2012, pp. 57–68.

[52] See Fiona Tolhurst, "Helping Girls to Be Heroic?: Some Recent Arthurian Fiction for Young Adults." *Arthuriana*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2012, pp. 69–90.

[53] See Roberta Davidson, "When King Arthur is PG 13." *Arthuriana*, Fall 2012, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 5-20.

[54] Hutcheon addresses this: "If we know the adapted work, there will be a constant oscillation between it and the new adaptation we are experiencing; if we do not, we will not experience the work as an adaptation. However. . . if we happen to read the novel after we see the film adaptation of it, we again feel that oscillation, though this time in reverse. Oscillation is not hierarchical" (xvii). The experiences of reading an adaptation with the knowledge of the original or of coming to a text after reading an adapted version of are examples of reading practices of audiences. The moving between or back-and-forth of that experience can make the reading practice richer.

Therefore, it seems that the flexibility of the *Gawain* poem might be its most important use—as a flexible source, it allows writers and readers to explore numerous themes, truths, and identities within a familiar framework in different ways, making it perfect for teaching in a classroom. Even though an adaptation might not remain entirely faithful to the original, the intertextuality that the adaptation is built upon allows for a dense, deep reading and telling of a seemingly simple tale. As I mentioned in previous chapters, even if students do not know the source material or the context of a particular idea, their interacting with it in new ways through children's literature can still be productive.

It is important at this junction to recognize that adaptations are inherently accompanied with questions of fidelity. While the scholarly conversation has moved away from focusing solely on fidelity, your students might want to know: How true should adapted texts remain to the original? Is it ethical to reconsider or rewrite elements of an original text? How much can writers change before the text is no longer considered an adaptation of the original? Questions such as these are worth considering. However, fidelity can limit the flexibility of adapted texts. Hutcheon cautions against only focusing on fidelity because "There are many and varied motives behind adaptation and few involve faithfulness. Other earlier adaptations may, in fact, be just as important as contexts for some adaptations as any 'original'" (xv). She goes on to explain that "adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication'; to judge an adaptation of fidelity is to assume (incorrectly) that reproducing a source is an intended or achievable goal" (6). Judging adaptations only on how well they represent the original limits their usefulness and misunderstands the purpose of adaptations. Adaptations function to engage with texts for new audiences, often in different cultural moments—it would be more productive to consider how well the adaptation meets the needs of its new intended audience rather than how perfectly it

aligns with the original text. Jane Yolen discusses this obsession with fidelity within the context of Arthurian studies, as well as the way she approaches reworking and using the Arthurian tales. She explains that:

> Sometimes knowledge can be an obstacle. One of the reasons scholars don't enjoy the modern retellings is that they're so busy finding points that are wrong, that are , or that represent a school of thought with which they don't happen to agree, that they don't enjoy the story anymore. They enjoy something that's a thousand years old only because it's already been canonized.[55]

Her answer to advocates of fidelity in adaptation is that:

> You cannot refer to traditional material as if it were a fixed, still point. When it finally gets set down, we have one fixed, still point, but not the fixed, still point. Up until the time it was set down, it had many mouths shaping it, and many ears taking it in. That material was fluid and changing until it was fixed in a written state. And even then we see many fixed, written states of the Arthurian legend. So why can't it still be played with?[56]

Thomas Leitch pushes Yolen's answer a little further, acknowledging that "adaptation studies have been moving 'from the fidelity discourse. . . to a focus on Bakhtinian intertextuality, with each text. . . afloat upon a sea of countless earlier texts from which it could not help borrowing" (63). Important here is Leitch's acknowledgment of intertextuality in adaptation. Intertextuality allows adaptations to function as tools for reading and understanding original texts. In previous chapters, I asserted that intertextuality functions as a bridge between children's literature and other genres of literature; this is true here as well in the realm of children's adaptations. Intertextuality as a characteristic of adaptations makes them pedagogically useful because the

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[55] See Thompson, "Interview with Jane Yolen," 1988.
[56] See Thompson, "Interview with Jane Yolen," 1988.

network of texts from which the adaptation has borrowed is fodder for class instruction and

student comprehension. Thus, in analyzing modern adaptions of the *Gawain* text, I am not

concerned with fidelity to the original for the sake of fidelity; instead, I consider fidelity only in

noting what significant moments are kept from the original text for the new audience to discuss

how the adaptations can be useful for literature pedagogy through the paired-texts framework.

Introduction to the *Gawain* Adaptations

To make evident the productive uses of children's adaptations of medieval texts for the

classroom, I examine Gawain's time spent as a guest in Hautdesert Castle in the four children's

versions to consider how students might interpret differing variations of Gawain's chivalric duty

and better understand the chivalric code often outlined in medieval romance. Before I move into

my close reading of the tempting scenes in the adaptations, I briefly introduce the adaptations

and their authors. Though the Gawain text is ubiquitous, these adaptations are not.

First, Ernest Rhys offers a prose version of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* simply

titled *The Green Knight* (1907). He was a founding editor of the *Everyman's Library* series of

affordable classics, and his works often dealt in adaptations. His version of *Gawain* is found

within a larger work, *Fairy Gold: A Book of Old English Fairy Tales*, chosen by Rhys. Here,

Rhys offers a collection of more than fifty fairy tales, rhymes, and romances, all presented

specifically for children. In the preamble to his book, he discusses his purpose, specifically

highlighting the *Green Knigh*t poem. He explains that "the elfin Green-Knight , which is a case

of a delightful old fairy-tale that grew into as delightful a romance. A romance indeed is little

else than a fairy-tale for older folk; and with an eye to the close kinship between the two the first

part of this book of "Fairy-Gold" tries to show in a new way how the fairy-tale-tellers and the

romancers "swapped" (as school-boys say) their good things" (vi). Here, Rhys explicitly makes

evident the connections between fairy-tales or children's stories and adult romances. His work, then, is important in the context of this dissertation because Rhys sees value and emphasizes similarities in the intertextual interchange between the two genres.

Next, James Yeames adapts the *Gawain* poem into an abbreviated five-act play: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Play* (1911). Yeames was a prolific writer at the beginning of the twentieth century, offering numerous histories, plays, and novels. He was a reverend, and his work was often religious in nature, but he does adapt the Gawain poem into a play as well as one another Arthurian story: "The Young Knight or How Gareth Won His Spurs: adapted from Tennyson's "Gareth and Lynette," in the "Idylls of the King." In the introduction to his play, he explains that "The story is necessarily modified in order to bring it within the appreciation of boys, and to adapt it, in its representation, to their powers and resources." Yeames' version is perhaps the most dramatically altered adaptation: he includes new characters (Merlin, Dagonet, assistant to Gawain, and a Kitchen-knave, for example) to add humor to the play, and focuses extensively on how Gawain is tempted. Yeames introduces a chorus and devotes much time to setting the scene and argument of the play before beginning the dialogue of the play. Yeames foreshadows Gawain's temptation by inserting a scene into the play (in Act II), in which Gawain's dreams are invaded by temptations the night before he must begin his journey to complete the challenge. In this scene, the magician Merlin invokes the mysterious dreams to prepare Gawain for his journey. He places a spell on Gawain and says, "Sleep well, my son! But, sleeping, thou shalt have strange dreams and see visions of mystic meaning. The time of thy fiery testing is at hand, and I will strive to fit thee for the hour of thy trial" (Act II, p. 15). Gawain is then visited by visions of Fame, Gold, and Pleasure. Gawain nobly refuses them all in his dreams. Upon waking, Merlin explains: "Fame,–Gold,–and Pleasure! Great Three! Too oft the

tempting ministers of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil! My soul is dark with foreboding. Surely there are fierce ordeals awaiting thee, my son! Not that I mistrust thy knightly honor" (Act II, p. 17). Here, Yeames emphasizes the morality of the tale. Gawain must remain true and honorable, or he will succumb to the three vices of the world. Yeames' presentation here feels distinctly religious: though the sins are different, the depiction of the three sins approaching Gawain before his trial invokes the temptation of Christ in the desert. Gawain, then, could be considered a variant of a savior or Christ-figure. Readers would be invited to appreciate Gawain's morality and discipline and recognize; Yeames' inclusion of the tempting of the three discussed here aligns with his purpose of making the tale suitable for the early twentieth-century western male reader.

Like Rhys, Constance Hieatt offers her adaptation (1967) in prose but adds illustrations. In her Preface, Hieatt explains that she was inspired to write an adaptation for children after reading it to her own children as a bedtime story. She notes that her two little girls enthusiastically helped her with the adaptation, and she was influenced by her discussions of the poem with her husband, who was a medievalist and professor of English. Other than opting for prose and losing the musicality Hieatt's adaptation remains the most faithful to the original, even devoting extensive space and description for the hunting scenes, which the other adaptations downplay.

Finally, Morpurgo offers the newest and most popular modern adaptation of the *Gawain* poem for children (2004).[57] Like the others, Morpurgo's adaptation is concerned with morality, goodness, and virtue, and is didactic in nature. For example, he makes sure to situate the narrative as one that children can learn from. Before jumping into the beginning of the poem

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[57] Morpurgo's adaptation has even been translated into other languages, adding another layer of adaptation to its existence.

with the scene of Arthur's court at Christmastime, Morpurgo offers an introduction and rationale

for the tale, explaining that:

> My story is of Gawain. Of all the tales of the Knights of the Round Table, his is the most
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> magical and the one I most love to tell. For Gawain, as you will shortly see, was as
>
> honest and true a as a Knight of the Round Table should be, as kind and chivalrous and
>
> courteous, as brave as any other, and stronger in battle than any, except Lancelot. But
>
> Gawain was headstrong too, and more than a little vain; and as this story will show,
>
> sometimes not as honest or as true as he would want himself to have been: much like
>
> many of us, I think. (6)

Here, Morpurgo's emphasis on the relatability of Gawain's struggles with truth (and, thus,

goodness), suggests that he assumes readers will be invested in truth as well. Considering the

narrative as a whole, the language is accessible—as might be expected of a modern translation—

but it is not simplistic; in fact, Morpurgo works to keep the language poetic and uses some of the

same kinds of language as the original, often leaning into alliteration. Though the audience is

obviously children, Morpurgo does not construct his child audience as simple. He offers

engaging vocabulary in his descriptions of the scenery, clothing, and battle. The tale retains its

original preoccupation with religion and honor but presents it in a package that is accessible to

children. Overall, though, Morpurgo remains faithful to the original poem, and his revisions

seem to be for clarity and entertainment.

As a whole, the adaptations delete the Troy frame that begins the original, as well as the

motto of the Order of the Garter at the end of the text but keep the setting of Arthur's castle at

Christmastime. This suggests that modern authors find the references to Troy, the Roman

lineage, and the Order of the Garter unnecessary fundamentally to the text. The modern authors

also simply might have just assumed that these elements would have been unfamiliar to the twentieth-century child audience and thus not necessary for their adaptations while Christmastime and the court of Arthur would be. Furthermore, Gawain's uncharacteristic and interesting diatribe against women is missing in all four of the children's adaptations. It makes sense that this was deleted in the context of our western cultural shift about gender; furthermore, Gawain's hateful speech towards women is quite unheroic and omitting it out allows child audiences to avoid grappling with the nuance of Gawain's character. Its omission in these modern texts, however, seems to suggest that it is not fundamental to the telling of the Gawain tale. Medievalists might disagree. I do, in fact, and think it would be worth bringing this omission up in conversation with your literature students: the scene seems so out of place in the original that it must serve some purpose. Class discussion about Gawain's views of women might lead students to more fully understand the cultural shift that has taken place surrounding women from the medieval to the modern. Gawain's diatribe has been often examined and analyzed by medieval scholars, so its exclusion from the children's adaptations is a direct commentary on the differences in culture. This omission might inform the way that readers interpret the poem and that readers interpret Gawain's character. Asking students to consider the differences in the adaptations While those elements are deleted, all of the adaptations keep the hunting scenes,[58] the tempting scenes, the challenge scenes, and emphasis on morality and truth as fundamental to the text. Gender is presented within traditional constraints, even with the omission of Gawain's diatribe against women. Even though the narratives are abridged, they are not "dumbed down." Their language suggests that the authors believe that they are engaging with

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[58] Though they are kept, however, the hunting scenes in the children's adaptations are shorter and less descriptive than in the original poem.

an audience of readers who are perceptive and smart, but who need to be educated and concerned with morality.

Close Reading of the Temptation Scenes

Gawain's dalliance with the lady is worth examining in and of itself in the context of the pedagogical potential of adaptions for the literature classroom. The tempting scenes are a significant part of the original text. The *Gawain* poem is sometimes divided between the temptation and the challenge. The temptation, then, is fundamental to the poem. Thus, it remains in all four of the adaptations examined in this chapter, though some have revised their presentation. When teaching a course in medieval literature, students might find the temptation scenes strange. Their cultural context is incredibly different from the medieval one represented here, and that difference might make student uncomfortable or confused. Students might wonder why the married woman is tempting Gawain and also why he does not simply shut her down. Thus, the temptation scenes are a productive entry into discussions of chivalry and courtly love, both motifs imperative to understanding the corpus of medieval romance. One typical trope found in medieval romance is the knight's obligation to be chivalrous and courteous, as well as the trope of the incompatible or "bad" husband. In these romances, infidelity is not the absolute evil it would be for a modern reader, instead lack of courtesy is the worst thing. In the case of Gawain, this poses a problem: kissing the lady is in fact a bad thing, but it is a bad thing because she has a generous and courteous husband, not bad in terms of infidelity. Part of her appeal to him is to his knightly near-obligation, under certain circumstances, to kiss people's wives. If pairing this text with the original to get students to understand the concept of knightly politeness, you might point readers to the lady's surprise that Gawain has not attempted to kiss her yet, hinting that this would be the expected behavior of a knight:

'So god as Gawayn gaynly is halden,
And cortaysye is closed so clene in hymseluen,
Couth not ly3tly haf lenged so long wyth a lady,
Bot he had craued a cosse, bi his courtaysye,
Bi sum towch of summe tryfle at sum talez ende.'
 Þen quoþ Wowen: 'Iwysse, worþe as yow lykez;
 I schal kysse at your comaundement, as a kny3t fallez,
(SGGK III, 52, 1297-1304)[59]

'that one so good as Gawain the gracious is held,
who all the compass of courtesy includes in his person
so long with a lady could hardly have lingered
without craving a kiss, as a courteous knight,
by some tactful turn that their talk led to.'
Then said Wawain, 'Very well, as you wish be it done.
I will kiss at your command, as becometh a knight.

The adaptations offer versions of this exchange. In Yeames' version, the lady does not explicitly

ask for a kiss, but does ask, "If I then be your sovereign and ye are my true knight, why art thou

so stern and cold towards me? And if ye are my servant to do my behests then shall ye stay here

and make merry with me and my maidens" (25). Here, the lady appeals to the expectation that

Gawain would stay and keep company with her. In Yeames' version, the lady does not come to

Gawain's room to wake him many mornings. She only comes once and does so to tempt him

with "Pleasure." In lieu of her three-fold seduction, Yeames replaces the first two temptations

with visitations from knights of other kingdoms who attempt to get Gawain to commit treason

against Arthur. The first promises Gawain a "richly jeweled sword" and a crown which Gawain

refuses (21). The second visitor (from North Wales) offers Gawain a string of jewels and a

"Golden Key" fit to open "vaults of treasure, beyond all the dreams of desire" (23). Taken

together, these three temptations mirror the temptations of Fame, Gold, and Pleasure that

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[59]The original text follows the edition by Tolkien & Gordon (1925), second edition edited by Davis (1967); the translation is taken from Tolkien's translation (edited by Christopher Tolkien 1975). The reference indicates the part of the manuscript, the stanza (numbers taken from the translation) and the line numbers (taken from the Davis edition).

Yeames introduced in Act II of the play. Yeames' decision to add these invitations and to include the lady's temptation merely in this succession of three suggests that for Yeames, Gawain's knightly interactions with the lady are less important than Gawain's need to be portrayed as someone who does not succumb to sin generally. However, in the end, he is tempted by the thought of avoiding the blow of the Green Knight and takes the gifted girdle in an effort to keep himself safe.

Rhys also de-emphasizes the physicality of the exchange between the lady and Gawain. In his version, the lady invited Gawain to breakfast three mornings in a row. At breakfast, she attempts to get him to give her his ring rather than a kiss. Rhys does, however, include the lady's suggestion that Gawain's interactions with her should be chivalrous and he should do as she requests. When he refuses to give her the ring, she exclaims "that if true courtesy were enclosed in himself, he would keep back nothing, -no, not so much as a ring!" (66). The next day, the lady again attempts to get Gawain to give her his ring again, explaining that the day before she had taught him that it was his duty to give, "yet, you give not the ring as courtesy requires" and then takes a ring off of her finger to give to him (27-28). Yet again, Gawain declines her desire, but explains that he cannot take the ring but that "he would forever be her servant" (28). On the last day, she comes to his room dressed in her best (aligning with the original and with Morpurgo and Hieatt's versions). Yet, she does not offer or ask for a kiss. Again, she requires an exchange of items for him to remember her by. Gawain refuses again but succumbs finally when she offers the green girdle that would protect him. Thus, in this adaptation of the tempting scenes, Rhys removes the physicality of the encounters. Thus, like in Yeames' adaptation, the lady and Gawain are less engaged in matters of infidelity, which might make sense in the cultural context of the early twentieth century in which both men were writing. These adaptations, then, would

not be useful for talking about the strangeness of the supposed infidelity with modern students, but would still be useful for discussing issues of chivalry and a knight's duty.

Hieatt remains fairly faithful to the original and interweaves the temptation with the potential of exchanged gifts and physicality. When the lady comes to his room the first day, they talk and enjoy each other's company, and the lady asks for a glove to be a token of their encounter and his service to her. He knows that he must refuse because if she were to give him a gift in return, he would have to give it to the lord of the house with whom he had made a deal that he would exchange any winnings from the day. Gawain focuses on politeness here and says that "while it might be rude to say no to a lady who asked for a gift, it would be even ruder to give away any gift she might offer him" (Hieatt). He says he cannot give her anything and she invokes the aura of the original when she says, "You should ask for a kiss! I had thought that such a courteous knight would have remembered his manners!" (Hieatt). This invocation directly aligns with the lines from the original that suggest that it is Gawain's knightly duty to kiss her. Gawain obliges and the next two days follow the same pattern. She offers him a ring that he declines but appeases her with a kiss, and then at first even declines the green sash with a kiss. However, in keeping with the original and the other adaptations thus far, when Gawain learns that the sash can keep him from harm, he thinks of the danger that is before him and concludes that saving his life is "more important than my sport with the lord" (Hieatt). Thus, Hieatt's adaptation emphasizes Gawain's politeness as a knight—he stays true and honorable in all of his encounters with the lady, but eventually succumbs to the temptation of the sash. Here, students might discuss the presentation of the tempting scenes in relation to the original. In this context, with the explicit dialogue from Gawain that explains the chivalric code and how he must be

polite, students might better understand why the lady interacts with Gawain the way she does even though her husband is good.

