İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ARAŞTIRMALARI DERNEĞİ

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION OF TÜRKİYE

IDEAS:
Journal of English Literary Studies

October 2024

Volume: 4

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Two or More Books by the Same Author

List the works alphabetically. Remember to ignore articles like "a, an, the."

Palmer, William J. *Dickens and New Historicism*. St. Martin's, 1997.

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Translations

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard, Vintage-Random House, 1988.

Howard, Richard, translator. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. By Michel Foucault, Vintage-Random House, 1988.

Edited Book and Edition

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, edited by Margaret Smith, Oxford UP, 1998.

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Last name, First name. "Title of Essay." *Title of Collection*, edited by Editor's Name(s), Publisher, Year, Page range of entry.

Harris, Muriel. "Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers." *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One*, edited by Ben Rafoth, Heinemann, 2000, pp. 24–34.

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Duvall, John N. "The (Super)Marketplace of Images: Television as Unmediated Mediation in DeLillo's White Noise." *Arizona Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1994, pp. 127–153.

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Seitz, Matt Zoller. "Life in the Sprawling Suburbs, If You Can Really Call It Living." Review of *Radiant City*, directed by Gary Burns and Jim Brown. *New York Times*, 30 May 2007, p. E1.

Weiller, K. H. Review of *Sport, Rhetoric, and Gender: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations*, edited by Linda K. Fuller. *Choice*, Apr. 2007, p. 1377.

Poems and Short Stories

Burns, Robert. "Red, Red Rose." *100 Best-Loved Poems*, edited by Philip Smith, Dover, 1995, p. 26.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*, edited by Tobias Wolff, Vintage, 1994, pp. 306–307.

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Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by H. E. Butler, vol. 2, Loeb-Harvard UP, 1980.

Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by H. E. Butler, Loeb-Harvard UP, 1980. 4 vols.

Dissertations

Bile, Jeffrey. *Ecology, Feminism, and a Revised Critical Rhetoric: Toward a Dialectical Partnership*. 2005. Ohio University, PhD dissertation.

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Editor's Preface

With great pleasure, I present the eighth issue of *IDEAS: Journal of English Literary Studies*, continuing our tradition of bringing insightful and thought-provoking work in English literary studies to a diverse, global readership. This issue, rich with interdisciplinary perspectives and literary analyses, further reinforces our commitment to excellence in exploring English literature's complexities and its intersections with other domains. I would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed contributors and to the editorial board members who have worked diligently to uphold the journal's standards.

I am also pleased to announce that, in addition to our journal's existing academic reach, *IDEAS: Journal of English Literary Studies* is now indexed in several new databases: ROAD, BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine), OUCI: The Open Ukrainian Citation Index, and Academindex. These new indexes further enhance our accessibility and visibility within the international academic community, broadening the scope of our readership and allowing our authors' works to reach an even wider audience. We remain committed to maintaining the journal's high standards and to fostering impactful scholarship in English literary studies across these platforms.

The eighth issue opens with the article, "Swift's Alberti? The Geometrical Comedy of *Gulliver's Travels*," by Selena Özbaş from İstanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University. This thought-provoking analysis places Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* within the context of Leon Battista Alberti's geometric principles and Renaissance humanism. Özbaş suggests that Swift's work subtly utilizes Albertinian optics to craft a comedic yet critical narrative, inviting readers into a richly layered, intellectual exploration of posthumanist comedy.

Following this, Huriye Reis from Hacettepe University contributes the article, "Pilgrims Speaking Angry Words: Change and Anger in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," which examines the role of anger as a social and cultural force amid the transformative shifts depicted in *The Canterbury Tales*. Reis argues that Chaucer's pilgrims, who experience anger in response to societal instability, perform this emotion as a means of articulating resistance to feudal norms. By exploring the anger expressed by characters like the Miller and the Wife of Bath, the article reveals how anger in the *Tales* serves not only as a reaction to rapid societal changes but also as an essential element in reshaping the pilgrims' roles and identities within the evolving medieval structure. This analysis underscores the significance of anger as both a cultural response and a catalyst for potential societal transformation.

In "Cruelty and Tragedy: Cathartic Journey in Peter Shaffer's *Equus*," Sena Baltaoğlu from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University re-examines the Aristotelian concept of catharsis through Freud's psychoanalytical lens and Artaud's theory of cruelty. This piece delves

into the therapeutic dimensions of *Equus*, showing how Shaffer's tragic characters, Martin Dysart and Alan Strang, engage in a mutual journey of self-discovery that ultimately offers them, and the audience, an emotionally charged form of release and healing.

In "'Þat ȝet þe wynd & þe weder & þe worlde stynkes': The Sins of Richard II and the Corruption of the Crown," Shawn McAvoy from Patrick & Henry Community College revisits medieval perceptions of kingship through the critical lens of Ricardian poetry and political commentary. McAvoy examines how John Gower, William Langland, and the Gawain Poet each critique Richard II, focusing on the king's efforts to align his personal will with the sanctity of the crown—a transgression that ultimately threatens the stability of the realm. Through this analysis, McAvoy provides valuable insights into how these writers confronted the complexities of power and authority in their era.

This issue also features a compelling book review by Eren Bolat on Anna McKay's *Female Devotion and Textile Imagery in Medieval English Literature*. Bolat's review underscores McKay's examination of medieval textile imagery as a medium through which women expressed their spirituality and engaged with theological concepts. Bolat notes how McKay effectively integrates feminist perspectives with literary and theological analysis, illuminating how textiles served as a unique vehicle for medieval women's religious identity and agency.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our referees for their rigorous and invaluable feedback, which ensures that every article meets our journal's high academic standards. My gratitude also goes to my esteemed colleagues on the editorial board—Dr. Aylin Alkaç from Boğaziçi University, Prof. Dr. Seda Arıkan from Fırat University, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Önder Çakırtaş from Bingöl University, Assist. Prof. Dr. Şafak Horzum from Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Assist. Prof. Dr. Reyhan Özer Taniyan from Pamukkale University, Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Turan from İstanbul Kültür University, Assist. Prof. Dr. Serhat Uyurkulak from Fenerbahçe University, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nazan Yıldız Çiçekçi from Karadeniz Technical University—whose dedication and expertise make the publication of each issue possible. I look forward to continuing this journey together as *IDEAS* reaches new horizons in English literary studies.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ali ÇELİKEL
Editor-in-Chief
Marmara University, Türkiye

