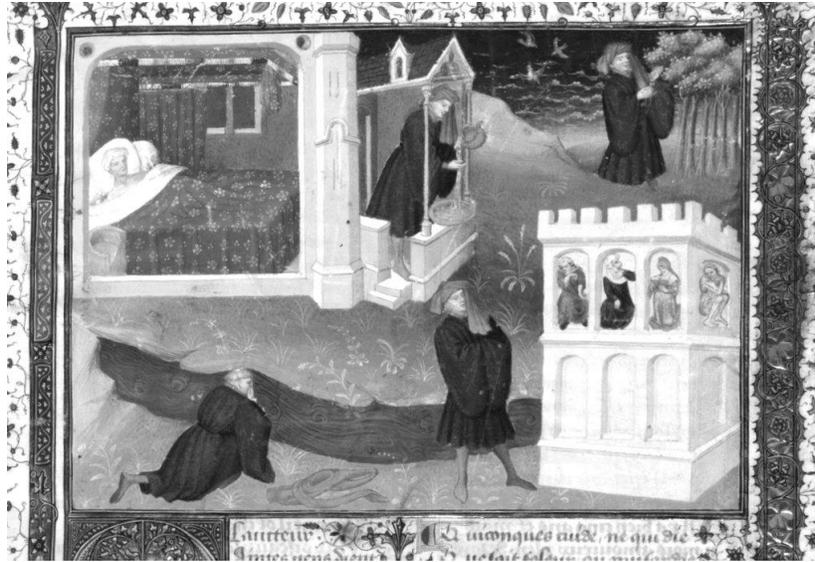


EN 35419  
Spring 2016  
Tuesday/Thursday 9 to 10:20 a.m.  
Cobb Hall 303

Julie Orlemanski  
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Office: Rosenwald 415a  
Office hours: Tu, 10:30 to 11:30,  
Th, 12:15 to 1:15, and by appt



## What Was Fiction? Being Imaginary in the Middle Ages

This class proceeds from the axiom that 'fictionality' is the outcome of a set of relations. It cannot be studied apart from its production in specific historical and discursive circumstances. To study fictionality in the Middle Ages, then, is to consider the interplay of metaphysical, epistemic, institutional, aesthetic, and formal factors that worked together to cut distinctions between reality and unreality, or between different modes of being. We will investigate how medieval literary texts managed and inflected the imaginariness of phenomena, and along the way we'll engage questions such as: How did poetic narrative script readers' intellectual and affective experiences of fictionality? If the 'fact' was not an important concept in medieval society (not coming to widespread cultural prominence until the seventeenth century), then what was fiction defined against? How significant was fiction's etymology - from *ingere*, to fashion or form? What role did fictional thinking, or thinking about fiction, play in (for instance) philosophical speculation, claims to historiographical authority, understandings of the pagan gods, sacramentality, religious devotion, sexual fantasy, and literary reflexivity? How might 'fictional thinking' in the Middle Ages intersect present-day debates about the ontology of fictional worlds, or about the history of epistemic regimes? Finally, is it even valid to talk about medieval fiction as such? Or might it be a distorting anachronism to stretch one category around such diverse phenomena as imagination, mimesis, myth, virtuality, counterfactuality, example, ideal, lie, trope, figure, *experimentum*, romance, *fabula*, phantasm, invention, and dream? Given the quarter's limited scope, we must leave aside several crucial topics; notably absent are readings on the distinction between history and romance, on legal fictions, and on the philosophical theory and practice of the schools. Despite this, the course aims to provide a substantial introduction to something that might be called medieval fictionality, as it was constructed within vernacular literary practice.

Nota bene: Syllabus very much subject to change!

## **Texts**

### Required

Thomas Hoccleve, *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems* (Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies), ed. Roger Ellis, University of Exeter Press, 2001. 978-0859897013

*Croxton Play of the Sacrament* (Middle English Texts), ed. John T. Sebastian, Western Michigan University Press, 2012. 978-1580441810

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose* (Oxford World's Classics), trans. Frances Horgan, Oxford University Press, 1994. 978-0199540679

Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, Harvard University Press, 1986. 978-0674299665.