Morpurgo's version removes the initial gifts but keeps the persistence of the lady. Gawain does allow himself to be tempted into giving her multiple kisses; the interactions between the knight and the lady are in no way inappropriately described or salacious. The lady repeatedly comes to Gawain's bedside, flirts with him, gets close to him, and tempts him to kiss her. Gawain allows the kisses rationalizing that, "After all, a kiss from a lady to her knight is quite acceptable" (Morpurgo 104). In the adaptation, the tempting is quite obviously presented as a game:

> In time, it became a game between them, a sport they both enjoyed, and at the end of it, neither was the winner. But there was no loser, either so they both could be happy. They parted in friendship and love—and with a kiss so long and languorous that for several minutes after the lady had left, Gawain's head was still spinning. (106-107)

The situation is later described as friendship, as well; thus, Morpurgo presents the lady's seduction as a game between friends. The stakes seem to be lower in Morpurgo's presentation; however, the situation itself—a married woman asking for physical affection and words of affirmation from a man that is not her husband and the man (the hero, nonetheless!) giving in to her advances—would usually be cause for revision when considering authorship for children. Why does Morpurgo leave it pretty much as presented in the original text? He does not gloss over it; he devotes many pages to the encounters. In Morpurgo's hands, the seduction and gifting scenes are imbued with humor (Morpurgo includes quips and witticisms and emphasizes that the relationship between the Lord and Gawain is playful); even so, the scenes still overtly suggest that Gawain feels uncomfortable with his actions. This is significant because it suggests that

Morpurgo wants his readers to grapple with Gawain's infidelity: Is it acceptable that he bends

the truth since he was not really doing anything *that* bad? Especially if in doing so he will spare

the feelings of his friend? However, the feelings intensify when, on the third night, Gawain does

not share the gift of the green belt with his host. In this scene, the Lord is disappointed that

Gawain does not have an interesting gift for him, but concludes that "we both played by the

rules, did we not?" (39). Gawain, torn between remorse, fear, and embarrassment, responds:

"'We did'. . . but as he spoke he found it hard to look his friend in the eye" (39). Here, the reader

knows that Gawain has not played by the rules; he keeps the belt for himself because he believes

that it will save him in the encounter with the Green Knight the next day. In doing so, he

succumbs to dishonorable feelings of cowardice and dishonesty. Interestingly, within this

episode, the scenes in which the Lord goes hunting while Gawain stays in bed to sleep off "the

heady excesses of the night before" create a dichotomy between good, hard work and lethargy

(30). Morpurgo highlights Gawain's laziness repeatedly: "While Gawain luxuriated in all these

creature comforts and delights the lord of the castle was still out chasing his fearsome boar" (32).

In fact, Morpurgo uses words such as "dallying" to describe Gawain's activity at the castle while

the Lord hunts devilish boars and goes on daring adventures. The juxtaposition here is significant

and palpable—Gawain's location in a place of luxury creates an arena for dishonesty. If he had

been out on adventure with the Lord, he would not have encountered a situation in which is

honor might be tested. Morpurgo's purpose seems to be didacticism as well as pleasure and

enjoyment, so it might be useful to consider Morpurgo's inclusion of the seduction scenes as a

move towards recognizing that children are capable of handling difficult subject matter,

situations, and conversations while writing a "radical space" in which to have conversations about choice.[60]

Ultimately, in keeping the tempting scenes, the authors of these adaptations allow readers to grapple with Gawain's infidelity and dishonesty and retain the seductions offered by the lady to Gawain. Students might wonder why Rhys, Yeames, Hieatt, and Morpurgo decided to keep the seducing scenes in any capacity if this adaptation is indeed intended for young readers. It might seem quite inappropriate for children's literature as it has been traditionally understood. With context from lectures and the original, students might wonder why the adaptations keep the seduction scenes, devoting much space to the experience? Morpurgo and Hieatt specifically seem to align their adaptations closely with their source text. Rhys and Yeames differ in their presentation but do not altogether delete the lady's seductions. Is it because Gawain mostly keeps his knightly composure, only allowing what would have been deemed acceptable as chivalric honor? Is it because the situation allows for conversations about choice and morality and goodness in facing the temptations of evil? Or is it because fundamentally, this experience is one that exemplifies the chivalric code as Gawain and the lady would have understood it in a medieval context? In pairing one (or many) of these adaptations with the source text (even translated versions), students can tease out answers to these questions. I argue that the scenes are retained in these children's adaptations because they are fundamental to the code of chivalry that imbues the original poem. While students might find the behavior of the lady strange, pairing the original with the adaptation(s) can allow students to consider how the interpretation shifts if the scenes are deleted or altered. Students can also be prompted to consider what they learn about

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[60] See Herbert Khol, *Should We Burn Babar? Essays on Children's Literature and the Power of Stories*. The New Press, 2007.

the character of Gawain, about women, and about knightly honor as the engage with the varying versions of the poem.

Overall, the adaptations can serve as an entry point into a conversation about a concept that modern students might find confusing. The attempts to reckon with this concept in the adaptations makes evident that students will be engaging in an ongoing conversation about how to interpret these scenes; students then will be active participants in the context of adapting and interpreting the original Gawain poem. Students might find enjoyment and agency when they recognize that other scholars have attempted to consider the implications of the tempting scenes in the original text and find confidence in their own ability to interpret the scenes on their own with context from the original. They, then, become critical thinkers and researchers, which is a key objective of the English literature classroom. While the case of Gawain and the lady is just one example of the ways that a children's adaptation can be productive in a literature classroom, teachers of literature classes have many options for pairing adaptions with their own source texts. Because adaptations are so flexible, points of entry into the adapted text through adaptations are abundant; teachers can focus on larger concepts such as chivalry, religion, or gender, or more specifically on narrative form and structure, as well as themes and other literary elements. Moving from the adapted text to the adaptation (or *from left to right* to invoke Deleuze and Guattari) and then back again creates a productive space for students to understand and interpret unfamiliar concepts and narrative modes in a way that might be more effective or efficient than if they were to deal with the original text on its own.

Chapter Three

From Right to Left: Transforming Literature Pedagogy Through Children's Historical Fiction

> "I like writing for young people because I think what we call adolescent issues in this society are also my issues; probably they are human issues, issues that deal with identity and responsibility. . . I don't think there is anything more important for young people or old people than books. It seems to me that one of the most important things a book can do is to help readers see beyond the edges of their own experiences."
> —Karen Cushman[61]

Karen Cushman's medieval girls do indeed help readers to see beyond the edges of their own experience. Alyce, Catherine, and Matilda invite modern readers into the Middle Ages while simultaneously inviting readers to reconsider their own identities and cultures, as well as the process of history-making and how we make meaning of and from the past. Cushman's historical fiction for children has the potential to transform literature pedagogy through stories of medieval female adolescence. Both her characters and her books function as bridges, bringing two sides of many networks together: the medieval and the modern; children and adults; fact and fiction. Cushman's books are examples of the ways that children's historical fiction has the potential to accomplish this transformative bringing-together because of its rhizomatic intertextuality. As historical fiction, these works are not only intertextually interacting with a linear history of texts that inform or have come before them but are also pushing outwards in other directions. Because it is produced in cultural moments outside of the time it invokes, children's historical fiction moves backwards and forwards, in and out of ideas, histories, and cultural frames, as well as audiences. This characteristic of historical fiction for children uniquely positions it as a productive tool for teaching period-specific literature courses to college students.

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[61] Hendershot, Judith, et al. "Interview with Newbery Medal Winner Karen Cushman." *The Reading Teacher*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1996, p. 200.

In Chapter Two I explored how medieval texts adapted for children can be a bridge for college students to comprehend a course's genre or period-specific concepts effectively and easily. In this chapter, I continue developing the metaphor of children's literature as a bridge by arguing that historical fiction can also be useful for teaching college students about course-specific concepts, paying particular attention to the ways that historical fiction for children can be productive in surveys of period-specific literature classes by offering the benefits for students outlined in my introduction. Though my example pairs historical fiction with the Middle Ages, I invite readers to consider the ways that they might apply pairings of children's historical fiction in their own literature surveys.

Specifically, in this chapter, I outline how Karen Cushman's medievalist middle grade chapter books, *Catherine, Called Birdy* (1994), *The Midwife's Apprentice* (1995), and *Matilda Bone* (2000) are useful tools for implementing a paired-texts pedagogical framework through examples of their potential to foster equity, create confidence in students, and generate student engagement; they are filled with opportunities for students to understand the techniques and concepts taught in a university medieval literature course. Student learning might include techniques taught in most English literature classrooms, such as close reading of complex texts, critical thinking, and critical theory as well as concepts specifically related to study of the medieval: identifying key tropes of Middle English poetry, illustrating devices used in medieval prose, such as alliteration; defining and understand the genres of British medieval literature; and understanding the cultural hallmarks of the English Middle Ages that define it as a distinct period, different from the Early Modern or the Renaissance. While there are a variety of children's books that are categorized as historical fiction incorporating medievalism, I chose Cushman's novels for this project because they are award-winning, engaging, and are often

found at the top of publisher's book lists of medievalist literature for children; furthermore, there

is little written about them, so this project aims to add to the limited conversation about

Cushman's work.[62]

Whether it was Cushman's intention or not, the books' structural and thematic patterns

echo those of medieval texts; thus, they are productive for teaching those concepts. These novels

incorporate medievalism as defined by Pugh and Weisl by offering pictures of daily life through

the eyes of adolescent girls in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.[63] As medievalist

texts, Cushman's books are not necessarily intended to teach about the Middle Ages, but rather

to invoke the medieval. Reneé Ward even goes as far to say that historical fiction for children

that uses medievalism is not always meant to be read as totally historically accurate, but the

"books adapt and interlace motifs, themes, or characters from medieval sources in order to

explore contemporary concerns. . . medievalism has purpose" (152-153). Clare Bradford agrees,

explaining that "medievalist texts, whether fantasy, non-fiction or fiction, are not 'about' the

Middle Ages so much as 'about' the cultures and times in which they are produced" (2).

Cushman's books exemplify these understandings of medievalism—they highlight gender,

religion, medicine, science, and identity—issues that are concerns for contemporary and

medieval audiences. Her characters are occupied by the everyday realities of the Middle Ages as

well as issues twenty-first century readers encounter daily: injustice, diversity, and politics, for

example. Reading between the lines of these books allows students to bridge connections

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[62] A few other American Newbury winners that are examples of this genre include: Marshall's *Cedric the Forester* (1921); Young's *The Wondersmith and His Son* (1927); Kelly's *The Trumpeter of Krakow* (1928); Young's *The Tangle-Coated Horse* (1929); Seredy's *The White Stag* (1937); Gray's *Adam of the Road* (1942); Jewett's *The Hidden Treasure of Glaston* (1946); De Angeli's *The Door in the Wall* (1949); Bond's *A String in the Harp* (1976); Fleischman's *The Whipping Boy* (1986); Avi's *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* (2002); Armstrong's *Whittington* (2005); Schlitz' *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!* (2007); Gidwitz' *The Inquisitor's Tale* (2016); and Murdock's *The Book of Boy* (2018).

[63] I discussed Pugh and Weisl's definitions of medievalism at length in the introduction of this dissertation. See Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (2013) for more.

between the lives and literature of the late-medieval and critically think about twenty-first century social issues. Developing critical perspectives, inquiry, and debating interpretations are skills that English professors appreciate and aim for their students to acquire through coursework: reading texts that integrate medievalism is one way for teachers of medieval literature to have students meet these objectives in the classroom. Medievalism in historical fiction for children is transformative in the way that it presents the culture and time it is written within through the lens of another culture and time. In this way, medievalism works rhizomatically through its intertextual nature: texts are not necessarily linearly connected but oscillate in and out of many cultural frames, connecting the medieval, the writer, and the reader.[64] Medievalist texts exemplify Deleuze and Guattari's principles of connection and heterogeneity (that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be") as well as the principles of multiplicity and cartography (Deleuze and Guattari 7). Medievalism is inherently connected to the Middle Ages and requires that connection, but it is flexible in that connection—it maps concepts of the Middle Ages with a larger network of ideas, books, cultures, and avenues of thought. This characteristic makes medievalist historical fictions valuable in a literature class because they create an opportunity for students to consider not only the culture and times of the Middle Ages but also contemporary cultural thought.

One skill learned in literature courses should be student acknowledgment of the ways that the cultural moment in which a book is produced does inform its writing. Sara K. Day discusses this characteristic of literature, specifically in the context of historical fiction, noting that "whether we are looking back on fictionalized representations of the past or looking ahead to the futures authors imagine, it is important to recognize the influence of the political, cultural, and

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[64] As defined by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987).

social contexts in which these texts are produced[65]—and the aspects of these that are in many cases actively ignored or erased. . . there is much to be gained from revisiting and reevaluating not only these texts but also our engagement with them" (2). In other words, Day is suggesting that looking at texts differently, under the assumption that they are products of a particular historical moment, invites readers to consider what aspects we, existing outside of that cultural moment, might be overlooking. Focusing specifically on the Middle Ages, Ward furthers the discussion of cultural production and reminds literary scholars that although we exist in a cultural moment that can be different from the genres we teach, often-discussed "'big issues'—which range from race, identity, and gender to faith, history, and social hegemonies—were of no less concern to medieval writers and audiences than they are to those of the modern period" (153). Using a paired-texts pedagogy emphasizes entering texts from new and varied entry-points. Thus, one benefit of the paired-texts method in a survey class is that the pairs will naturally prompt students to consider how we potentially misunderstand different historical cultures. The paired-text framework is also beneficial because students can be encouraged to think about how their own belief systems and culture might influence their interpretations and interactions with a text. Students can be prompted to consider issues of the twenty-first century as well as issues of the period they are studying through literature. In "Truth as Patchwork: Developing Female Characters in Historical Fiction," Janet Hickman explains that when she is reading in "critical theory mode," she looks for characters who are not only authentic but who embody "qualities that would be useful against the injustices of our time as well as her own"

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[65] In her dissertation, "(Re)Fashioning Gender: Dress as Embodied Feminist Critique in Modernist Women's Writing," Lauren Sperandio Phelps also speaks to the significance of cultural, textual production; specifically focusing on cultural politics of sex, gender, and sexuality, she notes that "literature reflects the society that produces it. . . fiction can either reproduce, and thus reinforce, social norms or it can critique those norms" (16). Children's Literature in particular has historically been positioned as an intentional tool for reproducing, changing, or reinforcing social norms. Educators who pair children's literature with other literary genres, then, should keep this in mind as they chose texts.

(97). Students in survey courses can be encouraged to do the same. Inquiry such as this is a pivotal technique in literature classrooms, and children's literature offers rich opportunities to facilitate critical and nuanced analysis of texts, histories, and cultures.

For example, when students are introduced to the historical fiction of Karen Cushman, it would not only be important to situate the conversation in the realities of the culture of the Middle Ages but would also be imperative to offer context for Cushman's cultural time. Cushman is writing in the 1990s in the United States; her cultural experience is colored by significant cultural shifts and technological advancements.[66] The end of the twentieth century brought wider public access to the internet, the end of the Cold War, legislative changes related to gender and pay, educational reform, and political upheaval. It also saw significant changes in pop culture, with the Disney Renaissance, the popularity of new, diverse media, and discussions of gender inequalities in entertainment such as film and television. Writing at the end of the twentieth-century, Cushman would be inundated with issues of identity, diversity, and gender and these influence her novels. Her cultural perspective is evident in the way that Cushman characterizes her protagonists: Joseph Zornado explains that "Cushman's first two novels reveal a passion for the process of history-making rather than the product produced by the historian—which is why she populates her texts with marginalized, heretofore unexamined characters from medieval England. No kings or bishops take center stage in her first two novels. Rather, young girls with no power, no voice, and little or no future are her protagonists" (252). Students will need to have context for Cushman's cultural experience and recognize that they are bringing their own to their readings. Practically, students can be asked to consider how the readings of the

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[66] Though this is worth recognizing, readers in 2023 might not see a huge difference between the time Cushman was writing in and now. For example, Lena Dunham's 2022 adaptation of *Catherine, Called Birdy* differs in tone from the novel, it is not at any great meta-historical distance from the 1994 novel.

primary medieval texts and the medievalist historical fiction might support deeper understandings of both cultures: for example, can knowledge of the feudalism, chivalry, dominance of the Catholic Church, and social hierarchies of the late-Middle Ages support a nuanced reading of Cushman's books? Conversely, does knowledge of contemporary culture and the way that cultures write histories change how we read medieval texts? Hopefully, students will be able to answer "yes!" to these questions and use the intertextuality of the paired-text method to reconsider conventional views of the literature.

Introduction to Cushman and her Medieval Girls

In her 1996 Newbery acceptance speech, Karen Cushman says that she writes "about strong young women who in one way or another take responsibility for their own lives." Her decision to write about independent and resilient young women positioned her as one of the most popular children's writers in America in the 1990s. Her books were popular and critically acclaimed, securing her the Newbery Honor, American Library Association Notable Book for Children, and Golden Kite Award for *Catherine, Called Birdy*; the Newbery Medal for *The Midwife's Apprentice*; and the John and Patricia Beatty Award[67] for *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*, among others.[68] Critics, educators, librarians, and readers alike value her novels for their engaging storylines and memorable characters. Her first novel, *Catherine, Called Birdy* is still included in fourth through seventh grade classroom curricula and is often recommended to young readers. Cushman's historical fiction for children was the most popular of its kind when it was published and remains popular today, with *Catherine, Called Birdy* being adapted into an Amazon film of the same title directed by Lena Dunham in 2022.

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[67] Awarded in 1997 by the California Library Association.
[68] Other awards for *Catherine, Called Birdy*, her most celebrated novel, include ALA Recommended Book for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, Booklist Editors' Choice, Horn Book Fanfare Selection, IRA Teachers' Choice, and the School Library Journal's Best Books of the Year.

Catherine, Called Birdy is Cushman's most celebrated novel. It follows teenage Catherine, (nicknamed Birdy due to her affinity for birds and her flightiness), who is a witty and strong-willed girl living in a manor in 1290s England. The narrative unfolds through her diary entries, where she shares her thoughts, experiences, daydreams, and desires. Faced with the inevitability of an arranged marriage, Catherine rebels against the societal expectations for females of her status, as well as the suitors her father invites to woo her. She writes about her daily life, her interactions with family and friends, her struggles with embroidery and other ladylike pursuits, her experimentation in medicine, and her aspirations for freedom and independence. Since the book is a diary, the content is personal: Catherine includes her humorous and poignant observations of villagers, friends, and family, information about her relationships with various characters (including an unconventional priest, her nurse, her mother, and her potential suitors), and her dreams of experiencing life beyond the confines of her medieval society (for example, one avenue she considers for escaping is becoming a nun). As Catherine matures and faces the realities of her world, readers witness her growth, resilience, and determination to carve out her own path in a time when women had limited autonomy. In the end, she accepts the inevitably of the arranged marriage but decides that she can find happiness inside the social contexts of her eleventh-century village. Overall, the novel authentically captures the essence of medieval life while highlighting Catherine's spirited nature and her quest for self-determination amidst societal constraints.

Cushman's next medieval book is *The Midwife's Apprentice*, awarded the Newbery Medal in 1996. Shorter than the other two books discussed in this chapter, *The Midwife's Apprentice* revolves around a nameless, homeless teenage girl who is taken in by a strict and bitter midwife named Jane in a late thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century medieval village.

Initially known only as "Beetle" due to her unremarkable and insignificant nature, she longs for identity and significance beyond her current circumstances. Under the guidance of Jane, Beetle learns the art of midwifery, gradually gaining practical knowledge and confidence as she assists with births and tends to the health needs of women in the village. Throughout her apprenticeship, Beetle faces hardships and setbacks but also experiences moments of growth and self-discovery. She begins to integrate herself into the village community and is eventually respected rather than bullied. In two specific, pivotal instances, she saves a village boy named Will from drowning, and then later helps his family cow deliver twin calves. With her new confidence, comes a new name: in the middle of the book she christens herself Alyce. Alyce discovers her own strengths and resilience, gradually earning respect within the community for her dedication and compassion in aiding expectant mothers and those in need. However, after a particularly difficult birthing experience, Alyce is discouraged and runs away from the village to work in a neighboring inn. There she gains new skills (for example, she learns the alphabet, the humors of the body, and the business of running an inn) and is introduced to an alternate way of life. She decides she is content there, but when Will visits the inn, she is reminded of her life with Jane. Ultimately, she decides that she enjoyed midwifery and is suited to be Jane's apprentice.[69] She returns to Jane and asks for her job again, insisting that failure will no longer discourage her. Overall, the novel chronicles Beetle's transformation from a nameless and destitute girl to a confident and capable apprentice, finding her place in the world as she navigates the realities of medieval life. *The Midwife's Apprentice*, then, is a story of identity, resilience, and empowerment, detailing the journey of Alyce as she finds purpose and identity in a world that

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[69] In a moment of revelation, Alyce realizes she was a midwife's apprentice with a newborn hope of being someday a midwife herself. She had much still to learn, and she knew a place where she could learn it, cold and difficult and unwelcoming as that place might be. That was her place in this world for right now, and though her belly would likely never be full, her heart was content" (113-114).

initially saw her as insignificant. Importantly, the books offer the practical reality of the experiences of someone who held the status of apprentice, as well as the job of a midwife in the Middle Ages. The authenticity of the experience will be useful and appealing to readers interested in late-medieval medicine and village life.