English Language and Literature
Research Association of Türkiye

Swift's Alberti?
The Geometrical Comedy of *Gulliver's Travels*

Selena ÖZBAŞ

İstanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University, Türkiye

Abstract: This article propounds that Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* develops a geometrical comedy in the Albertinian fashion. Starting with a specific reference to Momus in *Puppet-Show*, it will be maintained that Swift refers to an earlier tradition of criticism and transfers it to his prose writing. To explore this point, the article will draw on the Italian Renaissance humanist, satirist, and architect Leon Battista Alberti's *Momus* and *De Pictura.* It will be suggested that there is a corollary between the exilic vision of the picaresque anti-hero and the definitive quality of the centric ray which establishes the centre of meaning in painting in Alberti. In accordance, it will be maintained that Swift adapts Alberti's critical rendition of the Momus story as a geometrical metaphor for linear perspective. Although Momus does not directly appear as part of the *dramatis personae* in *Gulliver's Travels*, Lemuel Gulliver emerges as an eighteenth-century successor to Alberti's geometrical designs since Swift adapts the Renaissance humanist's method of geometrical optics which reveres ocularcentrism. By these standards, it will be propounded that this method informs the comedic programme of *Gulliver's Travels*. In accordance, the conclusion draws on the point that Swiftian comedy owes a considerable debt to the mimetic concerns of Renaissance humanism which signals the birth of a posthumanist comedy through a re-mapping of Albertinian perspectivism.

Swift'in Alberti'si? *Gulliver'ın Gezileri*'nin Geometrik Komedisi

Öz: Bu makale, Jonathan Swift'in *Gulliver'ın Gezileri* isimli eserinde Albertinyen tarzda bir geometrik komedi geliştirdiği tezini savunmaktadır. *Puppet-Show* (Kukla Gösterisi) şiirinde Momus'a yapılan özel bir referanstan başlanarak, yazarın erken bir eleştiri geleneğine referansta bulunduğu ve bunu düz yazılarına aktardığı ortaya konulacaktır. Bu noktayı araştırmak amacıyla, makale İtalyan Rönesans hümanisti, hicivcisi ve mimarı Leon Battista Alberti'nin *Momus* ve *De Pictura* eserlerine dikkat çekecektir. Alberti'nin pikaresk anti-kahramanının sürgünsel bakışı ile resim sanatında anlamın merkezini oluşturan merkezî ışının belirleyici niteliği arasında bir ilişki olduğu düşüncesi öne sürülecektir. Bununla ilişkili olarak, Swift'in, Alberti'nin eleştirel biçimde ele aldığı Momus öyküsünü doğrusal perspektifin geometrik bir metaforu olarak uyarladığı düşüncesi savunulacaktır. Her ne kadar Momus *Gulliver'ın Gezileri*'nin *dramatis personae*'sinde bir yer edinmese de, Swift'in Rönesans hümanistinin okülarsantrizmi yücelten geometrik optiğinin yöntemlerini kullanmasından dolayı, Lemuel

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Gulliver'ın Alberti'nin geometrik tasarımının on sekizinci yüzyıldaki mirasçısı olduğu savunulacaktır. Bu standartlar altında, bu yöntemin *Gulliver'ın Gezileri*'nin komedik programını beslediği öne sürülecektir. Bu konuyla bağlantılı olarak, sonuç kısmı Swiftyen komedinin Rönesans hümanizminin mimetik ilgilerine ne denli borçlu olduğu ve buradan hareketle Swift'in Albertinyen doğrusallığı yeniden konumlandırma yoluyla posthümanist bir komedinin doğuşunu müjdelediği sonucuna ulaşacaktır.

Introduction: A 'Punch' in the Face

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), the "English Rabelais" as Voltaire (1694–1778) once declared, who "has the honour of being a clergyman though he makes fun of everything" (74), conceals throughout his oeuvre a highly puritanical sentiment towards theatre. In 1709, when he composed *A Project for the Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners* addressing Louisa, Countess of Berkeley (1694–1716), he was not only imitating Horace's (65–8 BCE) defence of pure virtue, an asset he thought would re-flourish under the authoritative example of Queen Anne (r. 1702–1714), but also he was looking forward to proposing a moral programme for the reformation of the English stage. In a manner which suits his moralistic dedication, he berates "the undecent and prophane Passages" which have consequences upon "the Minds of younger People" (*Bickerstaff Papers* 55) and continues:

> I do not remember that our *English* Poets ever suffered a criminal Amour to succeed upon the Stage, until the Reign of King *Charles* the Second. Ever since that Time, the Alderman is made a Cuckold, the deluded Virgin is debauched; and Adultery and Fornication are supposed to be committed behind the Scenes, as Part of the Action. These and many more Corruptions of the Theatre, peculiar to our Age and Nation, need continue no longer than while the Court is content to connive at, or neglect them. . . . By which, and otherwise Regulations, the Theatre might become a very innocent and useful Diversion, instead of being a Scandal and Reproach of our Religion and Country. (56)

Despite the *Project*'s fervent attack on theatre as a corruptive spectacle, Joseph McMinn suggests that Swift was ready to abandon his anti-theatrical emotions and "the dull, paranoid mentality behind them" (37) due to the friendly acquaintances he made over the years which might suggest a conceptual difference in Swift's imagination between theatre and drama. As McMinn implies, since theatre is a practical endeavour whereas drama is characterised by its intellectual vigour, "Swift knew little about theatre, but a great deal of drama" (38), which could explain his hostility towards theatre but his love for drama.

However, and whatever the extent of Swift's acquaintance with theatre or his dramatic reconciliation with it might have been, his fascination with a fairly new dramatic form of entertainment appears to be almost inescapably present in his writings. As much as he detests the practicality of theatre, he professes the enjoyment he derives from the staging of a puppet theatre in *Puppet-Show* (1729) and praises it as the invention of "wit":

> The life of man to represent,
> And turn it all to ridicule,
> Wit did a puppet-show invent,
> Where the chief actor is a fool. (*Poems* 169)

