

THE WIFE OF BATH – CRITICAL COMMENTS

- **JAMES WINNY** – Claims that the Wife “has overthrown the prohibitive morality of the medieval church and planted her own pragmatic doctrine on the ruins”
 - “her indiscretions and shortcomings do not stand as types of moral weakness, but as details of complicated personality”
 - “she presents a case for the kind of sexual freedom which she has chosen instinctively throughout her life”
 - “she is herself a conspicuous example of all the wifely vices imputed to her sex”
- **D.W.ROBERTSON** – describes the wife as “hopelessly carnal and literal” in her understanding of the scriptures.
 - He thinks she is “not a ‘character’ in the modern sense at all, but an elaborate iconographic figure to show the manifold implications of an attitude”
- **CHAUCER** - the Bible “is a text wherein we find that woman is the ruin of mankind” (due to the original sin by Eve)
- **JACK GASKELL** - ‘The Wife obtains financial control and ‘maistrie’ with her first three husbands, yet took no pleasure in the sexual means to getting it’.
- **CHRISTINE TUCKER** - ‘Wife transforms sex into a debt which her husbands should give into a device which she uses to manipulate and benefit from her husbands’.
- **GILBERT AND GUBAR** – see the Wife as a strong, independent character who stands for feminine supremacy in a misogynistic time.
- **CAROLYN DINSHAW** – the Wife is “enacting an antifeminist stereotype of the greedy, insatiable, domineering wife”
- **BROWN AND EGGE** – “three fourths of the Wife’s story heretically disrupts sacred medieval hierarchy by giving women maistrie over men”
- **BRODIE** – the Wife is an “independent woman [who is] sexually experienced [and] challenges patriarchal norms”