Cushman's last medieval-themed book is *Matilda Bone*. This novel offers a less-likeable protagonist than Cushman's other two novels.[70] Set in the fourteenth century, *Matilda Bone* focuses on orphaned Matilda, who is sent from the manor house where she has been under the tutelage of the zealous and intolerant Father Leufredus to be an apprentice in "Blood and Bone Alley" in the fictional English town of Chipping Bagthorpe. She enters her new home with Red Peg the bonesetter, who is excited to have Matilda for assistance. Red Peg's excitement dwindles, however, when she discovers Matilda's extreme piety, intolerance, self-pity, and self-righteousness. Matilda is disappointed in her new home and finds that she does not enjoy her duties of tending the fire, cooking, and helping set bones as much as she did reading, writing, and praying. She elevates holiness and literacy and shuns the people of the alley as incompetent and uneducated. Red Peg needs help, though, so she is patient with Matilda, even though the girl often offends Peg or hinders her work. While Matilda learns from Peg, readers are introduced to a wide cast of colorful characters, including a physician, an alchemist, a bloodletter, a kitchen maid, and an astrologist. Through Matilda's daily experiences, she learns the techniques of medieval bone-setting, as well as the skills of the specialists she encounters in Blood and Bone

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[70] In an author profile interview, Cushman discusses Matilda's characterization. She explains that she actually had a difficult time writing Matilda because she was so different than her other characters. Cushman says, "I had a hard time with this novel, because I always try something different and this character is more passive and obedient before she grows. I keep thinking, 'But will children like her?' (102). Matilda is indeed the most passive of Cushman's medieval girls and also the most resistant to change. She is almost annoyingly set in her ways and is often unkind because of her shortsightedness. I, too, wondered if readers liked her. For more of Cushman's interview, see her author profile in *Beauty, Brains, and Brawn: The Construction of Gender in Children's Literature*, edited by Susan Lehr, 2001, pp. 99-103.

Alley. Matilda begins to enjoy her work of helping and healing; she makes friends with the inhabitants of the alley and her worldview is widened. In the end, Peg's patience pays off, and at the conclusion of the novel, Matilda recognizes the goodness and competencies of those around her, and begins to appreciate their practical knowledge, common sense, and cleverness as more useful than letters and religion.

Overall, Cushman's medieval-themed books invite readers into the Middle Ages through elaborate scenes, relatable characters, and colorful language. While the books offer modern conceptions of self-identity, literacy, and personal agency, they do offer extensive information about medieval medicine, midwifery, village life, religion, social status, festivals, food, and pilgrimage.

Negotiating Fidelity in Children's Historical Fiction

When using historical fiction as a pairing, instructors must consider their pedagogical purpose: this will inform the level of fidelity they will require in course adoption. As literature professors, should we choose between factual accuracy and poetic license? Does it matter? Answers to this will likely depend upon your theory of what literature should do. If you align with children's literature scholars such as Rebecca Barnhouse[71] and Anne Scott MacLeod,[72] your options might be limited by the rigid constraints of true fidelity. However, if you believe that

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[71] Barnhouse is one of the most vocal proponents of strict fidelity in historical fiction for children, and she spends much time analyzing Cushman in particular. Notably, in *Recasting the Past: The Middle Ages in Young Adult Literature* (2000) Barnhouse asserts, "The best historical fiction tells a good story and at the same time represents the past responsibly and accurately. Its writers check their didactic tendencies, and create memorable, sympathetic characters who may question some of the values and perceptions of their own eras, yet who are clearly shaped by those values. . . Novelists must not only get the facts right, they must also present all of their characters as authentically medieval, reacting to people and events around them with authentically medieval sensibilities" (x). Her rigid guidelines for children's historical fiction excludes a number of potentially fruitful texts; in contrast with Barnhouse, I suggest that children's historical fiction can add to courses whether they are totally faithful or not.

[72] MacLeod also advocates for historical fidelity, noting that, "historical fiction writers who want their protagonists to reflect twentieth century ideologies, however, end by making them exceptions to their cultures, so that in many a historical novel the reader learns nearly nothing—or at least nothing sympathetic—of how the people of a past society saw their world" (27).

literature can function as a transformative bridge, rhizome, or window, then even with factual inconsistencies, historical fiction has the potential to be productive in the literature classroom. While there are varying views about how fidelity should be approached in historical fiction for children, I take the stance that fidelity is not the most important consideration when choosing children's historical fiction for a paired-texts syllabus. In a class that is less concerned with historical accuracy than critical inquiry, fidelity is less important than cultural commentary and representation. Additionally, classes are facilitated by instructors who can alert students to ahistorical information and give them the appropriate context they need in order to interact with the texts in a productive way. Lectures, discussions, and supplemental texts can help students bridge medievalism with the real Middle Ages.

With this in mind, I believe that Cushman's three medievalist children's novels are productive tools in a medieval literature classroom. While her novels are typically categorized as middle grade historical fiction, that genre designation causes some controversy among critics who argue that, though her novels are well researched, Cushman often takes ahistorical liberties, creating a picture of the Middle Ages that is not accurate.[73] Those who take issue with her accuracy often focus on the way that Cushman presents her characters, noting that women in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries would not have had the agency that her characters have; they assert that women and girls would have most likely not acted and spoken in the way that Cushman's characters do. For example, MacLeod criticizes Cushman's books because they "evade the common realities of the societies they write about" (26). Furthermore, Barnhouse

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[73] Joseph Zornado maps Cushman's place in children's literature scholarship in his article "A Poetics of History: Karen Cushman's Medieval World." He explains that "Though honored by the Newbery award committee, Cushman's *Catherine* and *Apprentice* nevertheless draw mixed opinions about the books' merits as historical fiction from teachers and scholars alike. Those who favor the books praise the main characters, young women who discover within themselves the strength and confidence to survive, even thrive, in a brutal and unforgiving medieval world. Skeptics charge that Cushman's work is not "real" historical fiction, but rather, simply "fiction" because her work sacrifices historical "facts" in order to tell what amounts to contemporary stories about female adolescence" (251).

says that good historical fiction should offer characters that "act and react in ways that are fitting their own time and place, not for modern America," and contests that Cushman's characters act too modern. Ultimately, Barnhouse values authenticity above all. She creates a firm distinction between good and bad attempts at writing about the Middle Ages:

> Well-told modern tales of the Middle Ages abound—thanks to novelists like Skurzynski and Cushman, Sutcliff and McGraw, Calnuag Paterson, Alder, and Stolz. The writers who research carefully enough to understand the differences between medieval and modern attitudes, between different medieval settings, and between fantasy and history, can help their readers understand a strange and distant culture: the Middle Ages. Writers who create memorable, sympathetic characters who retain authentically medieval values teach their audience more than those who condescend to readers by sanitizing the past. Trusting readers to comprehend cultural differences, presenting the Middle Ages accurately, and telling a good story results in compelling historical fiction, fiction that, like medieval literature in its ideal form, teaches as it delights. (86)

Barnhouse concludes that Cushman's medievalist books are not effective modern tales of the Middle Ages, even though Cushman herself explains that they are painstakingly researched. Moreover, Barnhouse views any characterization that promotes feminism, literacy, didacticism, or tolerance in medievalist historical fiction as unfaithful, and authors are condemned to the label of inaccurate if they choose to do so. Barnhouse's problem is that Cushman's characterization demonstrates her "modern attitudes about such topics as literacy and tolerance for diversity" (ix). Barnhouse emphasizes her contention by asking, "what can be more ridiculous than a young medieval girl interested in books and reading?" (7). Speaking of Cushman specifically, Barnhouse mentions Alyce of *The Midwife's Apprentice*, who "values books and reading more

than a girl in her situation probably would have" (7). According to Barnhouse, typical medieval girls would not pursue literacy or be interested in writing simply because it was not usually pursued. However, of this attitude, Chamutal Noimann asks, "Does [this] mean that there could not have been more anonymous women who were as passionate about reading and writing as these famous freaks of history? Could one only write about Heloise, for example, if one wanted to provide young women today with a positive medieval role model because she is "real" and Alyce [of *The Midwife's Apprentice*] isn't?" (107). Historically, the daily lives of normal, everyday women were not always recorded and there is scarce information about individual, unique female experience.[74] However, as within any society, it is likely that women existed outside of socially accepted conventions. It is as true for culture in the twenty-first century as it was for the late-medieval period that rebels existed in one form or another. Thus, to say that the representation of a medieval girl in children's historical fiction[75] is improbable simply because she resisted the prevailing social structure or acted outside of what modern people believe to be standard of medieval people seems unfair.

Furthermore, Noimann goes on to suggest that if "we believe that historical novels are firstly works of literature and as such should spark the imagination and teach us not only about the past but about the present, the future, and most of all about ourselves, then we should perhaps be more forgiving of factual inconsistencies" (107). I agree with Noimann's evaluation of

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[74] Janet Hickman explores the development of female characters in historical fiction, noting that "Gender is only one of the aspects of truth in fictional lives, but it creates more than its share of complexities, beginning with the relativity scarcity of specific information about real girls and young women. . . authors have to rely mostly on alternative sources to determine that girls of the past were like, to explore what might have been 'true' for a young female character in a particular place and time" (93). For more from Hickman, refer to "Truth as Patchwork: Developing Female Characters in Historical Fiction," in *Beauty, Brains, and Brawn: The Construction of Gender in Children's Literature*, edited by Susan Lehr, 2001, pp. 92-98.

[75] Cushman's choice to make Catherine literate here also serves a narrative function. Within conversations about historical fiction and fidelity, there seems to be catch-22: if Catherine cannot write, then she cannot write to readers, thus Cushman would have had to forgo a first-person narrative. However, historical fiction must open such avenues of "unconventional" literacy or it cannot exist.

historical fiction; its ability to teach us about the past and present allows readers to consider many alternative histories and viewpoints, which is what literary studies aspires to do. The problems that scholars hold with Cushman's books are exactly the reasons that I believe they can be productive in a medieval literature classroom; her decision to weave twentieth-century ideas of feminism, diversity, literacy, and tolerance into her novels along with elements of the Middle Ages and medieval literature makes them perfect for class discussion about the Middle Ages and contemporary theoretical concerns.

Therefore, even though Cushman's texts take historical liberties in representation of everyday people, the books can aid in teaching students about the daily life of medieval people, about medicine, religion, and societal hierarchies, as well as materiality. The books provide a frame for practicing and applying literary theories, as well as have the potential to encourage class conversations about knowledge and values. Cushman's novels follow the same genre modes as the medieval texts they interact with and invoke, such as saints' lives and self-writing. Thus, the novels will be useful in a university medieval literature classroom because they are tools for teaching the concepts and skills often included on the syllabus. Ultimately, for the purpose of my pedagogical framework, the usefulness of children's texts is not necessarily found in their historical accuracy but in their ability to engage students with the paired content in a new or helpful way.

Cushman in the Literature Classroom

As I have suggested in previous chapters, reading children's novels can give students a foundation for understanding abstract concepts found in period-specific texts. Typically, children's novels use more accessible language, allowing readers to spend less time attempting to understand unfamiliar language and more time considering content and themes, all of which

create equity and generate student confidence. Children's texts also tend to center around a common plot structure (departure-adventure-return or problem-struggle-realization-achievement of peace or truth). Most readers will be familiar with this structure even if they have not read the assigned children's text because they have probably encountered the plot structure in other children's books they have already read or in children's movies and television shows. The familiar quality of children's novels makes them useful in university literature classrooms because it allows students to all begin from the same place. When teachers introduce difficult or unfamiliar concepts or theories through a children's text, students will be more engaged, and the discussion will be able to quickly move into analysis. Instead of entering a classroom in which some students are wrestling with comprehension of language while others already deeply understand the text and are ready to analyze, teachers will enter a classroom where all students are on similar footing and from there, moving into more difficult readings later on will be easier; students will have context for the period's concepts, topics, or motifs, so they will be less intimidated when they encounter the texts they anticipate being difficult.

When designing a literature course that will use children's texts (either paired or on their own) to discuss a particular genre, instructors should look for children's books that illustrate the concepts outlined in their course objectives; they should consider what they want their students to gain from the paired readings. For example, instructors might want students to gain understanding of a particular form (alliteration, poetry, or drama for example), narrative structure, or theme, or perhaps a more general understanding of the historical or cultural context informing surveyed texts. In my entry through the lens of a medieval literature classroom, I would aim to use Cushman's books to introduce students to often-discussed topics or motifs in medieval literature. When students read medieval texts in a sophomore literature course,

instructors encourage students to consider the cultural and historical context of the texts. Thus, in addition to specific themes, metaphors, or comprehension of the text itself, students in these classes discuss daily life, religion, materiality, and politics through their readings. Cushman's books offer examples of those concepts in a way that is direct and entertaining: her characters and scenes are funny and memorable, while also offering details that are historically authentic. Her narrative structure is simple, but not boring, and her language is colorful, weaving in Latin and medieval phrases. She incorporates topics that offer context for reading medieval literature: students are introduced to pilgrimage, feudalism, the crusades, medicine, religion, marriage, feasts, festivals, and saints, to name a few. In this way, the books can serve as a tool for general understanding of the topics and provoke deeper research. Cushman's books offer a multitude of options for understanding concepts found in medieval literature, but I focus my discussion on three specific topics related to the medieval (literacy, religion, medicine) to explain how this pedagogical move might work in practice. The books offer an extensive number of examples that could be entry points for students into conversations, not just about these three topics, but a variety of medieval motifs. My aim in this chapter is to suggest to all professors of literature surveys that children's historical fiction can be transformative for student understanding and comprehension. While my entry to that transformative pedagogy is through medievalism and Cushman for this example, educators who desire to implement children's historical fiction into their classrooms should look for topics, motifs, or themes that align with their fields and choose children's texts that interact with those topics. Thus, since my aim in this chapter is to be a springboard for instructors to begin their course design, I offer only one to two examples from each book per topic.

Topic 1: Literacy, Writing, and Books

While some scholars suggest that the characters in Cushman's books appreciate reading and writing too much, there are productive and accurate examples of literacy, writing, and books in her three novels.[76] While books and manuscripts were a significant part of medieval culture, they were primarily located in monasteries or in the homes of the wealthy. The manuscripts that existed were either religious or medical in nature or were historical documents or miscellanies. Manuscripts were significant cultural artifacts and language was important to medieval people.[77] The textual culture of medieval England proliferated from monastic scribal culture to early printing methods. Today, some of the most ubiquitous examples of medieval textual culture are illuminated manuscripts. Cushman's novels invoke many aspects of those medieval literacies.

If a course objective was for my medieval literature students to consider the significance of reading and writing to medieval English people, I would point them to particular scenes in the novels in which the characters explain what reading or writing was like for different members of society. Specifically, the material act of writing is significant in all three of Cushman's novels. In her medieval worlds, knowledge is made and kept through ink and vellum. While her emphasis on literacy might be more didactic than necessary, there are still productive examples for student

[76] Again, Barnhouse critiques Cushman's tendency towards didacticism. She argues that Cushman is portraying "the Middle Ages as a time when children have little opportunity to read and when books were hard to come by. [She presents] us with characters who must fight for the books, the reading, and the knowledge they desire, characters who see literacy as an avenue towards knowledge and power. These characters become role models for today's adolescents. . . by this unintentional didacticism, the writers commit anachronisms instead of giving us the real Middle Ages. Thus, not only do they underestimate the cultural differences between medieval and modern society, they also underestimate their readers' ability to comprehend and learn from such differences, condescending therefore to both the past and the present" (10). Her contention with Cushman's girls are that they value literacy more than any "normal" medieval girl would have. However, even with the anachronism, the illumination of the topic itself can prompt students to consider accurate representations of books, reading, and knowledge for medieval people

[77] For more about medieval literacy and textual culture, see James Westfall Thompson's *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages* (1963) and *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, edited by Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (2010). For more specific explorations of textual culture, the following texts enter the discourse of medieval literacy in unique ways: Cermanová, Pavlína., and Václav. Žůrek. *Books of Knowledge in Late Medieval Europe: Circulation and Reception of Popular Texts* (2021); Ellison, Katherine E., and Susan M. Kim, editors. *A Material History of Medieval and Early Modern Ciphers: Cryptography and the History of Literacy* (2017); Hindley, Katherine Storm. *Textual Magic: Charms and Written Amulets in Medieval England* (2023); and Zieman, Katherine. *Singing the New Song Literacy and Liturgy in Late Medieval England* (2008).

introduction to the topic. For example, *Catherine, Called Birdy* is almost entirely concerned with writing. The novel is presented as a series of journal entries through the perspective of a teenage girl who is the daughter of a lord, so though the typical plot structure is upheld (problem-struggle-realization-achievement of peace or truth), the narrative representation of it is through diary entries rather than typical dialogue. Catherine makes it evident right from the start that she has been directed by her brother (a monk) to keep the diary in order to "grow less childish and more learned" (2). She situates the act of writing as a method for learning which would have been appropriate given her brother's access to writing and reading and her father's status. Furthermore, in her introduction, she explains where she obtained the writing materials: "The skins are my father's, left over from the household accounts, and the ink also. The writing I learned of my brother Edward, but the words are my own" (2-3). Here, Catherine's description of her access to writing materials is accurate. It would be normal for the daughter of a medieval lord to take the scraps left over from her father's accounts: this would not be outside the realm of possibility. Her description of her writing materials is important for students of medieval literature because these are the typical tools for writing; students are introduced here to key terms (skins and ink), as well as household and social structure.

Similarly, in another example, monastic scribes are described in *Catherine, Called Birdy*. Students will find descriptions of a country monastery and of the scribal practices occurring there, including book-binding, ink-making, illuminating, and transcribing. In the novel, Catherine's visit to the monastery presents a vivid picture of monastic textual production, worth quoting at length here:

Edward works in Paradise. Beyond the garden, near the chapel, is a room as large as our barn and near as cold. Shelves lining the walls hold books and scrolls, some chained

down as if they were precious relics or wild beasts. In three rows sit 15 desks, feebly lit

by candles, in 15 monks sit curled over them, their nose is pressed almost to the desktops.