The English puppet-theatre, which was the Neapolitan acting companies' gift to the British Isles (Speaight 18–19) and largely flourished during the eighteenth century, already maintained a widespread circle of influence even a generation earlier during the age of Ben Jonson (1572–1637). Although in the following decades it caught the eye of the defenders of morality during the Interregnum and occasionally suffered from false images of notoriety, it seems to have retained its public reputation. Since this "impersonal theatre" of the puppet-show which "has always been the theatre of the people" (Speaight 11) had drawn the attention of London society away from the bawdiness of Restoration comedy and replaced it with dramatic elegance, it was developed into "the talk of the town" (Speaight 92). When considered in conjunction with Swift's Anglicanism, it is only natural that the traditionally religious but currently moralistic function of the English puppet-theatre in the eighteenth century would readily appeal to Swift's sensibility to virtue. In the same poem, he makes an implicit reference to Dr Thomas Sheridan's (1687–1738) parody of the famous puppeteer, Stretch of Dublin's performance and decides that Sheridan judges him unjustly since "Puns cannot form a witty scene, / Nor pedantry for humour pass" (*Poems* 171).[1] The puppet-show for Swift stood for a non-theatrical drama, a "mimic-race" which brought "all to view" (*Poems* 171) as it did for Ben Jonson in his plays *Volpone* (c. 1605/6) or *Every Man* (1598/9).[2]

In bringing everything to view, there is an interesting moment in *Puppet-Show*, which is telling and more integral to our inductive method here, of the long literary heritage that nourished Swiftian imagination. For his benevolent relationship with the dramatic substitution the cultural scene of eighteenth-century England had to offer not only reflects Swift's conservatist ideals but also brings to view his fascination with the English Punch who was both a central character of the puppet-shows and a direct descendant of the hook-nosed Pulcinella (Speaight 16–18). He defends the satirical and morally corrective tone which Punch generates within the confines of a puppet-booth

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[1] On Dr Thomas Sheridan's personal relationship with theatre and Swift and the development of his son, the famous actor Thomas Sheridan's stage career, see Sheldon.

[2] Perhaps this also explains the enduring allure of the Swiftian 'drama' which is being produced in the form of puppet theatre in the twenty-first century. One of the very recent versions staged in the form of puppet-theatre belongs to Valérie Lesort and Christian Hecq, staged at the Athénée Théâtre Louis-Jouvet, Paris. It is advertised as a "free adaptation", but how free is it? See "Le Voyage de Gulliver."

since he believes that his jests will "stand confest the greater fool" (*Poems* 171). But also, he makes two specific references to two literary personalities as cultural synonyms for Punch. He continues:

> What *Momus* was of old to Jove,
> The same a *Harlequin* is now;
> The former was buffoon above,
> The latter is a Punch below. (170; italics added)

As a stock-character of the Commedia dell'arte, Arlecchino is quickly identifiable as a fellow *zanni* of Punch. However, his reference to Momus does not appear to be equally familiar to the reader by common standards. And yet we cannot help ourselves asking: Why would Swift choose to mention a certain Momus in proximity to Punch's satirical powers?

In the context of Swift's drama of wit, a reference to Momus immediately makes the very first impression of a mythological persona who is amusingly quick and clever in perception in contrast to Jove, and literary evidence certifies our first impression. The first mention of Momus in the Antiquity appears in Hesiod's *Theogony* (c. 8th century BCE) where Nyx bears several children such as Death, Doom, Sleep, Distress, and finally Blame "although she had slept with none of the gods" (21). Hesiod does not offer much on Momian blame but simply makes a passing reference to him as one of the offspring of the dreadful night. A more elaborate treatment is to be found in the Aesopian compilation of Babrius where Momus is a "fault-finder" (75) who mocks and criticises the beautiful creations of Zeus, Poseidon, and Pallas. The moral of the story, it is implied, draws on the point that Momus's mockery is a making of his envy which aims at beauty and nothing can be "entirely pleasing to the fault-finder" (77) although as George McClure observes, "Momus' criticisms are all legitimate or at least plausible" (4). Having been treated as a dark force in Hesiod and an envious creature in Barbius, however, Lucian (c. 125–after 180) offers a rather well-rounded argument with regard to his behaviour. He is not simply a minor Olympian force of evil or an Aesopian model of grudge, but rather a *parrhesiastes* (a speaker of truth) and sceptic (McClure 13). In *Zeus Rants*, he holds Apollo responsible for ambiguity in his oracles and, in an accusative tone, puts it to him that the "hearers need another Apollo to interpret them" (131), reducing the Apollonian discourse to *mythos* and elevating his artless diction to the level of *logos*. Condemning the Apollonian divination as a hermetic cryptogram, he establishes his linguistic plainness as a prerequisite for semantic intelligibility. In *Icaromenippus, or The Sky-Man* where Menippus narrates his travel to the moon to reflect on the human condition, Lucian utilises the 'critical' image of Momus as a symbol for the "impudent and reckless" (319) philosopher who looks scornfully upon fellow human beings. Even though he is uncomplimentary towards Momus in *Icaromenippus*, he uses the mocking-god to unveil the 'sublime' objective that lies behind the philosopher's sense of superiority at Momus' expense. In other words, Momus's critical powers also help debunk a 'myth' of criticism. Thus, as different from the preceding tradition, in Lucian's hands Momus becomes "the most iconoclastic god of the

ancient world" (McClure 33) so much so that his literary example would later inform the culture of criticism in the Western literary canon.

The Lucianesque influence on Swift's treatment of Momus will only surprise the neophyte. After all, a 1718 portrait of Swift depicts a volume of Lucian, Horace, and Aesop present by the side of the 'jovial' clergyman (Jervas). But it seems difficult to decide which ancient writer had the overwhelming effect. Little scholarly ink has been spilt on the Aesopian intervention in Augustan literature let alone in Swiftian satire and yet the orientation of the existing literature allows us the inference that by referring to Momus, it is possible that Swift spotted an Aesopian corollary between Punch, as motioned by Martin Powell and Stretch in his own day, and the fault-finder god. Under this standard, Swift's Momus would become a moral 'puppet' and an extension of the newly burgeoning "symbolic form" (Lewis 9) of the seventeenth century where the post-Civil War fabulists looked for innovative ways of cultivating forms of second-order thinking through fiction. While this point remains an ever-powerful one, this would also mean that we would be forced to take Swiftian satire and comedy as a byword for figurative zeal that feeds on an Aesopian heritage. However, Swift's Momus is hardly a fabulistic symbol since he crowns the political gadfly as the one who can confess "the greater fool" whose jest "will ever be" (*Poems* 171). Thus, to insist on the Lucianesque vein allows us to see him beyond the confines of the eighteenth-century literary climate's moral, linguistic, and textual conservatism. If understood in this manner, Swift's Momus will rather emerge as an ardent observer of the truth itself, a *rara avis* with a potential for homonymy rather than being simply emblematic of an eighteenth-century Everyman. For he is not the "buffoon above" but the "Punch below" (*Poems* 170) who is part of a perceptive scheme. To demonstrate this point, the following part will try to explore the post-Lucianesque treatment of the Momus story. Drawing on that point, the third part will suggest that Swift furthers a geometrical mission in the non-theatrical drama of his prose writing by taking his example from the intellectual climate of the Quattrocento. It will be concluded that it is the Albertinian vision which eventually informs the character of the *comédie humaine* of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Albertinian Resolutions