### Suggested

*The Riverside Chaucer*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

### A few good resources:

*The Middle English Dictionary* <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/m/mec/>

*Chaucer in translation* <http://ummutility.umm.maine.edu/necastro/chaucer/translation/>

METRO (Middle English Teaching Resources Online) <http://metro.fas.harvard.edu>

### Assignments

25% Engaged participation and weekly Chalk postings

35% Paper #1 (due by email April 24)

40% Paper #2 (due by email June 8; abstract due by email May 22)

Note: If you are a Ph.D. student writing a seminar-length essay for the final assignment, the weight of the papers will be 20% for Paper #1 and 55% for Paper #2.

**Engaged participation:** Attendance and informed participation in discussions are expected. The assigned texts will demand a variety of reading speeds. Some days we'll have hundreds of pages of literary criticism; for other meetings, just a couple of hundred lines of poetry. Developing different reading practices, to manage and produce different kinds of understanding, is one of the skills the class aims to foment.

Try to contribute aloud to discussion at least once per class.

I prefer that you not use laptops in class, but I leave it to your discretion. In any case, please bring your full and vibrant attention to our discussion.

I am committed to making our class an environment where we all feel welcome to speak, respond, and share ideas. I've found this essential to cultivating collective practices of experimentation, risk, play, and invention.

You are required to post a short reading response (250-500 words) on Chalk **once a week** (unless announced otherwise). Please post by 6pm the day before class (so, by 6pm Monday, or 6pm Wednesday), in response to a text being discussed in the upcoming class.

**Paper #1: Historical topoi of fictionality** (6-8 double-spaced pages) This assignment has two parts. The first part is historical and conceptual; the second is literary-critical and interpretive. You will choose a *topos* (a literary common-place or motif) of medieval fictionality that plays a part in one of the medieval literary texts we have read thus far (Chaucer's "Tale of Sir Thopas," "General Prologue, or *Parliament of Fowls*; the *Romance of the Rose*; the *Plaint of Nature*). Do some literary-historical research into the circulation and significance of your *topos*. In the assignment's first

half, you will describe, analyze, and theorize its significance as a historically articulated means for thinking and figuring fictionality. You will certainly need to cite secondary sources. In the second half of the assignment, interpret the role of this *topos* in your selected literary text. Rather than advancing general claims about the motif, here you will be giving an account of its effects in a specific work. More than crafting a beautifully unified essay, I want you to execute each of the two parts of the assignment with intellectual verve. Please work as closely as possible with the original language of your selected text.

**Paper #2:** This should be modeled on a typical twenty-minute conference paper; that is, it should be between eight and ten double-spaced pages, written for oral delivery. The topic is up to you, though I expect it to have something to do with the theoretical, literary-historical, or interpretive questions raised over the course of the quarter. You will turn in an abstract in advance. **PhD students may choose to write a longer seminar paper (25+ pages), as per program requirements.**

## SCHEDULE

3/29

### Introduction

3/31

### Practice & Method

Geoffrey Chaucer, "Prologue to Sir Thopas" and "Sir Thopas," *The Riverside Chaucer* VII.691-966 [on the Chalk site]

Nicolette Zeeman, "Imaginative Literary Theory" in *Middle English, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature* (Oxford UP, 2007), pp. 222-240. [full text available for download through U of C library catalogue]

Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, *Habitus*, Practice," *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford UP, 1990 [1980]), pp. 52-65, notes 290-292. [on the Chalk site]

Julie Orlemanski, "Genre," in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 207-221. [on the Chalk site]

### Recommended

Helen Cooper, "The Tale of Sir Thopas," from *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales*, pp. 299-309. [on the Chalk site]

"General Prologue" of the *Canterbury Tales*, especially line 1-42 and 715-858. [on the Chalk site; explanatory notes in a separate pdf]

Helen Cooper, "The Canterbury Tales" and "The General Prologue" from *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales*, pp. 1-60. [on the Chalk site]

4/5

### The Roman de la Rose, a compendium of medieval fictionalizing

... dreams, birdsong, ekphrasis, personificational allegory, Narcissus, pagan gods, Fortuna, classical authors, hypocrisy...