Each monk holds in one hand his pen and any other a sharp knife for scratching out

mistakes. On the desks are pins and quills of all sizes, pots of ink black or colored,

powder for drying, and knives for sharpening. some of the monks copy the words from

one page to another. Others add fanciful designs to the first letter and decoration to the

page. Still others punch holes in the pages and sew them together between wooden

covers. Never have I seen books so beautiful or so plentiful. . . Edward's passion is for

the letters and the words, which he inscribes lovingly on the softened vellum. But for

me—oh, the pictures! The birds and the flowers, the saints and angels rushing up the side

of the page, climbing over the capitals and down the margin, the knights riding snails into

battle against squirrels and goats, the many faces of the Devil as he scampers over the

page tempting the reader away from holy words. (Cushman 26-27)

Notwithstanding that a teenage girl would not have been allowed in the monastery, readers are

offered a useful description of textual production that highlights key techniques of scribal

culture; this is the way that books were made and Catherine's detailed description of the process

is simple and effective.[78] Students are introduced to key terms (scrolls, pins, quills, ink, drying

powder, vellum) and key tasks (transcribing, illuminating, sewing). From this description,

students then might examine medieval textual artifacts or read paired religious texts that would

have been produced through the work of scribes. Students could discuss the significance of

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[78] This point would be worthy of inclusion on class discussion or lecture; Catherine's ability to enter the monastery is ahistorical but invokes both contemporary and medieval cultural concerns relating to gender. Thus, even the ahistoricism of Catherine's visit is a productive avenue for students to inquire and learn about cultural norms.

illumination, the problems of authorship and transcription, or the social hierarchies that designated who had access to books and who did not.[79]

Next, in *The Midwife's Apprentice*, writing is considered as an indicator of a learned person. Alyce's description of her first encounter with someone who could write suggests that to her (an induvial in the servant class), the writer's skill was impressive and unusual: "She thought at first he had the pox, for his long face, long nose, and long yellow teeth were all spotted, but it proved to be only ink, splattered as he pushed his quill pen furiously along. Corpus bones, she thought. He is writing! That is a man who can write!" (76-77). She learns the man is writing a history of the country, and her interaction with him paves the way for her knowledge acquisition. For Alyce, written knowledge is not as transformative as it is for Catherine: in the end, she determines that practical knowledge is more useful for her life as an apprentice. This is important because it aligns with historical understandings of status. Medieval individuals like Alyce who needed to make a living based on their practical skills would not have been as concerned with their ability to read or write as they would have their ability to perform their tasks. Thus, Cushman's characterization of Alyce might be considered more appropriate and accurate than Cushman's other characters. Conversely, in *Matilda Bone*, the protagonist, Matilda, is obsessed with knowledge and assumes that those who cannot read or write are inferior. She was orphaned and raised in a manor under the direction of a holy man—Father Leufreudus—so her worldview is colored by her experience living among the monks. For example, Matilda can write in Latin and has the "finest calligraphy" (40). She explains that "'all learned people can write. I write letters to Father Leufreudus, who is far away. Scholars like Father Leufreudus write the lives of

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[79] For useful supplemental information about textual production in the Middle Ages, refer to Part I of Walker, Greg, and Elaine Treharne. *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*. Oxford, 2010. Walker and Treharne offer a comprehensive and reader-friendly history of manuscript culture and reading in the Middle Ages.

the saints and devotions. Or folks in business keep records and accounts" (68). Her emphasis on literacy as a marker of superiority could lead to productive conversations about social hierarchies in medieval England. Students might be asked to consider the usefulness of literacy, the cultural environment of literacy in the Middle Ages, and how that might have impacted textual production, knowledge-sharing, history documentation, and the daily lives of medieval individuals of varying social status.

While these are only a few of the examples found relative to literacy, writing, and books in Cushman's novels, overall, they show the potential for generating discussion about the topic. If students are introduced to the problems and realities of medieval textual culture through Cushman's texts, they will have a foundation for further conversations about the topic as they encounter it in the assigned paired medieval texts and histories. Even though Cushman's presentation of literacy in the Middle Ages tends to be exaggerated, its existence is what instructors of survey classes can find useful. Highlighting medieval reading, writing, and literacy through the scenes in the novels and then moving into reading primary texts or histories can give students context for a culture that is different from their own. In addition to bridging connections between the course's assigned paired texts, students might explore the topic through the study of medieval writing tools and production techniques: students could be tasked with researching quills, ink, vellum, and book-binding; then, they might engage in smaller projects where they make medieval writing tools or offer in-class presentations outlining what they learned and the significance of the tools to understanding larger medieval culture. This is just one potential for practical student engagement of the topic.

Topic 2: Religion

The Church dominated medieval life. The reach of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages inundated all aspects of daily life in the Middle Ages for people of all statuses. The centers of education and knowledge were religious monasteries, the Divine Order was established and reiterated, and penance and praying were daily rituals.[80] Important cultural texts were religious in nature and even the poetry, romance, and prose of the Middle Ages is imbued with religious subcurrent and themes. Students can enter the conversation about religion in the late-medieval period through reading Cushman's books. After they are introduced to the personal and communal notions of religion in daily life in the Middle Ages, instructors can further contextualize the role of religion in medieval texts and culture through paired primary religious texts. Potential pairing options might include *The Book of Margery Kempe*, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Divine Comedy*, psalters and prayer books, devotional literature, or hagiographies.

In her novels, Cushman offers scenes that exemplify what medieval people collectively believed about God, Church, Evil, and their place in relation to them. *Catherine, Called Birdy* and *Matilda Bone* are particularly concerned with religion. For example, I might have my students focus on to the elevation of the hagiography in *Catherine, Called Birdy* or the numerous invocations to saints, observance of religious practices, and the characterization of the clergy in *Matilda Bon*e. Medieval religious practices might be different, odd, or confusing for twenty-first-century students, so beginning with the children's text is an effective place to begin to ease students into a topic that has the potential to be overwhelming due to its difference. The children's text will foster the pedagogical benefits of student engagement, equity, and

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[80] For a comprehensive overview of religion in the Middle Ages refer to: Fudgé, Thomas A. *Medieval Religion and its Anxieties: History and Mystery in the Other Middle Ages.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; Rubin, Miri. *Medieval Christianity in Practice.* Princeton UP, 2009; Walker, Greg, and Elaine Treharne. *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English.* Oxford, 2010.

confidence. The examples listed above would introduce students to key terms, ideological frameworks, and typical religious practices in the Middle Ages.

In *Catherine, Called Birdy*, religion functions as a narrative tool in the novel. Catherine's diary entries list the day as well as the saint that is celebrated that day. This decision places hagiography and religion at the forefront of the text. Cushman's decision was intentional and suggests that the lives and characteristics of medieval saints should influence the reading of the book. Very early on in the book, Birdy defines hagiographies simply for readers as she describes a gift meant for her mother: "the abbot received us kindly and sent to my mother gentle words and a marvelous small book of saints, their feast days, and their great works. Today, it says, is the fest of Saint Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumbria, whose head lies at York and body in the abbey at Whitby. I think there are too many words and not enough pictures, but since I read and my mother does not, I will try to seduce it from her" (25-26). Here, students are offered a simplified version of what a hagiography is: a small book listing saints, their feast days, and their works, that is text heavy. Notably, through this entry, students can discuss the compactness of copies of saint's lives, making them perfect for personal use and travel, since they would have been considered important texts; students might also consider how status affects Catherine's ability to enter a religious space often intended for holy men and how she has access to written manuscripts. After Catherine leaves the monastery with the gifted book of saints, her entries all begin with a description of the saint's day and sometimes how they died. The first entry with this inclusion is October 13, which bears her brother Edward's patron saint: "*Feast of Edward, King and saint, and my brother Edward's saint's day*" (28). Birdy is enthralled with the hagiography and writes that she is "making use of it to find out how saints lived and died and what lessons I may learn from them" (29). Throughout the novel, she offers commentary on the

saints, making connections between their achievements, characteristics, and deaths to her own life. Sometimes her discussion of the saint reads as sacrilegious or unserious ("19th day of October, *Feast of Saint Frileswide, virgin, though why that should make someone a saint I do not know*" (33); "20th day of October, *Feast of Saint Irene, killed by a man because she would not love him*" (33)), and tends to overtly invoke modern issues of feminism. For example, Catherine's musings about her own saint highlight issues of gender. The entry reads: "25th day of November, *Feast of Saint Catherine, a virgin of Alexandria whose body was broken on a spiked wheel*" (54). Catherine then begins to reflect on Saint Catherine's experience:

> Catherine, who is my own name saint, was, I know, a princess who refused to marry a pagan emperor, but I do not understand the part about her dying on a spiked wheel. What is a spiked wheel? Where are the spikes? What is it for, besides martyring virgins? How was she fastened on? Was it lying on the ground or upright? Why didn't they just put an arrow through her? Would I choose to die rather than be forced to marry? I hope to avoid the issue, for I do not think I have it in me to be a saint. (54)

In this rich example, readers are invited to consider arranged marriages, as well as religious persecution and martyrdom—all topics influenced by and associated with the Church in the Middle Ages. While Catherine's reflections seem to be heavily occupied with considering gender in a way that readers might consider to be modern, it is not out of the question that a medieval teenage girl would spend time in her personal diary considering how her gender might affect how she moves through life. Modern or not, her musings do point to a productive issue in medieval studies: how the Church controlled all people, but particularly women. For example, Catherine reflects on the corpus of saints in a perceptive note: "26th day of July, *Feast of Saint Ann, mother of the Virgin Mary*: I have noticed lately how many male saints were bishops,

popes, missionaries, great scholars, and teachers, while female saints get to be saints mostly by being someone's mother or refusing to marry some powerful pagan. It is plain that men are in charge of making saints" (177). Here, Catherine emphasizes essential contextual information for students of medieval literature: the Church and prevailing culture viewed the roles of women and men very differently. This is significant for students to understand as they begin to read primary medieval texts. Presentations of gender in the texts they encounter will be heavily influenced by the ideology of Catholicism.

While Catherine is only interested in the saints, Matilda is obsessed with them and invokes them for guidance. Throughout the novel, she appeals to various saints when she feels persecuted or misunderstood. While she was under the tutelage of the Father, she was taught to pray to the saints for healing and help. She finds comfort in them when she finds herself in unfamiliar Blood and Bone Alley. Interestingly, even though she asks them for guidance for dealing with issues that she deems to be problematic, the saints actually encourage her to learn from her new teachers. For example, "*Dear Saint Hippolytus, who knew suffering*, she prayed, *please deliver this child from her torture at the hands of the bonesetter*. But the saint replied, *You consider this torture? Why, I was tied by my feet to a team of horses and dragged through thistles and thorns. That was torture! This is healing. Watch and learn*" (35). Matilda engages in prayerful conversations like this often and they always respond to her, noting that their persecution was worse than hers and that she needs to pay more attention to practical life. At the end of the book, however, she appeals once more to the saints for guidance: "Dear Saint Thomas, she thought, who looks after those who have doubts. I am confused and uncertain and need your help. What is the right thing for me to do?" (156). For the first time in the narrative, the saint does not respond: "But neither Saint Thomas nor any other saint answered her, and Matilda knew

that, although the saints might provide comfort and consolation, they would not be telling her what life she should live or how she should live it. She must make her own decisions and her own way" (156-157). Cushman's decision to include Matilda's conversations with these saints suggests that religion was personal and practical.

Furthermore, Matilda's tendency to look to the saints for guidance rather than Peg or the other experts around her suggests that Matilda relates religion with knowledge and competency. She lauds those who know Latin, who know how to read and write, and who are religious. These are skills that she had been taught in childhood to appreciate. When she is asked by a fellow villager what she can do, she explains that she has "reading and writing in Latin and a bit in French. . . I know the Ten Commandments, the seven moral virtues, and the fourteen articles of the faith. I know which saint to invoke against oversleeping and which to call upon when in peril at sea, and I can quote Augustine of Canterbury on Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Gregory on Augustine. I can recite in Greek about the meaning of free will and whether God can be seen in his essence…" (59). Her preoccupation with religiosity highlights the pervasiveness of ideology. However, the villager is interested in practicalities, asking, "But what can you do?" (59). Matilda realizes that for her life in Blood and Bone Alley among the villagers, her knowledge is not as important as how she engages with her community. Thus, her answer then reflects a more functional answer: "I am attendant to Red Peg the Bonesetter" (59). Because wisdom was often housed in religious spaces, Matilda's initial attitude would not have been an abnormal understanding of the world. However, through Matilda's change of heart at the end of the book, Cushman suggests that practical knowledge is more effective for daily life than abstract philosophy.

While *The Midwife's Apprentice* is less about religion, there are references to the overarching beliefs of the village. Specifically, an entire chapter is dedicated to the description of sin, penance, and the devil. This chapter feels a little out of place in the flow of the book which makes me wonder if Cushman feel the need to include at least one example of religion at work in Alyce's life *because of* the importance of religion in the Middle Ages. The chapter is particularly engaging, entertaining, and memorable, and I think students would enjoy analyzing and discussing the events and their implications for the community in the book, and subsequently, communities of medieval people and literature that deals with issues of evil, sin, and penance. A major function of the chapter is to show that Alyce is smart and cunning. It also allows Alyce to gain retribution from the villagers who were cruel to her. Titled "The Devil," the chapter is maybe one of the most interesting chapters in the novel. Here, Alyce is able to settle the score with the townspeople because she understands their beliefs about demons and spirits and how they are scared of them. Importantly, she uses their fear and superstitions to gain agency. While they lock themselves in their homes because they think the devil is roaming the streets of their town, Alyce takes the opportunity to move freely and learns new skills. The villagers' superstitions are explained through specific events worth quoting in full here for context:

> It started with the two-headed calf born to Roger Mustard's cow, Molly. And then a magpie landed on the miller's barn and would not be chased away. Suddenly the whole village saw witches and devils everywhere, and fear lived in every cottage. . . Alyce, who had slept alone outside in the dark for most of her years, even at fearful times like All Hallows' Eve and Walpurgis Night, had never yet seen the Devil and had nothing to fear from the night. It was she, then, who was sent to fetch and carry and deliver messages after dark, while the villagers stayed in their smoky cottages. So it was that she saw much

of what went on in the village and how people lived their lives and spent their time. . . . It was so quiet for a few days, with all the villagers inside and idle, that Alyce even had a little time to herself, to wander and think and plan, to watch and learn from old Gilbert Grey-Head about the carving and polishing of wood, and to ask questions of the priest about sin and evil and the Devil, humming to herself all the while. (41)

Slowly, the "devil" begins to show up at the houses of all that had wronged Alyce, and readers discover at the end of the chapter that Alyce is the mastermind behind the curious events. While everyone else was preoccupied, she has spent time asking the village priest questions of religion and superstitions and has crucially learned a new skill: woodworking. She uses her new skills to craft a large set of goat-like hooves and generates footprints leading to the houses of townspeople that she knows are engaging in sinful behavior. She introduces the footprints in front of the church so that the community will associate them with their religious beliefs:

One damp autumn morning, Robert Weaver found strange footprints, which wound about the village and stopped suddenly at the door of the church. He called Thomas At-the-Bridge, who knew the ways of the woods and the tracks of the animals, to help him discover what sort of beast had been prowling about while they slept. . . What has hoofs, is larger than a goat, and more delicate than a boar, and walks our village by night but stops outside the door of the church?' By dinnertime all the village was talking of the strange animal that even Thomas At-the- Bridge could not identify. It only took a few incautious words and fearful whispers to convince them that the Devil had found their village and was looking for souls to lead into sin. (42-43)

In this way, Alyce has brilliantly used the religious-imbued fears of the villagers in her favor. In a climatic end to the chapter, Cushman says,

Alyce stepped out of the woods. She took something from under her skirt, threw it into

the river, and followed the crowd home. And so it was that all (except the fortunate

midwife) who had taunted or tormented Alyce were punished for their secret sin. After

this, the Devil was never seen in the village again, and no one but Alyce knew why.

Several days later, in a village where the river meets the sea, there washed up on the

banks two blocks of wood carved in the shape of the hoofs of some unknown beast. (46-

47)

Until the end of the chapter, readers will not know that Alyce is behind the hysteria. Students

will find this revelation entertaining and surprising. This chapter could generate student

discussion about evil, punishment, and superstition in the Middle Ages. Questions worthy of

exploration include: how did individual and communal beliefs about sin influence the daily lives

of medieval men, women, and children? What role did superstition play in medieval community

life? Was sin typically a communal or personal problem in the Middle Ages? After discussing

any or all of these excerpts, students could begin to understand how religion worked in context.

With the foundation offered by the children's fiction, entry into the paired medieval primary

texts will hopefully lead to richer and deeper conversation about those ways that religion imbues

many elements of the culture and literature. Reading the children's texts function as a tool for

students' interpretation and allows them to have confidence when they discuss religion in the

medieval literature.

Topic 3: Medicine

In an interview, Cushman explains, "As I was doing research for *Catherine, Called Birdy*

and *The Midwife's Apprentice* I got very interested in medieval medicine: bloodletters, bone

setters, barber surgeons, astrologers, and numerologists. I thought that would be very interesting

to kids" (Hendershot, et al., 200). Her preoccupation with medieval medical practice is obvious for readers of the three novels. She includes Author's Notes in *Catherine, Called Birdy* and *The Midwife's Apprentice* that offer useful supplemental information about medieval medicine and speak to her preoccupation with medicine in these novels. Collectively, the books offer a dizzying amount of entry points for students into conversations about medicine in the Middle Ages. Topics include general medicine, but move into sub-topics of herbology, alchemy, midwifery, bone-setting, toothaches, and blood-letting. Catherine writes in her diary of her experimentation with herbal remedies for herself, her family, and the villagers.[81] In another example, she outlines the experience of her father's toothache and interactions with a traveling physician:

> Two days ago the Spanish physician was here. He told my father that the toothache is due to an imbalance of humors in his body and recommended letting out some excess blood by cutting a vein under his tongue. . . the physician returned. The toothache, it seems, comes not from unbalanced humors but from a toothworm, which has burrowed deep into my father's jaw. This new cause required a new remedy, so the physician mixed henbane leaves with sheep fat, rolled this into little pellets, and dropped them on the fire. My father leaned over and breathed in the smoke through his mouth . . . The physician came again [the next day], escorted by six of my father's men. He told my father that this toothworm was especially stubborn and malignant and that nothing would do but a poultice of raven manure on the sore tooth. (158-159)

In the end, Catherine's father decides to travel to a "tooth-puller" in London to relieve his pain. Here, we get a firsthand description of the theory of medicine in the Middle Ages: one's health is

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[81] For example: "I have been gathering violets to make oil of violets against the melancholy. Since I turned thirteen last year I have used a great amount of oil of violets" (Cushman 114).

based upon the balance of humors in one's body. Matilda Bone reiterates this worldview when she assists the village bloodletter. He explains, "'You know four humors rule the body in any circumstance: blood, phlegm, and black and yellow bile, which must be kept in balance. . . illness or pain, if I may be redundant, means one of the humors is superabundant. Or even double. Too much blood is the cause of most trouble" (45). When one of the humors was imbalanced, something had to be done to re-balance the body. Removing excess blood was one avenue for that. In the case of the toothache, the physician attempts to relieve Catherine's father's pain by removing blood. Cutting small veins was one method of bloodletting. Matilda learns that leeching is another way to "reduce pains, without a doubt, once we let the extra blood out. . . I think the leeches. We won't open a vein, which a bit overreaches" (45). When removing excess blood does not work, medical professionals look to other remedies and causes for the ailment. In this way, medicine in the Middle Ages was a system of inquiry and trial and error. Physicians and everyday people such as Catherine often recorded their medical knowledge, trials, recipes, and experiences in journals or miscellanies. Many documents like this are available for review today, either in archives or as digital facsimiles of the originals. After reading about medieval medicine, Medieval Literature students might practically enter the conversation by finding medical records, recipes, or herbals. From there, students could also experiment with medieval medical recipes and attempt to reproduce them or compare them to modern medicine and its effectiveness or ingredients. Finally, Students might be prompted to look for references in paired medieval literature. Chaucer's "Canon's Yeoman's Tale" is considered with alchemy and could be a potential pairing for any of the texts.