Leon Battista Alberti was born into the wealthy Alberti family of Florentine origin where their public career prospered through the study and practice of law, earning them the name "del Giudice" (Pearson, *Leon* 18). Later, they became owners of a large international financial network but fell from favour once they had been sent into exile due to the political conflict between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines (Pearson, *Leon* 20). Born in exile in 1404, Battista Alberti did not only suffer from homesickness but also started off his career in life as the illegitimate offspring of his father. However, the following years proved him to be a prolific writer with a holistic interest in liberal arts such as geometry, mathematics, rhetoric, grammar, architecture, and literature due to the influence and mentorship of Gasparino Barzizza (c. 1360–1461) at Padua who was raised in the

Petrarchan style (Pearson, *Leon* 37). Barzizza's humanist curriculum which was characterised by "an age of literary discovery in which intrepid book hunters unearthed a wealth of ancient manuscripts that had languished for centuries in monastic libraries" (Pearson, *Leon* 37) led Alberti to compose treatises such as *De re aedificatoria* (*On the Art of Building*, 1452), *Della famiglia* (*On Family*, 1462), *De commodis litterarum atque incommodis* (*On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Letters*, 1429), *De Pictura* (*On Painting*, 1435), and *Intercenales* (*Table Talk*, c. 1429) and pieces of fiction such as *Philodoxeos* (*Lover of Glory*, c. 1424) and *Momus* (1450).

Since Alberti was an exile by birth, his writing is usually concerned with his unfortunate origins; a feature of his life which he later found much to his own advantage since "he was aware that a long Tuscan tradition connected exile with the making of literary meaning" (Pearson, *Leon* 27). In this sense, he was both an integral component of Florentine culture and not, allowing him to view it from both the periphery and the centre. Understandably enough, in his comic masterpiece *Momus*, Alberti looks up to the model of Lucian more than any other ancient authority since the protagonist continues to refuse to show respect for Jupiter's creation and presents the world instead "with bugs, moths, wasps, hornets, cockroaches and other nasty little creatures, similar to himself" (15). But also, since Alberti "had to construct his identity on precarious foundations," *Momus* is rife with "the theme of exclusion" which "runs like a leitmotif through all of his literary works" (Marsh 123–124). He preserves the Lucianesque literary image of Momus as a picaresque anti-hero and his career as an outspoken Olympian. But also, it is inescapably semi-autobiographical in the sense that the exilic pattern speaks for the author's ebbs and flows throughout his career. Thus, Alberti conjoins his personal *tristia* with Momus's intellectual unorthodoxy and exilic vision. In accordance, the narrative builds a non-conformist tone and an exilic mood which define his relationship with the centre as one that is constantly threatened by his *logos*. Under planetary terms, the text becomes a calendrical record of Momus's motions through which he reaches his perihelion and aphelion and consequently, the exilic mobility of Momus becomes a prerequisite for attaining truth. First, his adventure starts with a Promethean fall from favour and continues with his banishment from the heavenly court which results in the loss of his sacred flame (*Momus* 31). But later, he is summoned since the Olympians believe "it would be the worst form of exile to live among his own kind where he was a universal object of scorn and hatred" (39). He dreams of bettering his position and seeks help for his cause from Virtue, thinking that "a wise man adapts to the time he's living in" (45) and yet after being expelled from Virtue's temple he does not shy away from speaking against the gods and "the sacrilege, the ruin, that attends the corruption and collapse of our common liberty!" (51). He is both an Ovidian (or anti-Ovidian?) rapist of Praise, one of the daughters of Virtue, and he also suffers the fate of a castrate at the hands of Juno and her company by going "from manly to unmanly" (241). Even his daughter, Rumour, complains to the immortals that she has been unjustly displaced from her homeland "before even seeing it" (87), and yet her gossip holds the power to "prove a serious obstacle to the

reputation of the gods among men" (77). Finally, he strives to become a dear councillor to Jupiter by offering his notebooks including his observations on the principles that make a good and just ruler out of "loyalty and love" (209). But his 'mirrors for princes' is rejected by its addressee only to his own grievance since in Book IV, Jupiter finally recognises that "through his own negligence he had deprived himself for so long of such fine teachings" (353). This, in return, should not necessarily mean that he is depicted as a binarist who contrasts wisdom with inanity, manhood with femalehood, political toleration with social avoidance. Instead, he emerges from the text as a perspectivist who needs to take a step back to observe various realms and reach a truthful observation from a certain distance.

There seems to be in Alberti's Momus a certain degree of pictorialism. Despite the rather sombre mood of the narrative, it would be hardly just to assume that Momus is characterised by his despondency in Alberti's version. Instead, the exilic element and the sense of mobility that accompany the protagonist become metaphors for visual power. Or, to put it more correctly, Momus's exilic adventure and his intricate relationship with figures of authority hide an almost unsuspected talent for vision. In fact, the rhetorical manoeuvre that the narrator employs only seemingly veils Momus's capacity for powerful political, social, and empirical vision. Far from being a despondent character, due to his mobility Momus becomes an acute observer of the deities' and humans' habits in his respective visits to the world of the humans and the world of the Olympians. His adventurousness and love for mischief which lay bare the picaresque element in his character equals to his capacity for powerful sight. Thus, he represents the centre of the story not because he is the title character but because he is the source of the centric ray which determines the vision of the reader. From this aspect, he represents Alberti's obsession with sight and perspective throughout his writings,[3] as connected to the author's geometrical interests. For, in his treatise on painting, *De Pictura*, Alberti contends:

> Furthermore, I wish that the painter be expert, as far as possible, in all liberal arts, but above all I desire in him the knowledge of geometry. I certainly agree with Pamphilus, a very ancient and famous painter, from whom the young nobles learned painting for the first time. His opinion, in fact, was that no one by ignoring geometry would have been a good painter. Certainly, our rudiments, from which one extracts a whole, complete, and precise technique of painting, are easily assimilable by a geometrician. (75)