*Roman de la Rose*, lines 1-7200 and 99??-12350 (pp.3-110 and 154-190, chs. 1-4 and 6 in our translation)

### Recommended

Noah D. Guynn, "Le Roman de la Rose" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, pp. 48-62. [full text available for download through U of C library catalogue]

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III.339-510, on Narcissus [on the Chalk site]

Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*

- 4/7            **a compendium of medieval fictionalizing, continued**  
                  ...*Nature, Genius, infelicitous sacraments, Pygmalion, mirrors, sexual euphemism...*
- Roman de la Rose, lines 15861-end (pp. 246-335, chs. 9-12 in our translation)
- Recommended**  
                  Alain of Lille [on the Chalk site]  
                  Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X.220-297, on Pygmalion [on the Chalk site]
- 4/12            **Close-reading for fictionality**  
                  Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls* [on the Chalk site]
- 4/14            **Close-reading for fictionality, continued**  
                  Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls* [on the Chalk site]
- 4/19            **Theorizing & Analyzing Fictionality Now**  
                  Thomas Pavel, Chs 1-4 of *Fictional Worlds* (1-113)
- 4/21            Thomas Pavel, Chs 5-6 of *Fictional Worlds* (114-148)  
                  Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Blackwell, 1986), pp. 141-148. [on the Chalk site]  
                  Eric Hayot, Chs. 3 and 4 of *On Literary Worlds* (Oxford UP, 2012), pp.42-53. [on the Chalk site]
- Recommended**  
                  Blakey Vermeule, Preface and Chs 1 and 2 of *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2010), pp.ix-xiv and 1-48; 251-2 (notes).
- \*\*Short paper is due to me by email on Sunday, April 24.\*\*
- 4/26            **The historicity of fictionality**  
                  Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel, Volume 1: History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti, pp. 336-363. [free download: [http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s17\\_8150.pdf](http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s17_8150.pdf)]  
                  Nicholas Paige, Introduction and Conclusion of *Before Fiction: The Ancien Régime of the Novel* (U of Pennsylvania P, 2011), pp. 1-33 and 198-206; 207-215 and 252-254 (notes). [on the Chalk site]
- Johan Huizinga, Chs. XV and XVI of *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1949[1919]), pp. 200-220. [on the Chalk site]  
                  Owen Barfield, Chs. XI and XIII of *Saving the Appearances: A Study of Idolatry* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1988 [1965]), pp. 71-78 and 84-91. [on the Chalk site]  
                  Charles Taylor, Ch. 1 of *A Secular Age* (2007), pp. 25-41 and 781-782 (notes). [full text available for download through U of C library catalogue]
- Recommended**  
                  Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and 'the Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *The Historical Journal* 51 (2008): 497-528. [full text available for download through U of C library catalogue]

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- 4/28           **Difficult texts**  
selected exempla **[on the Chalk site]**  
Steven Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?" *Representations* 103  
(2008): 1–29. **[full text available for download through U of C library catalogue]**  
Steven Justice, "Eucharistic Miracle and Eucharistic Doubt," *Journal of Medieval and  
Early Modern Studies* 2012 (42): 307–332. **[full text available for download  
through U of C library catalogue]**
- 5/3             **Sacramentality and Fictionality**  
*Croxton Play of the Sacrament*  
Sarah Beckwith, "Ritual, Church and Theatre: Medieval Dramas of the Sacramental  
Body," in *Culture and History, 1350–1600*, ed. David Aers. (1992), pp. 65–89. **[on  
the Chalk site]**
- 5/5             *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*  
"Treatise on Playing of Miracles" **[on the Chalk site]**  
Wyclif on eucharist **[on the Chalk site]**  
Christina Fitzgerald, "Performance Anxiety and the Passion in the Croxton *Play of the  
Sacrament*" **[on the Chalk site]**
- 5/10           First and Second Shepherd's Play, from the Wakefield Cycle **[on the Chalk site]**
- 5/12           **NO CLASS**
- 5/17           Chaucer, Pardoner's Prologue and Tale
- 5/19           Chaucer, Pardoner's Prologue and Tale

**\*\*Abstract for final paper** is due to me by email on Sunday, May 22.\*\*

- 5/24           **Fictions of the Self**  
Hoccleve, "My Compleinte"
- 5/26           **Fictions of Voice**  
Hoccleve, "My Compleinte" and "A Dialoge"  
A. C. Spearing, selected criticism **[on the Chalk site]**
- 5/31           **Fictions of Writing**  
Hoccleve, "Fabula de quadam imperatrice Romana"

**\*\*Final paper** is due to me by email on Wednesday, June 8.\*\*