In addition to general medicine, specific sub-topics can be useful for class discussion. The topic of pregnancy and midwifery could be productive for practical conversations about the

lives of women in the Middle Ages. *Catherine Called Birdy* evokes midwifery throughout the pregnancies of Catherine's mother, but *The Midwife's Apprentice* offers specific and detailed examples of the practice that can be useful for supporting student knowledge of medieval life and culture. In the "Author's Note" at the end of the book, Cushman says "Medieval midwifery was a combination of common sense, herbal knowledge and superstition, passed from woman to woman through oral tradition and apprenticeship. Things were done the way they had long been done, with little innovation or progress. This 'women's knowledge' was considered reliable and valuable, as illustrated in this book by the inclusion of Jane Sharp's information in Magister Reese's great encyclopaedia" (119). In the text itself, Alyce learned by observing Jane in action. Summing up her new knowledge, Alyce says:

> She took and stored in her brain and her heart what she heard the midwife say and do about babies and birthing and easing pain. She discovered that an eggshell full of the juice of leeks and mallows will make a labour quicker, that rubbing the mother's belly with the blood of a crane can make it easier; that birthwort roots and flowers can strengthen contractions in a reluctant mother and that, if all else fails, the midwife can shout into the birth passage, 'Infant, come forward! Christ calls you to the light!' She found that mouse ear and willow can help stop bleeding and that a tea of anise and dill and bitter milkwort will help when milk will not come. She learned that newborn infants are readily seized by fairies unless salt is put in their mouths and their cradles, that a baby born in the morning will never see ghosts, and that a son born after the death of his father will be able to cure fevers. (61-62)

This description is worth quoting at length because it is rich with information about the beliefs of midwives in the Middle Ages. Alyce offers recipes and herbals that were considered useful for

aiding in childbirth. Importantly, her description is imbued with authenticity of medieval beliefs about birth, even referring to the widely-held notion that children were often at risk of being kidnapped by fairies. Throughout the rest of the book, Alyce puts these skills into practice. She successfully helps mothers in labor using these skills. Students can be encouraged to research these ingredients and their implications and uses in medieval culture.

  Matilda Bone offers the most examples of medieval medicine in action. Matilda's position in Blood and Bone Alley places her in the center of the village's medical knowledge. Practitioners in the alley offer a variety of services to meet any physical need: there is a herbologist, an alchemist, and barbers who also remove problematic limbs among the characters. Furthermore, Matilda's job as assistant bonesetter situates her in a space where she is learning about the basics of bonesetting in the Middle Ages at the same time as readers. On her first day of work, Peg tells Matilda, "You will also be brewing our lotions, potions, tonics, and ointments. The dried herbs are kept in these crocks by the table. See, here is comfrey, also called boneset. Here, houseleeks and nightshade berries, watercress and wormwood. And sicklewort for staunching cuts. You'll soon learn which is which" (16). Here, readers discover that Peg is not just mending broken bones, but a person with general medical and herbal knowledge who specializes in setting bones. The language here offers key terms for students and introduces them to the concept of using herbs and potions for healing.

  In one other example from *Matilda Bone*, in a conversation about a friend's failing eyesight, the physician of Blood and Bone Alley explains "Medicine teaches us that the eyes send unseen visual rays out to an object. If these rays are disturbed—by wine, women, baths, leeks, or onions, by garlic, mustard seed, fire, light or smoke, dust, pepper, or beans—the sight fails. . . it could also be a test from God, some foreign substance in the eye, or a cancer in the

brain. Most likely it is because you are old, Nathaniel, and your eyes are wearing out like the soles of your shoes" (81). Here, students might discover the medieval practitioners of medicine were more aware of scientific medicine than they initially believed and could be prompted to consider the evolution of medicine from the medieval to their present historical moments. This kind of inquiry and research would allow students to consider not only how medicine has changed in practice, but also how representations of medicine in literature might change.

Conclusion

The examples here highlight key topics that make connections between medieval and modern contexts; the topics explored provide opportunity for intertextual analysis. This list is by no means exhaustive. Other topics relative to the medieval period are explored in Cushman's novels, such as anti-semitism and discrimination; the crusades; language and names; feasts, foods, and festivals; marriage and family relationships; making and materiality; and feudal structures Conversations connecting Cushman's texts to medieval texts and culture would also be productive for exploring literary theories. Feminism, for example, is regularly noted in scholarship about Cushman's medieval girls.[82]

Furthermore, this list only considers Cushman's medievalist novels: professors of medieval survey courses have a variety of children's historical texts at their disposal that would be avenues for exploring even more medieval motifs. Collectively, however, the examples discussed in this chapter provide an entry point into a paired-texts course design that considers

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[82] For more on feminism in Cushman's novels, see Angela E. Hubler, "Faith and Hope in the Feminist Political Novel for Children: A Materialist Feminist Analysis." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 34 no. 1, 2010, pp. 57-75. Hubler argues that *The Midwife's Apprentice*, "typifies an individualistic approach to female empowerment" (57) which is powerful in discussions of material feminism. Her essay explores fiction that "focuses on the labor, abolitionist, and civil rights movements, and of particular interest. . . by the women's movement to challenge male violence and to achieve educational, economic, and political equality for girls and women" (57).

the relationship between medievalism written for children and medieval literature and culture. Maybe even more importantly, though, the examples offered here provide a starting place for any professor of literature to begin mapping out the bridges that their students could travel between topics in their field and historical fiction for children.

Chapter Four

From Above and Below: Transforming Literature Pedagogy Through Embodied Contemplation

> "The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility."
> —bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

> "I see great potential for reengagements, revisions, and new applications. This is philosophy as *embodied and enacted*. A philosophy of praxis, and praxis of philosophy. And perhaps an as-yet-unimagined and unrealized alterior contemplative philosophy."
> —Louis Komjathy, *Philosophizing Contemplation: Towards a (Re)new(ed) Contemplative Philosophy*[83]

> "For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men."
> —John Milton, *Aeropagitica* (1644)

Echoing bell hooks, I maintain that college literature classrooms are locations of limitless possibility. Literature courses are based on artifacts that hold bodies of knowledge and infinite identities; these courses are literally imbued with meaning-making *rhizomes* in the texts they use, the students that encounter those texts, and the professors that facilitate the encounter. Thus, there is potential for offshoots of learning and meaning-making.[84] One goal of this dissertation is to inspire college literature teachers to consider genres in new ways and to pursue productive pairings to support student learning. Thus far, in this dissertation, I have outlined paired-texts teaching and the benefits of using children's literature in any literature survey or topics course— in and out of children's literature-focused syllabi—as well as the benefit of adaptations for understanding genres, modes, and theories. To further the concepts of paired-texts pedagogy,

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[83] See Louis Komjathy, "Philosophizing Contemplation: Towards a (Re)new(ed) Contemplative Philosophy," *Blog of the APA*, https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/05/26/philosophizing-contemplation-towards-a-renewed-contemplative-philosophy/.

[84] Thus far, I have only discussed literature as functioning rhizomatically; however, Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the rhizome and its functions could describe people as well: our ability to foster connections, to begin anew after failing or breaking, and to generate new paths are characteristics of both humans and rhizomes. The classroom is often a location of this kind of interaction so thinking about students and teachers as rhizomes can be productive for considering pedagogy transformation.

children's literature, and general literature pedagogy, this chapter asks practitioners to integrate contemplative pedagogy through pairing modes of writing and doing. In this chapter, to make evident that the paired-texts pedagogy does not have to be solely confined within the example of the medieval literature classroom, I broaden my scope to argue that the similarities between the act of self-writing that happened in medieval *and* early modern literature and in children's literature can be used in English classrooms by considering contemplative approaches to studying literature.

Contemplative pedagogy essentially pairs the concept of reader reflection or reader response often found in literature courses with the concept of meditation often found in religious studies. Contemplative approaches to writing and thinking involve a process of meaning making and discovering identity. In self-writing (including things such as diary writing and journaling), the author engages with outside content or material and inner discovery—this creates meaning for the individual and is often transformative. This mode of meaning-making is important for the literature classroom because one of the core objectives of literature courses is critical thinking and inquiry: in the paired-texts classroom, asking students to think contemplatively about the texts on their own, the connections they can make between texts, and the connections they can make for their own uses can instill a sense of agency, deeper learning, and engagement in students. One method for encouraging this kind of student interaction is through having them engage in a physical way with the texts they encounter: this could be through imitation or journaling. The physicality of embodied connection to the texts has the potential to make students' understanding of the texts richer. In this chapter, I offer three examples of ways that students might engage in embodied contemplation to analyze texts: imitation of writing mode, implementation of content (through making or doing), and reflective journaling. In my examples,

I integrate and pair examples of children's diaries, medieval autobiography, and early modern women's receipt-book writing; these three genres share a contemplative bend and offer examples of reflection that can be emulated by students to effectively analyze and understand course content and to implement into their own studies. These examples also suggest that the mode of contemplative thinking is an avenue for creating and forming personal identity: that characteristic of these examples is useful for the teacher of college literature because traditional college students are also engaged in the practice of identity formation. Offering college students an avenue for exploring and supporting that practice will be meaningful for them and create a classroom in which they can find personal value. This is important because contemplative writing or meditative writing can be an avenue for students to consider what they know and feel about a text. They can write in a mode that is found in medieval and early modern literature and in children's literature, creating an additional layer of meaning through paired-texts pedagogy that can serve to bridge their understanding of course concepts.

Expanding Contemplative Methodology

Much has been said about writing and literature classes through the lens of reader response theory or through culturally competent teaching, but one way of considering journaling as a pedagogical choice is through contemplative pedagogy. Within the realm of teaching literature courses, this pedagogy builds on reader response theory, asking students to move beyond considering personal reflections to meditative reflections. This is useful in the realm of survey courses because it supports student engagement with the texts and pushes them to consider connections. Survey courses—whether connected by theme, genre, topic, or period— require students to make connections across a typically wide range of texts and ideas. Contemplative pedagogy that focuses on journaling can be useful for literature pedagogy and has

been used in the humanities generally. Karolyn Kinane explains that "there have been a number of movements in education—particularly the teaching of writing—that share the techniques and aims of contemplative pedagogy as they are emerging: valuing personal stories, reflecting on experiences, building community, [and] increasing social awareness" (6). Thus, though practitioners might not be calling their methodologies "contemplative," they engage many of the facets of the field.

In *Introducing Contemplative Studies*, Louis Komjathy outlines and defines contemplative methodology and attempts to move contemplative studies from the realm of religion into interdisciplinary studies, particularly arguing for its viability in the humanities.[85] He explains that contemplative practice is an umbrella term for ways of interacting with the world: it is a method for developing attentiveness, awareness, and concentration. Contemplative studies fall under that umbrella to specifically foster "three primary defining characteristics: (1) Practice[86] commitment, especially formal meditation; (2) Critical subjectivity[87]; and (3) Character development" (Komjathy *Philosophizing*). Komjathy's method for engaging with texts is indicative of the process that many literature professors want their own students to undergo as they engage with course content. We encourage our students to make an effort to work with the texts they are assigned (commit to reading them); to learn to look critically at texts while connecting with them personally; and to, hopefully, learn something about themselves or a new skill that could be useful in their futures. Overall, contemplative pedagogy seeks to result in

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[85] See *Introducing Contemplative Studies* by Louis Komjathy, Wiley, 2018.

[86] According to Komjathy, "Contemplative practice refers to various approaches, disciplines, and methods for developing attentiveness, awareness, compassion, concentration, presence, wisdom, and the like. Possible connective strands or family resemblances include attentiveness, awareness, interiority, presence, silence, transformation, and a deepened sense of meaning and purpose" (14).

[87] I think that Karolyn Kinane perceptively interprets Komjathy's vague characteristic as "engaging in practice and critically reflecting on those processes, experiences, and insights" (8). This means that students should identity any biases and/or preconceived ideas that they may have that would affect their reading.

practice or surprise—the goal would be for students to engage with texts in a new way or learn something new about themselves. Thus, Komjathy's method of contemplative study makes sense in the literature classroom.

Furthermore, journaling is a natural method through which to engage in the meditative kind of reflection that Komjathy suggests.[88] In their discussion of contemplative writing, Daniel Barbezat and Mirabai Bush note that "Writing is communication, but contemplative writing as a practice often emphasizes process rather than outcome. Journal writing and free writing encourage simple noticing what is in the mind and in the world and writing the raw truth as experienced, not crafted for communication until later" (124). Contemplative writing, then, is more concerned with meditating on one's thoughts than of simply generating ideas. In a study about the cognitive benefits of journaling, Leanne Margaret Boschman explains that students found journaling for coursework to be an effective and transformative avenue of connecting with the content and leading to deeper thinking. For example, one student reflected that "journaling made me more accountable, made me think more deeply, gave me a private way to communicate with the instructor, was safe and was often transformative. Sometimes when I write, I can sort out my ideas and can even end up being surprised by what ends up on the page. If I write quickly, I think I am getting an authentic representation of my thoughts" (66). Many of my own students have made the same observations; journaling as a mode of reflective thinking offers a personal, low-stakes avenue for students to spend time meditating on their ideas about what they are reading. And, like, Boschman's student, they are often surprised and intrigued by what they discover. However, in light of this, we might wonder: is all journaling contemplative writing?

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[88] For more about contemplative pedagogy and journaling, see Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush's chapter on journaling in *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* (2013).

What is the difference? One difference seems to be purpose. Kinane suggests "that journaling becomes 'contemplative writing' when we treat it as a practice, subject it to first-person critical inquiry, and aim for character development" (10). Thus, in order to encourage contemplative journaling in the classroom, students will need to know that they are writing through the lens of contemplation. Outlining and defining the characteristics of contemplative writing, as well as offering examples for what that looks like (either through the instructor's own writing/teaching, previous student examples, or course texts), can help students effectively shift from merely reflective writing to embodied, contemplative meditation.

Imitation as Embodied Contemplation

One method through which to engage in embodied contemplation is through imitation. The act of imitating modes of writing can teach students about genre, themes, form, and other course concepts. Imitation in the literature classroom is not new.[89] For example, Scott L. Newstok outlines his methods for having students imitate important texts in his survey classroom, explaining that "incorporating creating exercises within the literary historical survey helps students better appreciate meter, form, and genre. They thereby recognize writers as practitioners. . . I call these exercises 'creative imitations'" (31). Newstok makes imitation a part of the context of the course and requires his students to offer explications—I would call them *contemplations*—for their imitative decisions. In doing so, he requires his students to spend time considering and justifying *why* they made the decisions they made in their imitations. The process of imitation requires students to take ownership of their ideas—they have to understand the form or genre conventions and then be confident to make it their own; in doing so, the act of

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[89] See, for example, James S. Ackerman, *Origins, Imitations, Conventions: Representations in the Visual Arts* (2002); Bartholomew Brinkman, "Imitations, Manipulations, and Interpretations: Creative Writing in the Critical Classroom," *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* (2010); Joel Weinsheimer, *Imitation* (1984).

writing the imitation and the feeling of ownership of the imitated creation allow them to physically interact with and engage in the activity. Rather than simply reading multiple examples of one kind of text, form, or genre, the imitation exercise invites students to have agency and active engagement in the learning experience. Furthermore, as students write about why they made the decisions they did in creating their imitation, they might discover that they are surprised by how much they know or the nuance they articulated in their work; this offers the contemplative exercise of thinking intentionally through their decisions. Contemplation here is important because it can allow students to become deeply aware of what they know or do not know and records the movements they made to get to that point.

One practical example of this could be useful in the realm of medieval autobiography or self-writing. This genre of writing is often confusing for students because the genre looks different to modern expectations of life writing or autobiography. Genre is troublesome in the medieval period and works do not always conform to one genre convention; often medieval literature conflates genre and combines different modes of writing. Medieval genres could be confusing for modern students who might be used to interacting with genre conventions that are easier to discern. Thus, considering paired-text pedagogy and contemplative writing can allow students easier entry into the content: in this case, the paired text could be a work of children's literature that imitates the form of the more "complicated" genre of writing or simply a children's text that offer historical context for the nonconforming text. Furthermore, to press the idea of paired-texts a little, students could pair the difficult text with their own imitations and/or the imitations of others. Their imitations will allow students to see the complicated or nonconforming text in a new way and to spend time considering the elements of the text and how they function within and outside of genre constraints.

Perhaps one of the most ubiquitous examples of this kind of writing frequently taught in the medieval literature classroom is *The Book of Margery Kempe*, written in the 1430s and often considered the first autobiography in English. However, *The Book of Margery Kempe* does not function as a typical autobiography; it offers events out of order chronologically, focuses explicitly on her religious and spiritual encounters, coloring even her married life by her spirituality, and was written through dictation. The work straddles genre lines, being described as autobiography, as a kind of hagiography, and as mystical or dream literature. Even so, *The Book* is important as an artifact of women's self-fashioning, of medieval religious experience and pilgrimage, of female identity and friendship, and of relationships (personal and communal). Although Kempe was not engaging in self-writing in the sense that modern readers might understand, readers still get a sense of her personal, lived experiences and in doing that reading can understand the tensions between genres and traditions.

For example, to engage in embodied imitation, students might be encouraged to take a passage of *The Book* and to re-write the section by replacing Kempe's experiences with their own. In doing so, students will have to identify the form, how it functions, and consider what that means for the genre choice as they interpret it and re-write it. *The Book of Margery Kempe* is a good model for imitation because contents are separated into major events: students can easily see Kempe's location in time and space by looking through the table of contents and can have the option to choose one scene to analyze and replicate. This allows for deep and focused consideration of writing conventions and form, as well as comparison between other chapters and their peers' works. After imitating a scene, students can then be tasked with meditating on their decisions and either writing about them or presenting them to the class by pairing their new

text with the text they have been contemplating. In doing so, students will have multiple layers through which to explore and visualize the genre.

Implementation as Embodied Contemplation

While imitating modes of writing can be useful for students to understand a genre and to reflect on their reactions to the texts, another mode of embodied contemplation that could be used in the classroom is the act of making or doing something outlined in the text or that is relevant culturally or historically to the texts studied. Student course projects might move beyond traditional papers to allow space for experimentation. Pairing "doing" with reading or analyzing texts could offer an avenue for deeper comprehension. My larger argument in this dissertation is that children's literature has the potential to foster equity, confidence, and engagement for students while offering valuable insight into cultural and historical contexts; experimenting as embodied contemplation can do the same. For this example, I once again return to Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy* to pair with the early modern genre of receipt writing, specifically those receipts that deal with ink-making.

In *Catherine, Called Bird*y ink-making is invoked as a useful and necessary practice in order for records to be kept: her own diary, her father's manor records, and the her brother's (and his monk brethren's) religious texts. Without the process of ink-making, she would not be able to offer the diary that allows her to engage in self-reflection and share her story. Thus, ink is pivotal to the text. Through the genre of historical fiction and diary, Catherine makes it evident that ink was important for the culture of fourteenth-century European people; it is a method of record keeping, making meaning, and cultivating personal identity. The same is true of the early modern period. The materiality and textuality of manuscripts, miscellanies, commonplace books, and other note taking or writing activities of early modern men and women has become an

increasingly large field of study. Because of our reliance on knowledge and written records of

bodies of knowledge to inform us of the past, the study of material knowledge-making process in

early modern England is a growing field that considers the ways that physical texts and

manuscripts inform and are informed by bodies of knowledge and cultural practices. This field of

study suggests that knowledge-making processes, such as writing, note-taking, and

experimentation, are part of a social and cultural matrix that creates individual and communal

meaning and traditions.[90] Since physical materials are studied to determine the ways that

knowledge was recorded, attained, and disseminated, of particular significance to this field is the

actual process of writing. The practice of contemplative reflection in the paired-text literature

class in this example would be especially useful because it is also concerned with the physical

process of writing to create the embodied experience. Thus, the materials necessary to record

knowledge—ink and paper— become significant in conversations of knowledge-making. One

especially interesting facet of study in this field is the idea that the practice of writing recipes,

experimenting with recipes, and reading or practicing recipes was a way to create identity,

particularly for early modern women in England, as Catherine Field, Wendy Wall, and Susan

Butters have demonstrated.[91] This genre of writing remains significant today because early

modern women were engaging in the same kinds of meaning making activities that modern

writers still find relevant. That link suggests that ink seems to be vitally important in meaning

making activities on a very personal level. From a pedagogical standpoint, this is interesting in

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[90] Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, "Current Trends in the History of Reading," in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England,* ed. Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1-20.