In opening the treatise with the basic principles of Euclidean geometry, he makes the promise of a painter and not a mathematician in explaining these principles since he believes that mathematicians "measure figures and shapes of things with the mind only,

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[3] Alberti's famous winged eye which is found on the last page of *Della famiglia* as accompanied by the motto "Quid tum?" has been subject to much analysis. For a detailed reading of the winged eye in relation to Renaissance visual culture, see Carman 55–82.

without considering the materiality of the object" (22).[4] In connection with this point, he establishes verisimilitude to nature in art a prime virtue and contemplates on points, lines, and surfaces, producing an introduction to linear perspective in Renaissance art which involves the re-creation of three-dimensional spaces on two-dimensional surfaces. In doing so, he divides rays into three categories: the extreme, the median, and the centric ray. The extreme ray touches the edges of a surface, the median ray touches the inside of the surface, and the centric ray aims at the centre of the surface. These rays which emanate from a monocular source, that is the observant human eye, form a triangle which he uses to explain his perspectival theory (Pearson, *Leon* 74). But, out of these variations, *De Pictura* labels the centric ray a champion since its position "and the distance contribute very much, then, to the determination of vision" (30). It even defines it as "the prince of rays" (30) as—along with distance—it defines our human way of perceiving objects. Later, the centric ray is shown to be a defining element in determining the centric point and the centric line which will later force the illusion of monocularism in a painting on the audience's part. This not only convinces the reader that the treatise signals a vindication of a new perspectival geometry that comes with a Ciceronian force (Spencer 39) but it also convinces us that Albertinian vision inaugurates centrality "as a kind of anchor of meaning" (Pearson, *Leon* 91) as it crowns the human agent as the instigator of vision and perspective. In other words, it develops an ocularcentrism which geometrically venerates the perception of the individual according to which perspective in painting is adapted. In Erwin Panofsky's words, Alberti's geometricised vision of the human eye unfolds "a concrete expression of a contemporary advance in epistemology or natural philosophy" which results in "a translation of psychophysiological space into mathematical space" (65–66).

To turn back to the forerunning discussion, the geometrical superiority with which Alberti graces the centric ray particularly relates to our discussion concerning the exilic self of Momus. For Momus is modelled as an observant eye which acts in the capacity of a centric ray, determining the geometrical standards of a perspectival construct. His delicate but also intricate relationship with the ideological centre which leads to a to-and-fro relationship with it, allows him to become a Protagorean measure of value. Retaining the critical powers of Momus which are to be found in Lucian's *Zeus Rants* and *Icaromenippus*, Alberti offers a development of his story and character where his gift for criticism and truth complements his all-observing geometric vision; a characteristic which is lost upon other members of the heavenly sphere and the members of the human society. In the following part, I will try to establish a discursive overlap between Alberti's geometric visionary and Swift's surgeon-explorer, arguing that the latter borrows from the former's ocularcentrism to re-create a comic semblance of the geometrical critic of the Quattrocento in a renewed eighteenth-century context.

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[4] Not only mathematicians but also philosophers are under attack in Alberti's writings. Caspar Pearson rightfully considers this a "defeat". For this point, see Pearson, "Philosophy Defeated."

The Geometrical Comedy of *Gulliver's Travels*

As much as it is important to understand that Alberti's *Momus* is part of a larger humanist project, it is equally vital to detect the narrative ways in which he bends the Momian tradition to his own geometric will as suggested earlier. However, it is hard to suggest an affinity between Alberti and Swift due to the lack of evidence. First, the Dean's bibliographical interests and records of his library suggest that he was on par with Aristophanes (c. 446–386 BCE), Terence (c. 195/185–159 BCE), Ovid (43 BCE–17/18 CE), François Rabelais (c. 1483/94–1553), Ben Jonson, Molière (c. 1622–1673), and William Wycherley (c. 1641–1716) (Williams 42–73), although these records do not make a single mention of Alberti. Not only that but also his readings of vision as a geometrical and physical phenomenon seem to be limited to George Berkeley's (1685–1753) *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), where the philosopher develops an anti-abstractionist argument against geometry (173), a position which, to a certain extent, conflicts with Albertinian geometry. On top of it, it seems hard to reconcile the Renaissance fascination with mathematical and geometrical ideals with the experientialism of Enlightenment thought. However, it seems hard not to notice the paradigmatic continuity between them (Panofsky 66). Alberti's Renaissance theory of vision is in direct conversation, although not in perfect agreement, with the Enlightenment's conception of vision, geometry, and knowledge. To explore this point of intersection between Alberti's geometrical vision and Swift's geometrical comedy, I will now turn to the argument that Swift's comedic imagination relates itself to the humanist geometry of the Italian Renaissance through the image of Momus.

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Momus is not mentioned as part of the *dramatis personae*. Nor is the exilic tone which adorns the geometric perspectivism of Momus seems to be present at first glance as Lemuel Gulliver does not particularly strike the reader as an excluded member of the English society. In an Albertinian fashion, however, he reminds us of Momus since he has a fragile relationship with England. After his return from Houyhnhnmland, he is disgusted by the fact that he fathered an issue "by copulating with one of the Yahoo species" (289), and yet he cannot omit the natural inclination to define the overseas worlds and his personal habits in proximity to England and English manners. He likens Lilliputian yeomen to the "Dray-men in *England*," (37), draws his hanger in "the Manner of Fencers in *England*" (98) during a public performance of puppetry at Brobdingnag, and at the end of his visit to the Lagadonian Academy he concludes that nothing "could invite me to a longer Continuance" and considers "returning home to *England*" (192). Although not explicitly banished from England, his picaresque voyage corresponds to Swift's "conservative psychology of the deprived younger son" which led to "political and social deprivation in terms of aimless mobility and exile" (McKeon 339). As a result, the narration is disturbed by fears of exilic exclusion as haunted by a "distressing spectacle of unrecognised merit" (McKeon 339). While describing the rope-dancers in Lilliput, he produces a great innuendo of personal talent that went unrecognised since they are "trained in this Art from their Youth, and are not always of

noble Birth, or liberal Education" (38). He is not an exile in the primal sense of the word and yet he acknowledges his banishment from the cultural centre. During his stay at Brobdingnag, he confesses:

> I had a strong Hope which never left me, that I should one Day recover my Liberty; and as to the Ignominy of being carried about for a Monster, I considered my self to be a perfect Stranger in the Country; and that such a Misfortune could never be charged upon me as a Reproach if ever I should return to *England*; since the King of *Great Britain* himself, in my Condition, must have undergone the same Distress. (97)

However, much like Alberti's Momus, Gulliver is determined to make the most of his exilic condition. By constantly taking a step backwards, adjusting his distance from the object that is England, and exposing himself as a travel enthusiast, he accepts the role of a mobile explorer of unknown worlds who cannot resist the desire to inspect. But this desire for inspection carries, as Philippe Hamou puts it, a "normativité esthétique" (33). For, throughout these travels, he produces himself as the perceptive focal point, the centric ray that determines our vision of the picaresque adventure. To put it more correctly, under the standards of Albertinian geometry, he becomes the linear perspectivist whose metaphorical exile contributes to the development of the rational eye according to which he measures the material world. He is "a great Admirer of Projects, and a Person of much Curiosity and easy Belief" as he thinks to himself before he is taken to the Laputan Academy for a visit, but it is only because "I had my self been a Sort of Projector in my younger Days" (178).