[91] Catherine Field argues that early modern women's use of recipe books as a justified, flexible genre of writing about self, which allowed them to become individually self-aware. Similarly, Wendy Wall asserts that the concrete act of writing recipes refines the culture of experimentation in early modern England. Furthermore, Susan Butters highlights how the implementation and learning of skills lead to knowledge, and that knowledge, while made up of smaller artifacts, creates a whole body of ideas about the world.

the literature classroom because we can ask our students to do the same. Pairing a children's

diary such as Catherine's that depicts the textual production of primary texts studied allows

students an outside point of entry into the primary texts; the significance of the material in the

fiction creates a bridge for understanding the significance of the content in the primary texts.

Adding on to student understanding, implementation of ideas outlined in the primary texts can

create a layer of connection in which students engage in contemplative methods of understanding

the course content. What follows is a discussion of the significance of writing for early modern

people and individuals today, an example of how a student might engage in embodied

implementation and contemplation through a case study of ink-making experimentation, and

practical connections students can discover when bridging the paired texts with their embodied

practice.

     In the epigraph to this chapter, I borrow a passage from Milton in which he highlights the

power of words—of written knowledge—and asserts that words are living entities that are as

important for humanity as God himself. Milton's language evokes images of ancient, yellowed

pages stained with exquisite archaic script in ink. When I read Milton's assertion that words "do

preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them," I

cannot help but think of the horns of ink used by early modern men and women to record

receipts, notes, poetry, and musings about the natural world as they learned. In this passage,

Milton is touching on a feeling about words and writing that has remained consistent among

students, writers, and natural philosophers since the sixteenth century, if not before: written

knowledge is powerful, maybe even magical.

     To understand the significance of the material culture of the early moder works they are

reading, it will be imperative that students recognize that written knowledge serves as a record of

learning, of processes, of emotions, of politics, of society, and of culture. Written knowledge can help us make meaning of the world around us and is one of the most significant technologies that humanity has adopted. Milton's discussion of the recorded knowledge found in books reveals that writing and the materials of writing are important; we might even say useful as the most important tools in creating meaning. The materials (or materiality) of writing consists of the tools—the paper, ink, quills—and situations, such as location and handwriting, that lead to the creation of a text. Students in an early modern or medieval literature classroom might be tasked with understanding the cultural or historical context of text production: understanding the situation in which a text is produced can offer insight into the context of a primary text. Thus, determining the production methods of a text can be pivotal for analyzing texts; one avenue for understanding the importance of textual materials could be for students to make the materials. This is especially relevant in my example, because the primary texts literally have recipes for making the materials. Thus, in this example, I explain how through embodied implementation and then contemplation, students could learn the ways that ink contributed to learning and the formation of personal identity both in early modern England and today.

As Milton notes, words are knowledge and when written down they are recorded so future generations can learn. This sentiment has an eternal weightiness to it; words, or "reason," are eternal. Milton also refers to the words of books as children of the author. This idea—that thoughts or art belong to the creator and can be considered their children—persists today and has a generational weightiness. Writing as an extension of the author means that writing preserves a bit of the author's body for years to come, just as children can preserve and carry on their parents' bloodlines for generations. Writing, like having children, confers a type of immortality. Inscribing ink onto a page can yield the same sort of immortality, preserving a bloodline. Ink,

therefore, is one of the most useful materials in preserving the knowledge of human beings and of preserving humans themselves, and we can see this most poignantly in the early modern period. This assertion falls in line with arguments about the usefulness of materials and ingredients for humans in early modern England. Particularly useful is Hannah Woolley's notion of *use-value* explored by David Goldstein. Through experimentation with ink, students would learn that early modern men and women engaged in experimentation with ingredients from the natural world to make their lives easier and to better understand the world around them. They wrote and experimented with recipes for food, medicine, and materials, such as ink, to generate new knowledge. Goldstein argues that "this principle of intrinsic use-value is in turn bound up with a relationship to nature not based upon dominion but necessity, in which nature is not given to humans by God but is seen as a vast network of materials and resources that the knowledgeable practitioner may utilize for one goal: to preserve the human" (107). One key concept in the study of early modern receipt books is that the natural world and its materials are available to serve one purpose.

Through experimentation and contemplation of early modern primary texts and *Catherine, Called Birdy*, students would learn that writing is significant because it supports a multi-layered meaning making process; writing allows one to create meaning on multiple levels: a cognitive level, an emotional level, and a physical level, which assists in cultivating a personal identity. In the spirit of pairing, I would like to suggest that we can see this practice quite clearly if we consider the ways the early modern women kept notes or diaries to create meaning. For example, their experimentation in ink-making through engaging with receipt books was an avenue for learning, for asserting authorship, and for asserting authority. For early modern women, writing was introspective and integral in self-discovery, and that holds true for writers

today. The written word, for them, as it is for us, is intrinsic to the creation of knowledge and identity. This practice, then, is an important endeavor to consider the ways that this tangible form of knowledge production—putting ink to paper—has transformed and to consider the ways that writing technologies will continue to transform for future knowledge production and recording.

According to Helen Smith, for early modern writers, ink does not exist on paper, but sinks into the page in ways that were experienced by early moderns as a practical problem and as a compelling figure for thought; thus, there is a close connection between paper and thought with an emphasis on the act of writing.[92] Cognitively, early modern women recognized who they were and what they liked by reading and writing. Their writing preserves who they are for future generations. In the same way today, many people engage in this process through journal writing. Just as early modern women kept records and notes, there are many today who are avid devotees of the handwritten diary and use that medium as a way to record experiences and knowledge. Writing instruction borrows this practice, and in many literature and composition classrooms, students are encouraged to draft and take notes using pen and paper. Many instructors encourage beginning writers to keep a record of their insights and observations about course material as well as their emotions and experiences as college students. This act encourages physical transcribing of identity onto a blank page. In all of these instances, the handwriting and the ink proves to be a significant physical element in the creation of a person's identity.

Example: Meaning Making Through Experimentation

First, experimentation and the writing that accompanied it proves that the act of writing was a multi-layered meaning making discipline. By reading about experimentation in receipt

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[92] Helen Smith, "'A unique instance of art': The Proliferating Surfaces of Early Modern Paper," *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, no. 8 (2017): 5. http://www.northernrenaissance.org/a-unique-instance-of-art-the-proliferating-surfaces-of-early-modern-paper/.

books and by practicing experimentation, students can discover the ways that testing and validating receipts was an avenue for self-discovery, preservation, and knowledge-making. Wendy Wall asserts that recipe writing is "an unexplored avenue" for understanding how people learned because recipes "presented routes of truth making" (212). Indeed, understanding how early modern women engaged in recipe writing and experimentation can show students much about how they learned because their notations suggest that they were actively engaging in a layered meaning making process. They were reading something that had already been written, preserved, and passed down, and adding to that recipe with their own marginal notes and validations. Often, in early modern receipt books, we find that recipes or ingredients have been scratched out or that notations have been added that state that a recipe has been proven to be effective. The layers of ink that appear on the pages of receipt books show that everyone who has contributed to the book has in some way engaged in meaning making. In this way, we can see the process of preservation of knowledge, and thus of human experience and reason. The layers of reading, practicing, and writing culminate in a methodical learning process.

Much scholarship surrounding manuscript and writing culture in early modern England focuses on the ways that writing was connected to science and the natural world.[93] Through study and experimentation, student would learn that written receipt books translated experimental labors into tangible knowledge that proves that domestic practices incorporated the same empirical and experimental practices that the science of the period did. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, writing was a way to keep a record of experimentation and to share experiments with others. Many early modern creators spent time observing the world around

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[93] See Pamela Smith's "Making as Knowing: Craft as Natural Philosophy," Susan B Butters' "From Skills to Wisdom: Making, Knowing, and the Arts," and Michelle DiMeo and Rebecca Laroche's "On Elizabeth Isham's 'Oil of Swallows': Animal Slaughter and Early Modern Women's Medicinal Recipes."

them and taking detailed notes about the natural world and their ideas and inventions related to that world. In this way, writing and making were introspective and probing. This is imperative for students in the early modern literature classroom to understand. In fact, Pamela Smith asserts that the process of "making" using natural materials was intrinsically related to knowing about nature.[94] Smith notes that understanding and observing elements of the natural world—the relationship between Creators and their Creator, as well as the rest of Creation—allowed artisans to empirically understand relationships on Earth. The mode of learning, making, and understanding translated into a "vernacular science" where "making constitutes knowing" (40). Making ink would have been considered a vernacular science and the house would have turned into a laboratory. In "Read. Do. Observe. Take Note," Elaine Leong also offers this notion, asserting that women served as early modern natural philosophers in their homes. She explains that: "While both male and female householders were producers of recipe knowledge, women played a key role in the creation of recipe books. Thus, viewing recipe books as 'laboratory' notebooks and attending to householders' methods of knowledge ordering allows us to recover, to borrow Holmes' terminology, the 'investigative pathways' of household science, and, with it, women's participation" (98). Those investigative pathways of knowledge ordering could not have been accomplished without ink. The way that early modern women created order in their experimentation was through writing with ink; in addition to making notations in the recipe manuscripts themselves, early modern women might also have kept observations in separate commonplace books. In each of these mediums, learning processes and insights about their domestic activities are preserved. Students of early modern receipt books would benefit from

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[94] Pamela H. Smith. "Making as Knowing: Craft as Natural Philosophy," in *Ways of Making and Knowing: The Material Culture of Empirical Knowledge*, eds. Pamela H. Smith, Amy Myers, and Harold J, Cook, (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2017), 17-47.

engaging in the same laboratory: the embodied experience of doing what early modern women did (trying a recipe, noting what works and what does not, re-trying steps) would add a layer of understanding to course content for students. Research suggests that one avenue for deep student engagement is through "doing," thus more so than simply reading a text for comprehension, engaging with the text in a material and embodied way can bring the course concepts to life for students.

Through investigative pathways, the routine of making ink was a way for women to practice reading, critical thinking, and imaginative experimentation. It was a way for them to assert authority in the domain of the household. Ink making was also imperative for future experimentation. Without ink, how could one record findings? How could one participate in any recorded meaning making processes? Thus, the method of ink making is multi-layered. Students reading the early modern receipt books alongside *Catherine, Called Birdy* would recognize this sentiment: the entirety of Catherine's diary is preoccupied with recording her feelings, experiments in medicine and herbology, records of the community, and general knowledge. Ink making had a duality that was significant because the process was as important as the product. Students would learn that ink making would have been a process that most people were familiar with because it was necessary. In fact, in *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing 1512-1635*, James Daybell notes that "the making of ink was a practice taught to children as a key part of learning to write" (38). If children were taught how to make ink, it is safe to assume that the knowledge was highly valued. This is most likely because "good ink was essential for the dissemination of knowledge generally speaking, and in the recipe books good ink ensured that recipes would be recorded for future use and circulation" (Tigner 55). Before one could effectively engage in other meaning

making endeavors, they had to master ink making. Catherine makes this clear: once she has her diary, there are various instances in the book where she explains her ink-making process. For example, the first time she learns to make ink, she is enamored by the useful process:

> Before I left the abbey, Edward showed me how to mix some colors and shape goose feathers into pens so I too can make flowers and angels. the black ink is easy. we have walnut husks and an abundance of soot. I also found buttercups, sneezeweed, and moss for yellows and greens, but have no lapis lazuli stone to grind for blue. I made a paste from crushed bilberries that looks as blue as a robin's egg but grows sour and so sticky that I must add a task the brothers never dreamed of—picking bugs out of the heavenly sky or the Virgin's veil. (Cushman 31)

Catherine's brief description of the materials needed for the ink-making process is useful for its accuracy and specificity; students get a glimpse of what gathering ink-making materials might have looked like for the authors of the primary texts they are studying. Once students understand the significance of writing and its materials to early modern authors, they might engage in a process of experimentation and contemplation by following the recipes outlined in the primary texts and journaling about them. I offer an example of this kind of experimentation through my own implementation and journaling in Appendix F. My experience is indicative of the kinds of embodied practice and contemplative reflection students might engage in as they implement the reflective paired methodology of considering how doing the task, combined with reading the primary texts and reading the children's text can better help them understand course concepts.

In an effort to explain what students might gain from this practice by pairing their new practical knowledge of ink-making with the material offered in *Catherine, Called Birdy* and the early modern primary texts, I will offer a few areas for class discussion. First, studies of early

modern women's writing and participation in receipt experimentation focus on the ways that women could assert authority as individuals. Proving recipes as effective was one way for women to build credibility and to become self-aware. Early modern women viewed writing as a unique, self-reflective experience. Even though it is mundane and seemingly insignificant, because hand-writing with ink can be materially, physically, and textually multi-layered, it makes sense that students can form unique, often layered, self-identities through a process as subtly complex as writing with ink. This practice highlights individual experience. This assertion of authorship and authority through writing about experience was fundamental in the connection of the early modern self to identity. The urge to write down experience is what can lead to meaning making endeavors. Looking at early modern manuscripts and their marginalia show students that much ink was used in the process of testing recipes for validity. Receipt books are peppered with scrawled initials and proclamations of *proabtum est* or "it is proven." In fact, a "growing number of researchers are noticing, when observed closely these volumes turn out to be startlingly full of marks left by the hands through which they have passed" (Sherman 119). That act of putting ink to page allowed women to engage in a physical process that was layered with meaning. The physicality of writing with ink was effective for self-discovery, garnering knowledge, and reflection. If ink was instrumental in experimentation, it is even more so in inscribing identity. Physically hand-writing with ink allows people to create meaning on multiple levels: a cognitive level, an emotional level, and a physical level, which assists in cultivating a personal identity. For early modern women, writing was introspective and integral in self-discovery, and that holds true for writers today. In the pairing, students will find that Catherine exhibits this in her diary as well: through her writing, she can learn how to interact with the world and how society around her functions, as well as how to take ownership of herself in the

society. In an introspective moment at the end of the novel, she reflects on her growth and her

desires to be anything but herself, concluding:

> I cannot survive by myself. But I also cannot survive if I am not myself. And who am I? I
> am no minstrel and no wart charmer, but me, Birdy, Catherine of Stonebridge, daughter
> of Lord Rollo and the lady Aislinn, sister to Robert and Thomas and Edward and the little
> Eleanor, friend of Perkin, goat boy and scholar. . . no matter whose wife I am, I will still
> be me. Mayhap I can do what I must and still be me, still survive and, please God, even
> thrive. . . if not free, at least less painfully caged. I am filled with a trembling that feels
> like feathers fluttering in my gut but I think is hope (Cushman 202-203, 205).

Here, through the entire process of the diary (over a year's worth of recording), Catherine

concludes that she has authority and autonomy in being herself: she discovers her identity

through writing about her feelings and recording experiences. I contest that she would not have

come to this realization without the embodied and introspective process of inscribing her identity

into her diary.

Students would learn that this assertion about identity has been explored some in early

modern women's writing. For example, Catherine Field argues that the physical endeavor of

writing the receipt books allowed women to identify and explore their identities.[95] In response to

the Renaissance notion of the self as bad, many early modern women used writing (diaries,

prayers, poetry, etc.) to construct their identities. Field suggests that early modern women's use

of recipe books as a justified, flexible genre of writing about self, which allowed them to become

individually self-aware (49). Because authorship is fluid, receipt books prove their emphasis on

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[95] Catherine Field, "'Many hands hands': Writing the Self in Early Modern Women's Recipe Books," in Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England, ed. Julie A. Eckerle and Michelle M. Dowd, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 49-63.

individuality in the compiler's notations of success through noting the recipe had been "proved," or had been unsuccessful. This practice highlighted individual experience. Self-expression found in recipe books through experience, community, and the assertion of authorship and authority was fundamental in the creating early modern self-hood.

Next, students would learn that the physical and material elements of writing created an arena for early modern women to record original verse and prose, practice handwriting, annotate and transcribe prose and memoranda of a domestic nature, and compile other material they deemed interesting or useful (Burke 61). Journaling in this way served as an aid for memory. This practice allowed women to create an identity for themselves because they were asserting authorship and identifying what they found individually interesting. By examining miscellanies, commonplace books, or receipt books for different women, scholars have found that some women were more interested in medicinal recipes, some more interested in artisanal practices, and some more interested in religious and political ideologies (Burke 61). The ink on the pages of those documents affirms these varying areas of interest. Because women used ink to create miscellanies, scholars have been able to understand the roles of women in the early modern household and to generate unique depictions of each person. Thus, writing was an avenue for creating meaning ideologically and personally that would be preserved for future self- reading and for generational reading. *Catherine, Called Birdy* is a direct representation of the practice exemplified in fiction. The paired-text method will allow students to learn the concepts of individuality in early modern women's writing and then see it in practice in common, everyday language that is accessible through the children's text. Even though Catherine's setting is slightly earlier than the texts, the mode of writing and identity-making is similar, so students can learn from the pairing.

Reflective Journaling as Embodied Contemplation

Finally, in addition to imitation and implementation, the physical act of journaling can serve as a method for students to engage in embodied contemplation. I have listed reflective journaling as the last of these methods because imitation and implementation both include reflective journaling in their frameworks. As discussed above, after students have imitated a text or implemented a concept in practice, they are asked to write about the experience, thus engaging in reflective journaling. In their reflections, they have the opportunity to not only reflect on the course concepts or what they have learned in the context of the reading, but also to consider what they have learned about themselves and their writing and learning styles. Therefore, in the conclusion to this chapter, I offer one example of how reflective journaling exists in C*atherine, Called Birdy*, discuss how her reflective journaling functions as embodied contemplation, and consider how students might engage in the same kind of reflective journaling.

At the beginning of *Catherine, Called Birdy*, Catherine explains to readers that they are reading a diary that serves a specific purpose: to make her, the writer, "less childish and more learned" (Cushman 2). Catherine's brother believes that the physicality, contemplative nature, and stillness of writing will help the rowdy teenager settle down. At first, Catherine resists, but when she is allowed to forgo spinning, a daily task she dislikes, if she will write the account of her year, she concedes, exclaiming "I am delivered! . . . So I will write" (2). In this instance, Catherine has the option to move from one physical task that inscribes identity for females (spinning) to another physical task that will help her inscribe a more personal identity. The choice suggests that there is a physicality to the act of writing that is significant and worthwhile: important enough to take the place of a daily chore. Immediately following her note that she is

delivered from the detestable task of spinning, she writes an important preface to the rest of the

diary, setting up the contemplative reflection that will follow in the rest of the diary:

> What follows will be the account of Catherine, called Little Bird or Birdy, daughter of
>
> Rollo and the lady Aislinn, sister to Thomas, Edward, and the abominable Robert, of the
>
> village of Stonebridge in the shire of London, in the country of England, in the hands of
>
> God. Begun this 19th day of September in the year of Our Lord 1290, the fourteenth year
>
> of my life. The skins are my father's, left over from the household accounts, and the ink
>
> also. The writing I learned of my brother Edward, but the words are my own. (2-3)

Catherine's introduction to herself and her situation is significant because it is the first example

of contemplative, meditative consideration of how she is going to interact with her material. In

the same way, we can encourage our students to consider how their identities and situations are

going to influence how they engage with the semester readings. Here, Catherine is doing more

than simply acknowledging her situation in her head: she is actively writing down her identity as

she knows it and situating the diary in a context. Through the physicality of writing, Catherine's

whole body is engaged in the reflection. This is important because throughout the novel she

returns to this kind of situating of herself. For example, as noted in the section above about

implementation, the diary ends with another proclamation of who she is, thus, she begins and

ends her diary by situating herself in context and in relation to those she is curious about.

One important facet of the reflective journal is the characteristic of curiosity; as students

engage in contemplative thinking by practicing commitment, critical subjectivity, and character

development, they might be spurred to do so by curiosity. In *How Humans Learn: The Science*

and Stories Behind Effective College Teaching, Joshua R. Eyeler emphasizes the importance of

curiosity and inquiry in the classroom to support student engagement and comprehension. He

explains that discussions, inquiry through essential questions, and intentional reflection are ways to support curiosity in the classroom and asserts that doing so will allow students to have agency in their learning. Eyeler points here to constructivist models of learning that suggest "that people cannot fully learn or understand unless they have been active participants in building concepts and knowledge for themselves" (51). Eyeler's pairing of curiosity with constructivism suggests that reflective journal writing can be an effective embodiment of contemplation—in reflection, students can be encouraged to meditate on many ideas and explore avenues, thoughts, feelings, and questions without needing to effectively answer any of them. In doing so, students are engaging in an embodied mode of writing and thinking that requires them to attempt to build knowledge bases for themselves. Circling back to *Catherine, Called Birdy*, pairing student reflections with the reflective writing of Catherine might allow students to explore their own meaning-making and identity-making processes. In the same way that Catherine's entire diary serves as an exercise in reflection invoked by curiosity, students might mirror her reflective diary-style and keep their own daily or weekly journals to track their progress in a course over time; hopefully, at the end of the term, they, like Catherine, will recognize that they know more than they think they do and that they are prepared to confidently embark on the next phase of their journeys as meditative and attuned individuals.

Conclusion

Through embodied contemplative work, students can make physical, memorable connections between genres, forms, and concepts, as well as learn about themselves. The contemplative mode of writing, thinking, reading, and learning is one avenue for the paired-texts classroom to add an additional layer of meaning to support student comprehension. Integrating contemplative work into the literature classroom can generate unique and novel connections,

asking students to look at a concept, genre, or form from every angle: from above and below as well as from either side. In doing so, students have more opportunities to make connections between what they are learning, themselves, and the world around them, which supports the objective of critical thinking and inquiry of the literature classroom.

Conclusion

Everything Changes

> JO. Who will be interested in a story of domestic struggles and joys? It doesn't have any real importance.
> AMY. Maybe we don't see those things as important because people don't write about them.
> JO. No, writing doesn't confer importance, it reflects it.
> AMY. I'm not sure. Perhaps writing will make them more important.
> —Greta Gerwig, *Little Women* (2019)[96]

In this dissertation, I have argued that children's literature warrants a more prominent place in English literature classrooms at the university level. Its flexibility as a cultural product the engages with and uses varying genre functions, historical contexts, and forms makes it a productive source of content for any literature classroom. Children's literature, though enjoyed widely by children and adults alike, has been relegated to existence only in library science, education, or children's literature genre classes at the university level; it deserves to move outside of those boundaries and students and educators would benefit from its pilgrimage into other realms. My aim in writing about children's literature was to attempt to prove its significance, much inspired by Amy's comment in the 2019 *Little Women* film that writing about topics that do not seem to have any "real importance" might be an avenue for generating importance.[97]

In looking at the avenues for productively integrating children's literature into the university classroom, I took Deleuze and Guattari's call to "see things…from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left" to heart. Over the course of my argument

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[96] Gerwig, Greta, director. *Little Women*. Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Entertainment, 2019.

[97] I found Jo and Amy's conversation to be particularly inspiring and relevant for considering the topic of this dissertation and for inspiring my research. Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), one of the most famous and beloved American children's novels, is regularly taught in American Literature classrooms, women's studies classrooms, and children's literature classrooms to name a few. It navigates the boundaries of adulthood and childhood in its content as well as navigating the boundaries of adult readers and child readers, making it an appealing, enduring, and valuable text.

(as you can see it my chapter titles), I consider how children's literature might move from its space "in the middle" and transverse boundaries. My conversation about adopting adaptations of children's texts allows a move from left to right—from original towards adaptation—and my argument for integrating children's historical fictions allows a move from right to left—from modern envisioning back to original historical context. By allowing children's literature to oscillate between the boundaries of old and new and to generate content that moves between modern cultures and histories and previous ones, the genre becomes a valuable location for study of various genres, forms, and themes. Furthermore, I argue that children's literature offers a productive place for contemplative pedagogy; by asking students to consider the texts and their responses to it—from above and below—students will have the opportunity for richer, more valuable engagement with course concepts and texts. Overall, my argument does suggest that "everything changes" when children's literature is considered in new contexts and class options. Teaching children's literature can change a literature classroom into a space where students feel even more comfortable and confident than they might have in a genre or period course that excludes children's literature.

Final Thoughts: Virtuality and Morality, or the Importance of Children's Literature?

A central figure in my argument about children's literature in the university classroom is the college student. One aim of using children's literature in the classroom is to create an equitable, engaging space for students. College is typically a place where students—sometimes for the first time—experience freedom, independence, and exploration. It is also the location of much ideological formation. I am compelled to argue, then, that college students, like children's literature, are uniquely situated to create equity and invoke change. Within research about children's literature and childhood, it seems that children's literature, childhood, and even

college students might all be said to exist within a conversation about autonomy and morality.

Do these entities get to decide how they exist or must they be molded by adult or cultural or

scholarly perceptions about how they must exist? This brings to mind Rose's argument in *The*

Case of Peter Pan, Or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction (1984). She contends that "there is

no child behind the category 'children's fiction,' other than the one which the category itself sets

in place" and traces adult conceptions of the child in her seminal text. Notably, according to

Rose, the genre mostly ignores the needs of the child audience to satisfy the needs and desires of

adults. Interesting here might be Derrit Mason's argument about the *virtuality* of children's

literature. In "The Virtual Child, or Six Provocations on Children's Literature and (Pre-) Digital

Culture," Mason argues that:

> We can characterize children's literature as a part of a broader apparatus, one that
>
> includes schooling and related sociocultural institutions, that seeks influence over the
>
> child's virtuality. Children's literature often aims to instill virtue, or moral quality, in the
>
> child, while mapping and regulating their Virtu, or power, creativity, and possible lack of
>
> morality. The child's virtuality has been the subject of adult concern for centuries, such
>
> that worried attempts to manage the child's virtuality end up producing virtual spaces for
>
> this management to take place. (2)

Here, Mason uses a rare definition of virtual to underpin his argument. Interesting in this

definition is that a virtual person possesses "inherent natural qualities or powers capable of

exerting influence by means of such qualities." Essentially, this means that a virtual person is a

"person whose actual existence reflected or testified to a moral or ethical ideal." Virtue, in this

context, holds the power to have an effect. Mason argues that this definition of virtual presents a

paradox because "its usage is associated with ideal moral goodness and an ability to exert power

or influence that may contain traces of evil." Mason's argument is interesting in a discussion of children's literature because it deals with a word that seems to oscillate between old and new, much in the way that the genre itself seems to oscillate between those borders. Through my own argument in this dissertation, we see this issue arise in the chapters about adaptation and historical fiction; a reoccurring question when choosing and writing children's fiction is: Is this appropriate? And when this is asked, the implication is more so, is this "moral"? Using virtual, then, to describe children's literature and children themselves seems to fall directly in line with the kind of work that has been undertaken by other scholars of children's literature, as well as the gatekeepers (authors, publishers, parents, and librarians) who disseminate that literature. This conversation is compelling and engaging because it examines why children's literature matters. It is a space of virtuality—power, to use Mason's definition—that imbues and impacts western societal norms and cultural codes. What is taught and offered to young readers—even traditional college students can be considered our western "youth"—is important because it is what they will be molded by to change society's ideologies. In the context of college students and university education, then, children's literature might function as a way of allowing college students to explore activism and to envision themselves as makers of their own futures. They are also perhaps virtual beings that oscillate between childhood and adulthood and are often engaged with new ideas, experiences, and opportunities. Their unique situation makes them a productive space for enacting change and creating equity.

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Appendix A

Syllabus & Course Information

Description of Course Content

Title: Medieval Literature and Twentieth-Century Children's Literature

Description: This course examines popular children's books of the twentieth century in concert with the medieval literature that has informed them. Many popular children's books have intertextual resonances with medieval English literature. From the narrative structures of their plots (modeled after sagas, quests, and romances), their modes of writing (allegory and satire), the fantastic nature of their characters, and even the linguistic details of the books themselves, these novels are infused with medievalism.

I hope that the literature we read will delight you, challenge you, and introduce you to ways of being and seeing that may be new to you. We will cover many genres and read a variety of authors. Class will be run as a discussion and commitment to a shared project of exploration and deep thinking will be insisted upon. Together, we will practice reading closely and attentively, taking our time to experience and enjoy not just plot and character development, but language and details, too. In writing assignments, we'll practice articulating subtle, nuanced interpretations of literature clearly and persuasively. Honing the skills of close reading and literary argumentation will improve your critical thinking and your writing, two necessary skills for careers in many fields.

This course will be guided by "essential questions" about the work literature can do creating critical insights about social issues, and literature's ability to create empathy and affective understanding across identities and experiences. Additionally, students will generate their own discussion questions based on individual texts. Discussions will be interspersed with mini-lectures, 10 – 15-minute presentations that introduce students to key ideas in theory and history to prompt critical thinking about the texts studied. Additional lectures explore relevant historical context, literary terms, and movements influencing the literature scene. Short essays will allow you to practice the skills of close reading and analysis, while a midterm and final will test your ability to distinguish among the course themes and analyze specific passages. The final writing assignment, the Signature Assignment (assigned in every section of sophomore lit), asks that you relate the reading to a social issue, thus underscoring the relationship between the literature we read and the world we live in.

Course Objectives under the Core Curriculum

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. The required objectives of these courses are the development of students' critical thinking, communication skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility.

- Students will develop their critical thinking by learning to read literary texts closely, pay attention to relevant details, and organize their observation into cogent arguments.
- Students will develop their communication skills by discussing literature orally in class and by articulating their findings in written arguments.
- Students will develop their sense and practice of personal responsibility by learning to engage with and incorporate secondary sources into their writing.
- Students will develop their understanding of social responsibility by tracing the way that literature shapes and addresses urgent social questions, both historical and contemporary; students will do this in class discussion and most pointedly in the Signature Assignment (see below).

The Departmental guidelines for sophomore literature can be found by typing "sophomore literature" in the "Search UT Arlington" box on the University website: http://www.uta.edu/uta.

Learning Outcomes

- To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature
- To help students recognize that literature is in dialogue with complex cultural and historical contexts
- To develop students' ability to read critically
- To develop students' skills of writing and expression, particularly with respect to analysis of literary texts.

Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials (you may use any edition of these texts, including eBooks; the listed ISBNs are the copies I will be using)

- *Catherine, Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman (ISBN: 978-1328631114)
- *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by JK Rowling (ISBN: 978-0439136365)
- *The Last Unicorn* by Peter S. Beagle (ISBN: 978-0451450524)
- *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norman Juster (ISBN: 978-0394820378)
- Other readings provided via Canvas

Other Required Materials

- 1 package ruled 3x5 index cards
- Access to laptop or tablet during class time, or ability to print PDF materials before class. I strongly prefer that you print the reading out and bring it to class in hard copy.

Descriptions of Major Assignments

Discussion Cards

Once per week (see schedule for dates), each student must bring a 3X5 index card. The card must have the student's name and the class date. This will be the mark of participation in that day's discussion. The lined side must contain a short summary of the reading for the day. The non-lined side should have at least one discussion question that has come up during the reading. These questions may be used during the class period as potential directions for class engagement. Cards will be accepted no later than five minutes after the start of class time. After five minutes, even if you have attended class, you will be marked absent.

Reader Reflection Journals (RRJ)

There will be three (3) RRJs due over the course of the semester. The primary goals of these journals are to develop strong close reading skills and promote individual engagement with the course content. Each RRJ may include: one quotation from the reading with a discussion of its significance to the student, observations about the key themes addressed in the reading, questions or predictions, or connections to current events and issues. RRJs should not summarize the readings, but should provide detailed, thoughtful responses unique to each reader's experience of the text. RRJs should be 500-750 words and must be submitted on Canvas before class on the date they are due per the course schedule.

Exams

Each exam (midterm and final) will cover previous untested material. The exams will contain a long-essay portion in addition to short answer questions. Students will be given a list of possible essay topics prior to the exam, but only one essay exam prompt from this list will be chosen. Grading criteria for the essay portion will be an assessment of the paper's ability to (1) focus arguments on the exam questions, (2) construct logical arguments, and (3) support claims with relevant examples from the text(s). Although your mechanical/editorial writing skills will be taken into account, they will be examined more closely on the reader reflection journals and signature assignment than on the in-class essays.

Signature Assignment

The Signature Assignment addresses all four of the course objectives. This essay includes the integration of outside sources; it, therefore, requires students to demonstrate **personal responsibility** as they use the words and ideas of other writers in an accurate and ethical manner. Citing sources properly isn't just a matter of mechanics. It's a question of personal responsibility (with real consequences for students) that overlaps with students' responsibility to the academic community of which they are a part. The construction of a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a careful analysis of textual evidence demonstrates **critical thinking** and **communication skills.** The development of a well-organized essay that demonstrates the correct use of grammar and other writing mechanics and demonstrates an awareness of the how to appeal convincingly to an audience further addresses the communication objective. The critical analysis of the way the selected text engages a significant issue of social responsibility addresses

the **social responsibility** outcome. **Specific Requirements**: Write a well-organized, effectively developed, 3-5 page analysis of at least one of the course texts. The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility. Students should anchor the paper's argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims. **(See Signature Assignment Prompt in Canvas/at end of Syllabus for full details and requirements.)**

Grading Information

Grading Distribution

Discussion Participation	20%
Reader Reflection Journals	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Signature Assignment Paper	30%

Grades are A, B, C, D, and F. All projects must be submitted to Canvas, unless otherwise stated, before the project's stated deadline. **Keep all papers** until you receive your final grade from the university (this is also how you will keep track of your grade throughout the course). You cannot challenge a grade without evidence.

Grading Scale

I grade holistically, which means that there are not specific point values assigned to different elements in your writing. The grades I assign indicate how well you meet the expectations of an assignment, which are explained in detail on every prompt.

90-100= A, for work that exceeds expectations.

80-89= B, for work that meets expectations well.

70-79= C, for work that meets the expectations of an assignment competently.

60-69= D, for work that fails to meet the minimum requirements of an assignment.

59 and below= F, for work that is either incomplete or has disregarded the requirements.

Please note that the Signature Assignment must be completed to pass the course and it is advised that *all* major assignments and exams be completed in order to successfully pass this course. If you fail to complete the Signature Assignment, you will fail the course, regardless of your average. ***Completion means that something is turned in as a "final draft." I will not accept late papers, but I will accept an "incomplete" or "unfinished" paper if submitted by deadline. It is better to submit something and receive a poor grade than nothing and receive a zero.***

Appendix B

Signature Assignment Instructions

Overview: The Signature Assignment in sophomore literature addresses all four of objectives in the Language, Philosophy, and Culture area of the core curriculum.

Personal responsibility (1): This essay includes the integration of outside sources; it, therefore, requires students to demonstrate personal responsibility as they use the words and ideas of other writers in an accurate and ethical manner. Citing sources properly isn't just a matter of mechanics. It's a question of personal responsibility (with real consequences for students) that overlaps with students' responsibility to the academic community of which they are a part.

The construction of a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a careful analysis of textual evidence demonstrates **critical thinking (2)** and **communication skills (3)**. The development of a well-organized essay that demonstrates the correct use of grammar and other writing mechanics and demonstrates an awareness of the how to appeal convincingly to an audience further addresses the communication objective.

The critical analysis of the way the selected text engages a significant issue of social responsibility addresses the **social responsibility (4)** outcome.

Specific Requirements: Write a well-organized, effectively developed, 3-5-page analysis of at least one of the course texts. The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility. Students should anchor the paper's argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims.

The key to this assignment is thinking about the work of literature you choose to write on as an argument—that is to say, a text that engages with issues of pressing importance. Some theories of literature hold that literature exists for its own sake, separate from politics, history, and worldly concerns. That is not the perspective this assignment adopts. Instead, I want you to think about literature as providing vibrant commentary on the state of affairs in a turbulent world. Of course, an argument made by literature is different from other kinds of argument. Where an op-ed columnist might make an argument based on statistics, facts, and other kinds of hard evidence, a writer uses narrative, metaphor, character, imagery, and tone. In this assignment you'll be looking at both kinds of argument side by side.

Possible Areas of Focus: As your focus, choose a social, political, or historical problem addressed by one of our primary texts. The issue you choose can be historical or contemporary; you can also bring a historical issue into conversation with a similar issue we face in the present.

Responsible Integration of Sources: Students must properly integrate material from two secondary sources into their analysis in a way that gives credit to the authors whose ideas and language they are incorporating. This is not a research paper or a summary of the work of

literature, but a paper in which you draw on secondary sources to communicate an interpretive argument about your chosen text through the lens of social responsibility.

Secondary Sources: Students should use two secondary sources to describe the social issue they explore (i.e. gender; sexuality; identity). Students may use additional materials to support their claim, demonstrate contemporary relevance, or provide historical context at their discretion. The only requirement is that students use two sources to set up and explain the issue they address in their interpretive argument. Students may use their secondary sources in one or more of three ways: as interlocutors in a conversation about their chosen social issue, to indicate the relevance of the issue in the present day, or to provide historical or cultural context. I suggest going with general-audience sources instead of scholarly sources.

Here is a list of credible sources:

- National newspapers (e.g., *New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Fort Worth Star Telegram*)
- Print magazines (e.g., *The Atlantic, Harper's, New Yorker, Time, Newsweek*)
- Online magazines (e.g., *Slate, Salon*)
- Scholarly articles (e.g., academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals; you can find citations for these articles by using the MLA International Bibliography database, JSTOR, or Project Muse—all of which UTA's library gives you access to online)
- Scholarly books or book chapters (it's a good bet a book is scholarly if it's published by an academic press, such as Duke University Press; if you're not sure, ask your instructor)
- Historical documents (e.g., old newspaper articles, letters, speeches, journal entries) from academic databases (see the History subject guide on the library website for ideas)

Students interested in using a source that isn't listed here should check with their instructor.

A General Outline to Follow:

The challenge with this essay will be transitioning between your analysis of the literature and your engagement with the secondary sources. You may structure your paper any number of ways, but make sure that you execute the following moves:

1. Draw the reader in with an intriguing introduction that establishes the importance and interest of the issue you'll be focusing on. One surefire way to do that is to start with what someone else has said about the topic at hand. In your intro, be sure to say what text you'll be writing about and what issue you'll be investigating.
2. State your thesis clearly at or near the end of your introduction.
3. Undertake your analysis by moving through a series of connected claims grounded in evidence from the literary text. This step will constitute the bulk of your paper.
4. Contextualize your analysis, making it relevant to the present day (or a particular historical moment), by engaging closely with two secondary sources. You may treat those secondary sources as background, as interlocutors, or as works of literature themselves.
5. Conclude. Do not just restate your argument. Indicate why your argument matters to twenty-first century citizens of the world.

Minimum Requirements:

Your essay should be a Word document that is double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt., Times New Roman (or some other easily readable) font. Follow the MLA's recommendations for formatting, citation, and style.

In order to receive a passing grade on the Signature Assignment, students are expected to:

1. Write an essay that is at least 3 pages long, but no more than 5. (-5 points if this condition is not met)
2. Foreground literary analysis in their essay.
3. Integrate two appropriate sources. (-5 points if this condition is not met)
4. Have a thesis.
5. Have a title. (-5 points if this condition is not met)
6. Incorporate evidence (i.e., quotations) from the literary text(s).
7. Have a Works Cited page. (-5 points if this condition is not met)

Signature Assignment Rubric

Requirement	Excellent	Good	Successful	Poor
Demonstrates critical thinking skills				
Provides a clearly articulated argument.				
Includes a specific, detailed thesis that supports the argument.				
Answers the "so what" and "who cares" questions by explaining why the argument is significant and to whom.				
Develops a coherent, and well-organized argument.				
Demonstrates communication skills				
Includes a creative title that forecasts the content of the paper.				