If the architectural image seems irrelevant here, it is only because Swift skilfully hides his optic concerns under a constructional edifice. For, there also lies the possibility to consider Gulliverian 'projection' as a spectacle through which the narration itself becomes an extension of Gulliver's sight aside from an attack on modern science. Sight is of central significance to his vision as he is not only a prime seer but also someone who is always being looked at. The Emperor of Lilliput, for instance, rushes into the scene "to have an Opportunity of viewing me" (28). And yet, he derives considerable delight from looking at himself once he is unshackled and is able to stand on his feet (29). Similarly, if the stoic horses of Houyhnhnm encourage the practice of virtue and hold a rational mirror up to the world, Gulliver uses it as a means of enlarging his understanding (240) to investigate the condition of himself and his own species more than anything else. However, seeing as a metaphor for ocularcentric power is reserved for Gulliver himself. In other words, seeing for Gulliver is a form of rationalisation, the sign of an empirical intervention which assists the human agent to carve a personal meaning out of the physical world, producing a "quasi-objectivity" (Rogers 187). In accordance, having been searched for his personal belongings by two Lilliputian officers at the request of the Emperor, Gulliver praises their visual diligence since he believes that "their Sight is much more acute than ours," but later finds delight in the fact that "a Pair of Spectacles" which delivers him a "Pocket Perspective" (37) has escaped their attention and holds unto it

since "My greatest Apprehension was for mine Eyes" (52). Alternatively, later in Brobdingnag, while he is being taken to a visit to the town along with Glumdalclitch, he observes the beggars on the street who give him "the most horrible Spectacles that ever an *European Eye* beheld," (112) and on another occasion where he observes a public execution, he confides in the reader that "I abhorred such Kind of Spectacles; yet my Curiosity tempted me to see something that I thought must be extraordinary" (119). He denies the same privilege of centric vision to a friend of his master at Brobdingnag who "put on his Spectacles to behold me better" and cannot help himself laughing at the sight of his eyes which appear "like the Full-Moon shining into a Chamber at two Windows" (96). Even when he is tutored by his master at Houyhnhnmland concerning "a thousand Faults in my self" (258), it is Gulliver's own truth-bearing vision which distances himself from his Yahoo-'ness' and the vices and faults that follow from it. Under Albertinian standards, Gulliver's prospective eye re-produces a Momian centrism and physical distance that determine the humanist value of vision.

Closely allied with this ocularcentrism is the point that Gulliver displays an almost unhealthy engagement with truth. Since the ratiocination of vision implies that truth is in the eye of the beholder, he strives for a truthful construct. He pushes his sense of truthfulness to its extremes when he introduces himself as a once-upon-a-time student at Emanuel College in Cambridge and yet, due to the financial distress of his father, he starts off his career as a Mr James Bates's, a surgeon's apprentice (19). Upon the death of his master, however, his business begins to fail since he refuses "to imitate the bad Practice of too many among my Brethren" (20) for fear of abusing the excellent practice of his master as an undertalented novice. Since he cannot indulge in untruthful business—a "bad Practice"—and must be a loyal accountant of veracity, he must resign wilfully. Elsewhere, and suitably enough, the fact that he expresses his wish, writing in the aftermath of his return from Houyhnhnmland, to "*strictly adhere to Truth*," not finding in himself "the least Temptation to vary from it" (292) is in direct conversation with his Cousin Sympson, the publisher's letter to the reader where he styles the Author as a truth-sayer since he "was so distinguished for his Veracity," whose "Style is very plain and simple" (9). The reader is left with a certain paradox here and the argument that he has a plain style is countered by the particularities he wishes to convey to the reader. Upon his arrival at Brobdingnag, he asks his reader to excuse him for occupying their mind with unnecessary details since he has been "chiefly studious of Truth" (94). He constantly produces apologies and yet continues to devour the page with almost obscene particularities for the sake of maintaining an obsessive realism. In seeking to maintain his position of a reliable narrator, he constantly engages with a "dispassionate and scientific scrutiny of life" (Watt 6) which generates factuality, descriptiveness, and an adamantly encouraged sense of mimetic precision. But narrating the particular, in return, serves the truthful end of Gulliver's vision. It is so definitive an aspect of the geometrical construct of the novel that it even passes for a source of despair when he puts it to the English captain who listens to Gulliver's extraordinary journey much to his disbelief and asks him

to publish a memorabilium that truth is no longer considered a virtue. He grins at the prospect of publication, claiming that "nothing could now pass which was not extraordinary" since "Authors less consulted Truth than their own Vanity and Interest" (147). The only means of curability lies in proclaiming his bodily cleanliness to his Houyhnhnm master and the linguistic cleanliness to the reader by not saying "*the Thing which was not*" (240) as the centric ray of truth.

Although it could be counter-argued that an Albertinian investigation of the perspectival matter in *Gulliver's Travels* might risk overlooking the satirical element in it and force us to find the Renaissance humanist in Swift, the critical pang is easily delectable once it is realised that Swift hides the joke under our nose. For as much as the ratiocinated vision of Gulliver exposes the humanist in Swift, it exposes the Dean's comedic commentary of it. For the human comedy of the novel rests upon the fact that the geometrical perspective is never lost upon Gulliver who claims that he "should be a living Treasury of Knowledge and Wisdom, and certainly become the Oracle of the Nation" (209). The narrator is not particularly fond of mathematicians as he considers them prime representatives of modern science—one only needs to remember his disdain for the Laputans who are "dextrous enough upon a Piece of Paper in the Management of the Rule, the Pencil, and the Divider" and yet talentless "and perplexed in their Conceptions upon all other Subjects" (163)—but also it is the very geometric centrism that secures our laughter. For he retains a sense of perspectivism which does not necessarily sacrifice his self-centred epistemology at the high altar of relativity since "Gulliver himself is the supreme instance of a creature smitten with pride" (Monk 70). Thus, as Edith Sitwell had put it once in her semi-biographical novel of Swift, "it had been his need to inhabit another being, conquer the will of another, remake the world of another personality, seeing in this victory a symbol of destiny overcome, the universe moulded to his will" (13). In the end, it is the perspectival pride that metaphorically chains him to a rock in the sea as is the case with Momus. Swiftian comedy makes sure that his geometrical punishment lasts forever but with a humanist wish in mind of the correction of a gullible perspectivism that is implicative of a reformatory optics which almost sits on the verge of posthuman comedy (McGurl 549).

Conclusion

The Momian inheritance in the Swiftian canon, let alone in *Gulliver's Travels*, might strike the critical eye as a rather bleak one. However, upon close inspection, it appears that Swift draws upon a rich literary tradition which could be traced back to Lucian where the doubtful Olympian is used as a symbol for truthful speech. Drawing on this heritage, in *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift puts to display his wide range of dependence on the Renaissance reception of the Momian story due to the degree of perspectivism he chooses to employ. From this perspective, he is in constant conversation with Alberti's geometrical optics whose passion for ocularcentrism is evidenced in the observant eye of the exilic Momus. In this sense, since in Ian Watt's words, "from the Renaissance onwards, there was a

growing tendency for individual experience to replace collective tradition as the ultimate arbiter of reality" (9), Lemuel Gulliver shares with Alberti's abrasive commentator a linear perspectivism. As a self-proclaimed man of science and a lover of experiential adventure, Gulliver strikes the reader as an eighteenth-century Momus with a claim to an all-seeing truth and self-centred vision. He is a testament to Swift's mimetic debt to Renaissance humanism in a context which transcends the points of intersection between Swift's Christian humanism and the civic humanisms of Erasmus and Rabelais (Hammond 192) since in adapting the perspectival eye of Alberti, Swift rekindles the early modern fire of geometricised vision. And yet, he resorts to the ancient comfort of comedic irredeemableness. Gulliver is no 'puppet,' but he is the Momian Punch who brings all to view. But, the punchline of the joke eventually strikes a neo-Latin pose and asks: *Quid tum?*

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Pilgrims Speaking Angry Words: Change and Anger in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

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Abstract: Medieval literature presents emotions such as anger as negative and destructive for the development of the medieval subject and society and defines anger not as a positive constructive affect but as an emotive reaction that should be suppressed, controlled or avoided. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, written against a background of tremendous change generated by political and religious conflict, the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt, acknowledges anger as an essential element of medieval culture although it does not give much space to the causes of it. The Canterbury pilgrims experience and perform anger as a result of the unstructured and fast change taking place in the traditional stabilities. Indeed, the changing society represented by the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales* appears to have anger issues and accordingly is characterised by situations of conflict and emotional crises. The pilgrims are presented as failing in terms of conformity and obedience to the regulatory principles of the feudal structure also because they foster anger and have angry responses when they are expected to suppress, avoid and control their anger. Anger in this context is presented as an essential element of the new culture that produces it. This paper reads Chaucer's representation of anger as an affect/emotion in the *Canterbury Tales* and argues that as an emotive/affective agent, anger performed by the defiant pilgrims represents and forms the cultural response to the pervasive change and its results in the medieval feudal social structure represented in the *Canterbury Tales.*

Öfkeli Sözler Söyleyen Hacılar: Chaucer'ın *Canterbury Hikâyeleri*'nde Değişim ve Öfke

Öz: Ortaçağ edebiyatı öfke gibi duyguları toplum ve bireyler için olumsuz ve yıkıcı olarak görüp, öfkenin yapıcı ve olumlu bir olgu değil, aksine bastırılması, kontrol altına alınması ve kaçınılması gereken bir duygu durumu olduğunu gösterir. Chaucer'ın politik ve dini çatışmalar, Kara Veba ve Köylü Ayaklanması gibi gelişmelerden kaynaklanan büyük bir değişim bağlamında yazdığı *Canterbury Hikâyeleri* adlı eseri, sosyo-kültürel sebeplerine çok yer vermemekle beraber, öfkeyi Ortaçağ kültürünün önemli bir ögesi olarak sunar. Canterbury hacıları geleneksel yapının hızlı ve belli bir düzeni olmayan değişimine tepki olarak öfke duyar ve öfkeli bir performans gösterirler. Aslında, *Canterbury Hikâyeleri*'nde hacıların temsil ettiği değişen toplum, çatışma ve duygusal krizlerle karakterize bir toplumdur. Hacılar, öfkelerini kontrol edip, bastırmaları ve öfkeden kaçınmaları beklenirken öfke besleyerek ve öfkeli tepkiler vererek de feodal yapının düzenlemelerine uyum

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sağlamakta başarısız olurlar. Öfke, bu bağlamda, onu üreten yeni kültürün önemli bir parçası olarak sunulur. Bu makale, Chaucer'ın *Canterbury Hikayeleri*'nde bir duygu/afekt olarak öfkenin temsilini inceleyerek, sisteme karşı duran hacıların gösterdiği öfkenin, yaygın değişimin ürettiği ve söz konusu değişime bir tepki olarak gelişen duygusal/afektif bir eyleyici olarak yer aldığını tartışır.

This paper reads Chaucer's representation of anger as an affect/emotion in the *Canterbury Tales* and argues that as an emotive/affective agent, anger represents and forms the cultural response to the pervasive change and its results in the medieval feudal social structure represented in the *Canterbury Tales.*[1] Medieval literature presents emotions such as anger as negative and destructive for the development of the medieval subject and society and defines anger not as a positive constructive affect but as an emotive reaction that should be suppressed, controlled or avoided.[2] My discussion in this paper, hence, is structured according to two important aspects of the *Canterbury Tales*, that it is a work of change and that the culture it represents is a culture of anger. It sees a correlation between the change generated by the socio-cultural developments and the anger produced by it as an essential element of medieval culture although the *Canterbury Tales* does not offer direct evidence for the socio-historical changes that generate a culture of anger. The Canterbury pilgrimage, in this context, is presented as an experience of people who are aware of the change taking place in the traditional stabilities and use anger as an agent to affect a reconstruction in their position in society. Change as a staple of the society presented in the *Canterbury Tales* has long been recognised and there are studies that address and identify anger in the *Canterbury Tales.* The notable studies of Jill Mann and Griffith present important insights on the way anger operates in relation to its philosophical and social contexts and demonstrate its negative implications for the pilgrims. Griffith traces the use of medieval tradition of anger in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and argues that "the medieval world took much care in trying to legislate and

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[1] This paper is a revised version of Professor Talat Sait Halman Lecture delivered at the 16th International İDEA Conference, Studies in English 24-26 April 2024, Cappadocia University, Mustafa Pasha Campus, Nevşehir, Türkiye. The author thanks the IDEA President Prof. Dr. Işıl Baş, and the organisers of the conference, Dr. Sinan Akıllı and his team.