Has an awareness of the audience and comes across as a credible writer and appeals to the values and emotions of the audience.				
Provides an effective interpretation of the text(s).				
Sentences are lively, engaging, and relatively error free.				
Uses correct grammar and mechanics.				
Meets the length requirement				
Demonstrates personal responsibility				
Incorporates evidence (e.g., quotations) responsively from the literary text and from the outside sources				
Correctly cites outside sources, using MLA formatting.				
Demonstrates an understanding of ethical decision-making.				
Has a works cited page, correctly formatted in MLA style.				
Demonstrates Social Responsibility				
Responsibly incorporates evidence from outside sources related to social issues				
Communicates a knowledge of civic responsibilities				
Engages with regional, national or global community issues				

Appendix C

Reader Reflection Journal Assignment Instructions

You will submit three (3) RRJs due over the course of the semester. Together, these are worth 20% of your overall course grade. The primary goals of these journals are to develop strong close reading skills and promote individual engagement with the course content. Each RRJ may include: one quotation from the reading with a discussion of its significance to the student, observations about the key themes addressed in the reading, questions or predictions, or connections to current events and issues. RRJs should not summarize the readings, but should provide detailed, thoughtful responses unique to each reader's experience of the text. RRJs should be 500-750 words and must be submitted on Canvas before class on the date they are due per the course schedule.

Writing a Reading Reflection Journal *might* consist of these stages. You are not required to follow this process. You might write a response following any structure you deem appropriate and interesting for you. This assignment is designed to promote individual engagement with the course content. Remember that in engaging with the content, you are responding to a conversation. Your journal is your personal response to the conversation.

If you choose to follow this outline, starting with Step 3 can make the writing a bit easier. You could also follow this process a few times depending on how many major ideas you want to explore in your RRJ.

1. Establish the main idea of the journal response. This is NOT a topic sentence. Do not write a topic sentence. Don't make this general. This is a main idea. Whatever reason you have chosen the quotation in Step 3 for, that is what the main idea is. This is not a single sentence. It should take multiple sentences since it is complex and detailed.
2. Bridge = explains the connection between Steps 1 and 3. It prepares the reader to look for the key idea in the quotation. This could be just one sentence.
3. Find a useful quotation or quotations from the reading. Keeping them short gives you more room to offer a response. You don't want a quote that's half of your paper - I want to hear what you have to think about the conversation.
4. Analytical critique of the quotation. Might consist of three stages:
    a. Explain what the actual quotation means. This likely includes citing parts of the quotation while explaining. This should be somehow connected to the main idea.
    b. Then, explain what it means in relation to your global argument. This part is hard. How do the issues in the quotation prove your journal's argument as a whole? How does it work with your ideas/experiences/reflection?
    c. Remind the writer what the key point is about my analysis/idea. Why does this global idea fit here?
5. Conclude with why this idea has value. Answer the questions: So what? Who cares? Why does this matter? Don't think that writing a paper is the accumulation of knowledge. It's all about how you use it. There are three useful words to help you wrap up an idea: therefore, thus, hence (followed by a comma).

Appendix D

Midterm Exam Assignment Prompt

Short-Answer Questions (5 points each, 20 points total): Responses should avoid generalizations and summary in favor of specific details from the text and concise analysis. Each question should require a paragraph length response when answered in full (approximately 5+ sentences).

1. Pick one **theme** of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (from the excerpts we read) and discuss: Why is the theme important? Where do you see it apparent in the text? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

2. In *The Last Unicorn*, how does the author create or reflect on beliefs about community and identity? What do readers learn about community and/or identity from the book? Why is the presentation of community and/or identity important? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

3. In "Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors," Rudine Sims Bishop discusses the importance of representation in children's literature. Describe two ways that Bishop argues that children's literature can serve diverse audiences **and** explain (in your own words) why that kind of writing matters. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

4. In "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," C.S. Lewis makes an argument for why and how authors should approach writing for children. What two ways does he argue are the best ways of writing for children **and** why does he suggest these are the best? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Long Essay Response (30 points): Choose one (1) question below and write a long essay in response to your chosen question. You are required to include evidence from at least two (2) of the works assigned during weeks 1-7 to receive credit. You *may not* write a response to both questions. (You are encouraged, though not required, to include prewriting, i.e. an outline or brainstorming, to help in structuring your response.)

1. M.O. Grenby explains that "Historians of children's books have often seen two forces – realism and didacticism on the one hand, and fantasy and fun on the other – as constantly in competition. . . But in fact the line between fantasy and didacticism had always been very blurred. Even the mid-18th-century pioneers of the 'new' children's literature would often include fantastical elements in their supposedly rationalist and instructional books. . . by the end of the 19th century children were having a vast range of fairytales and fantasy literature written for them. And […] this literature was not quite so different as we might at first think from the realistic and didactic texts that fantasy and fairytales have sometimes been seen as displacing."

Question: One of our course goals is to consider the tension between didacticism and the imagination. Didacticism means the practice of valuing literature primarily for its instructional content in order to teach. How do the books we have read navigate didacticism and the imagination? As a reader, do you find the texts as attempting to teach? Or purely an imaginative work? Or something in between? Why might it matter if the text is teaching or not? (Remember to include evidence from at least two (2) of the works assigned during weeks 1-7 to receive credit)

2. Donnalyn Pompper and Debra Merskin note that "Reading is a gendered activity. This is the case across decades of studies, ranging from the 1970s (Weitzman et al.), 1980s (Collins), and the 1990s (Nahara). . . And yet, children prefer stories that feature gendered characters like [them], so books lacking in female main characters represent a type of symbolic annihilation."

    Question: One of our course goals is to consider the way that literature shapes and addresses urgent social questions, both historical and contemporary. Constructions of gender and its representations are included in that. Thinking about *On the Consolation of Philosophy, The Last Unicorn,* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pick **TWO (2)** females from the books and examine their roles. How are they represented? What qualities do they possess? How are they described? How do they interact with other characters? What do their actions/words/encounters teach readers about femininity? Do their actions ever fall outside of "traditional" gender stereotypes? How? Why does their presentation matter?

Bonus (5 points): You may respond to the following question for five (5) bonus points on this exam. Your answer should be at least one well-developed paragraph. *You will only receive bonus credit if you have completed all other required parts of the exam in full.*

Question: The course objectives state that "students will develop their understanding of social responsibility by tracing the way that literature shapes and addresses urgent social questions, both historical and contemporary." What steps can you take as a reader and as a student to acknowledge and understand the social questions raised in this class? How can you be more empathetic in acknowledging and understanding perspectives and experiences different from your own? Why is it important to do so?

Appendix E

Final Exam Assignment Prompt

Short-Answer Questions (10 points each, 20 points total): Responses should avoid generalizations and summary in favor of specific details from the text and concise analysis. Each question should require a paragraph length response when answered in full (approximately 5+ sentences).

1. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, look at Gawain's requests and his language in lines 341-360 of the text. He asks permission to play the game instead, and he asks permission to get up and leave the table, and he asks permission to stand by the king (if such an action does not displease Gwenevere). What do these requests and his language reveal about Gawain's **character**? How is this a contrast for the Green Knight's behavior at the party? Use evidence to support your answer.

2. Pick one **theme** of Marie de France's poem *Bisclvaret* and discuss: Why is the theme important? Where do you see it apparent in the text? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Long Essay (30 points): For your essay, you must write a long essay in response to the prompt below. You are required to include evidence **from <u>at least two (2) works</u>** assigned this semester to receive credit (at least one of the works must be a novel read since midterm: *The Phantom Tollbooth* or *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*)

    Question: Author Philip Pullman, in his 1996 Carnegie Medal acceptance speech, said: "There are some themes, some subjects, too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children's book." One of our course goals is to consider the nature of children's literature and its function. Discuss the quote from Pullman in relation to at least two (2) of the children's novels we have read this semester. What do you determine as some of the major themes, that you can identify using the texts, and why might they best be shown in writing for children? Use specific evidence from the texts to support your answer.

Bonus (5 points): You may respond to the following question for five (5) bonus points on this exam. *<u>You will only receive bonus credit if you have completed all other required parts of the exam in full.</u>*

    Question: One of the tensions in children's literature scholarship is the issue of censorship. We discussed this issue in conjunction with literary criticism's theories of authorship. In light of what you have learned this semester, answer: Does the author matter? Do their beliefs matter when reading their texts? Especially when those texts are for children? Explain why you believe the way that you do. (Consider conversations about didacticism and censorship in children's literature scholarship.)

Appendix F

What follows is a sample journal entry that uses implementation/experimentation and contemplation to make connections between primary texts, course concepts, and embodied learning through doing.

To Make Good Inke

Because ink is integral to knowledge production, I experimented in ink making and recorded my findings to engage in the knowledge making process. While my experiment is situated in a modern context, I attempted to use the same ingredients and recipes as the ones that early modern women were using in their ink-making practices. What follows is my process, in what I believe might be the same note-taking fashion and content that we could imagine an early modern experimenter's recipe journal. I found that the experience of making ink was multi layered, much like writing itself. The process required that I read, engage, and take notes, thus I created meaning through the making: I did so through writing down my observations; through learning about the process and ingredients; through failing and re-trying; and through creating muscle memory. This layered process may be demonstrative of the way that early modern ink experimenters also made meaning. Therefore, the experiment itself informs a discussion of how the practices and results are integral and accessible for knowledge production.

I began by making two kinds of gall[98] ink: black and red. These seem to be the two most common; if early modern women were making ink, these would be the colors they would find most fitting for their needs. Integral to my meaning making endeavor was an original plan to only make one prototype of each kind of ink; however, as I began the experiments, I encountered problems with the red ink, so I had to engage in multiple attempts at making this shade. While

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[98] Gall ink is a concoction of tannin and iron. The three major ingredients are galls (tannin), iron sulfate/copperas (also called ferrous sulfate, vitriol, iron salt), and Gum Arabic. For more on gall inks: Birgit Reissland and Frank Ligterink, *The Iron Gall Ink Website*. Bureau Metamorfoze: The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), 2011, https://irongallink.org/ igi_ index8f4d.html.

making more than one prototype of the ink was tedious and time consuming—even frustrating at times—making mistakes and learning from those mistakes was the most rewarding and significant part of the experiment. The process of trial and error was invaluable because it allowed me to effectively understand the practical knowledge of the natural world that early modern recipe practitioners held. To document the project, I took notes in a journal (considering early modern receipt writers' methods and contemplative methodology), so that I have records of the steps and missteps in proving the experiments. Engaging in keeping a hand-written record of the experiment preserved new knowledge and insights and allowed for an evaluation of previous knowledge. This contemplative reflection allowed me to effectively instill and interact with the tenants of the methodology: to practice commitment, subjectivity, and character development.

Looking through early modern manuscripts led to hundreds of ink recipes.[99] While there were many available for experimentation, William Philip's *Book of Secrets* (1596)[100] and Mary Granville's family recipe book are easily accessible via the Folger Shakespeare Library and provided dozens of recipes for inks of various colors. The primary source for the common black ink is Mary Granville's recipe manuscript (Folger V.a.430) from the Granville family recipe book.[101] The Granville "recipe book belonged to at least three generations of women, and the recipes span from c.1640 to1750" (Tigner 55). Here, we find that one way that receipt books and the writing within them served as useful preserving aids was the way that they cultivated a

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[99] For examples, see: *A new book of knowledge treating of things, whereof some are profitable, some precious, and some pleasant and delightful*. London, printed for G. Conyers at the Golden Ring in Little-Britain, 1697. Reproduction of the original in the Harvard University Library, Cambridge. And see: *Early Modern Ink Recipes: from A Booke of Secrets (1596). University of Cambridge, https://www.english. cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc/ intro/inkrecipes.html.*

[100] William Phillip. *A Booke of Secrets: Shewing diuers waies to make and prepare all sorts of Inke, and Colours...necessarie to be knowne of all Scriueners, Painters, and others that delight in such Arts,* trans. W. P., London: Adam Islip for Edward White, 1596, ff. A3r-B2r. EEBO, http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/ openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99839372.

[101] Granville*. Cookery and medicinal recipes of the Granville family [manuscript], ca. 1640-ca.* 1750, in *LUNA: Folger Digital Image Collection, V.a.43.*

heritage of knowledge. Miscellanies, receipt books, and commonplace books were often passed down generationally in order to preserve knowledge and to prepare children for domestic living. For example, in the front of the Granville family book, "Mary Granville provides a note to her daughter Ann, who later becomes Ann D'Ewes: 'Mrs Ann Granvills Book which I hope shee will make a better use of then her mother Mary Granville'" (Tigner 55). Receipt books, then, were viewed as important conduits for a good and fulfilling life. They "were bearers of memory, indicators of artful practices, occasions for signaling way of reading and writing, and signs marking family and community networks. They were an intricate part of women's manuscript participation in the culture of early modern writing" (Wall "Women in the Household," 106). The heritage of knowledge offered in the Granville book comes with a multitude of black ink recipes. The simplest indicates:

> Take a quart of snow or raine water and a quart of Beere vinegre, a pound of galls bruised, halfe a pound of coperis, and 4 ounces of gum bruised, first mix your water and vinegre together, and put itinto an earthen Jug, then put in the galls, stirring itt 2 or 3 times a day letting it stand 8 or 9 daies and then put in your coperas and Gumme, as you use it straine itt. (Granville)

The ingredients in this recipe are standard for black iron gall ink recipes in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. The addition of copperas (or ferrous sulfate) to a mixture of oak galls and beer vinegar or rainwater creates a chemical reaction that turns the mixture black. The addition of Gum Arabic preserves the ink. Following the instructions proved to be successful, and I was rewarded with an abundance of silky black ink. While this process was not difficult, it was time consuming; however, the time spent making the ink yielded twenty-four ounces of ink and this was with my quartering the recipe. Thus, if early modern practitioners were following

the recipe prescriptively, they would have an abundance of ink on hand for recording purposes. Therefore, it seems that the time spent making this essential product for knowledge production would be worthwhile.

While the black ink experiment was successful, the experiment for creating red ink proved to be challenging. The primary source for the red ink is Philip's *A booke of secrets shewing diuers waies to make and prepare all sorts of inke*. The recipe is straightforward and requires two common ingredients for iron gall ink (oak galls and Gum Arabic) as well as alum and brazilwood, a common dyestuff used in many recipes from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century[102]:

> To an ounce of Brasill, take the third part of a quart of beere, wine, or vineger, put it in a new pot· let it stand a night, in the morning set it on the fire, and let it seeth till it be halfe consumed, then for euery ounce of Brasill, take two penny worth of alum, beaten to pouder, and as much beaten gum Arabike, stir them wel together, and let them seeth againe, but if you desire to haue it somewhat darke, then scrape a little chalke into it: when it seetheth, let it not seeth ouer the po t, and being cold, strain it through a cloath, and put it into a glasse well stopped. (Phillip, 1596)

The red ink experiment proved to be tedious for a few reasons: 1) the instructions for how long to boil/cool the mixture are vague and the ingredients can become unusable within a matter of seconds, and 2) one would have to be familiar with the ingredients and chemical reactions involved in ink-making of every color. If ingredients are confused, then results will vary.

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[102] Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, "Between Trade and Science: Dyeing and Knowing in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Ways of Making and Knowing: The Material Culture of Empirical Knowledge*, eds. Pamela H. Smith, Amy Myers, and Harold J, Cook, (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2017), 86-112.

I attempted the red ink recipe three times with poor results two out of three times. For the first two attempts, I followed the instructions to the letter up until the step to incorporate alum. This is where I messed up: I mixed up ingredient names. Leaning on my success and knowledge in making black ink, I confidently added ferrous sulfate to the concoction. As soon as I added the ferrous sulfate, the mixture turned deep purple. Here is where an early modern recipe practitioner who was familiar with ink and its ingredients would have realized their mistake. Adding ferrous sulfate to the tannin in oak calls creates a chemical reaction that leads to a dark colored ink. I was unaware of this knowledge of the natural world, so unlike an early ink maker, I was puzzled. While I did not obtain the desired blood-red shade, the deep purple ink was a good consistency for writing. At this point, I thought the purple color was a result of using beer vinegar instead of another base, so I attempted a second time using white distilled vinegar. After failing the second attempt, I realized that I had confused ferrous sulfate and alum. Thus, I attempted the recipe for a third time, hoping that the old proverb "third time's the charm" would prove correct. For the third and final attempt, I followed the same process as for the first two. When it was time to add the alum, the addition of the substance produced a blood-red ink. Following the recipe exactly, I was rewarded with about eight ounces of vivid red ink.

Contemplation

Participating in this experiment was essential to understanding the context and practices of recipe culture in early modern England. Reading the instructions, completing the steps, and writing down my thoughts and findings was an avenue to engage in testing the recipe for validity and for learning about the natural world. Pertinent to this process was my participation in a community of reading and writing. Even though I am hundreds of years removed from Philip and the Granville family, I am preserving their knowledge by learning it myself and by sharing that

knowledge with others. By engaging in the experiment, I became an active participant in the

knowledge/meaning making process. According to Goldstein, this was integral to learning. He

says that "Invention is the mechanism by which some aspect of the brain ranges out into its

repositories to find the thought or memory appropriate to the creative occasion. . . one's own

thoughts should be activated in the course of working through a recipe, so that a material

interaction ensures within the mind of the reader, as opposed to a one-way transmission in which

the reader remains unchanged and unchanging in relation to the knowledge that she seeks"

(Goldstein 115). This process of reading as participation is especially important in the context of

early modern recipes. The act of writing receipt books was an avenue for early modern women to

establish credibility, engage in scientific experimentation and invention, and validate ideas. The

recipe books were often shared with others and passed down through generations. Each new

reader, in the act of reading, was invited to conduct their own experiments and attempt to prove

or disprove the effectiveness of the recipe. This testing was often linked to identity and

authorship. In "Knowledge: Recipes and Experimental Cultures," Wendy Wall discusses the use

of the subject "I" and the second-person imperative in recipe writing. She notes that, "In addition

to creating a contractual form with an implied active reader, this linguistic structure [the second-

person imperative] split the writing subject into authoritative speaker and potentially skeptical

receiver" ("Knowledge: Recipes and Experimental Cultures," 237). Thus, recipes invited

audiences to serve two different positions. Because recipes were meant to be exchanged and

validated, they automatically invited readers to engage in the knowledge making process by

using the second person "you." By participating as a reader and an author, the recipe recipient

"was trained – through the act of reading – to understand the operations of declaring, testing,

doubting, and approving as distributed across ever-shifting positions"(Wall, "Knowledge:

Recipes and Experimental Cultures," 238). Reading, here, becomes just as important as writing, then, in the making of knowledge and identifying of self. It is significant to note the participatory act of reading as engagement because it was most likely the first act of reading that encouraged the making of knowledge. At some point while reading a recipe, a woman participated as an active reader, and was invited to action—to write and engage marginally with the text—because she believed that the recipe needed to be practically tested or, drawing from her own knowledge, knew that the recipe could be improved. This was essentially the same contemplative practice that I engaged in as I implemented their recipes.

Looking at the historical and social implications of ink recipes can lead to significant findings about how something as seemingly insignificant or un-noteworthy as a recipe can comment on the society at large. The multitude of ink recipes found in early modern receipt books suggest that ink was necessary for life in the early modern period. Ink was valued and each variation of a recipe suggests that individuals were interested in improving and in learning about the treasured substance. We might apply an idea offered by early modern scientist and natural philosopher, Francis Bacon, to ink as well as paper. Alluding to the material of paper, Bacon says, "it is precisely the commonplace nature of paper that should make us alert to its remarkable qualities" (Smith 26). The same can be said, if not more so, of ink. Its commonality as a substance people encounter daily, but do not cognitively recognize, suggests that it has become ingrained in our psyche. Without ink, the preservation of humanity would be difficult. It indeed has use-value.