[2] Considering Chaucer "as a writer with privileged insight into human emotions," Stephanie Downes provides a framework for the history of the reception of Chaucerian emotions in "Geoffrey Chaucer: Reading with Feeling" 409- 414. See also, Andrew Lynch, "The History of Emotions and Literature" and Sarah McNamer, "Emotion" for a review of Chaucerian emotions and criticism, p.128.

manage anger" (7). Mann's "Anger and 'Glosynge' in the *Canterbury Tales*" focuses on the ways anger is managed in the *Manciple's Tale* and the marriage group. It illustrates how the work uses glossing in the regulation of anger. It seems, however, that the anger dominating the pilgrims' interaction with the world is more of an emotional response of agential power the pilgrims utilise to achieve their aspirations of equality and freedom.

The pilgrims speak angry words, indeed, in the *Canterbury Tales*, and are often defined as angry. The Reeve and the Wife of Bath, for instance, are introduced as angry by nature in the General Prologue. The Reeve manages the manor with anger where the manorial workers fear him as much as the plague, or death itself [3] (I 587, 605).[4] The Miller is angry and drunk at the same time throughout the pilgrimage; the guildsmen's ladies get upset if their new position is not recognised and they do not get the treatment they desire and are addressed as madam (I 376-78). The Wife of Bath is a figure of nonconformity and resistance, angered when people do not observe her right to be the first in giving donations (I 444-52), and, as argued below, ready to fight her way to independence and social recognition as a woman through anger. The Shipman is always angry and cruel to his opponents (I 398-400). Briefly, the Host as the leader of the company of the pilgrims as a hostellier, (Tupper 263) the Friar because his sermon on anger fails in the *Summoner's Tale* are angry. The Cook and the Manciple, for instance, are figures of antagonism and angry criticism. When it is the Cook's turn to tell a tale, the Host invites the Cook to tell the next tale but the Cook is too drunk to oblige, in fact, he can hardly stay on his horse because of his drunk state. When the Manciple points out the drunken appearance of the Cook, "with this speche the Cook wax wrooth and wraw/ And on the Manciple he gan nodde faste/ For lakke of speche, and doun the hors him caste" (I 46–8). Similarly, in the *Pardoner's Tale*, the three rioteers are motivated by anger with Death caused by the Black Death and are ready to kill in their rage (VI 753-759).[5] Similarly, the Host gets angry with the Pardoner when the Pardoner, after his proud account of duping the faithful people with his false relics and sermon, tries to sell his relics to the pilgrims. In turn, the Pardoner gets angry when the Host tells him off and dismisses his offer with angry threats: "This Pardoner answerde nat a word;/So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye" (VI 956-57). It is instructive that the angry pilgrims are mainly the figures who sit rather uncomfortably in their estates and seek ways of changing their status. As argued below, we see examples of anger directed at the system and used to improve the status of the pilgrim particularly in the Miller and the Wife's Bath's engagement with the established regularities. Both the Miller and the Wife utter angry words and perform

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[3] Bryant presents the consequences of the feelings of surveillance such a position creates upon the Reeve in "Accounting For Affect in the Reeve's Tale."

[4] References to Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson, Oxford University Press, 1987.

[5] Tupper's *"The Quarrels of the Canterbury Pilgrims"* is one of the first studies that provide several examples of the frictions between the pilgrims, most of which seem to be occasioned by the quarrells about their rights. See Tupper 263. See also Wawrzyniak, "Cognitive Metaphors of Anger and Madness in *The Canterbury Tales"* which identifies and groups the angry pilgrims and their angry interactions as metaphors.

anger to have an impact as figures of friction, defiance and contest. Clearly, anger dominates, and anger operates through "the occupants of medial positions" (Bryant 128) who respond angrily to their public image, and seek betterment.

Moreover, two tales in the *Canterbury Tales* inform us about the long-standing tradition and the dominant discourse of anger in the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages received the classical ideas about anger from Seneca and Aristotle and blended the classical views of Aristotle with the teachings of Christianity taught especially by Aquinas (Rosenwein, *Anger* 89-90). The medieval period associated Aristotle's view of human anger as virtuous with God's anger and allowed its practice by the humans against sin as righteous anger. In this context, anger was an emotion to be exercised only by the authorities and it caused disorder when performed by the lower classes. The Senecan understanding of anger as an emotion with destructive consequences and the Aristotelian idea of anger, adapted by Aquinas, as potentially good but evil when performed by humans urged the medieval authorities to have it as a privileged to use in controlling the masses (Rosenwein, *Anger* 99). To this view, anger differed in nature according to the agent of anger and its consequences. The medieval anger, thus, was of two kinds, the righteous anger needed for the protection, correction and disciplining of the people, and the evil destructive anger to be restrained and avoided (Rosenwein, *Anger* 82, 96,127). The *Parson's Tale*, for instance, provides a catalogue of the evil consequences of anger and emphasises how anger breeds hate, discord, war, manslaughter, and is generative of more anger. It also offers a significant categorisation of anger as righteous anger and bad anger, as Aquinas does (Griffith 14-15). When the Parson speaks of the anger of the authorities, he presents anger as an agential and corrective emotion of change. In other words, he, in fact, recognises anger as a necessary emotive response for the betterment of society. But, as the established system does, the Parson's sermon, too, in its definition of good anger, allows anger to be felt and used only by the powerholders (X 531-40). Similarly, in his capacity as a preacher, the Friar, in the *Summoner's Tale*, is eager to present the medieval ideas about anger in his abortive attempt to pacify the anger of a sick man lying in bed (III 1992-2004). Similar to the Parson later, the Friar delivers a discourse of anger as detrimental both to the angry subject and the relationship between the people. He foregrounds the potential of anger in provoking further anger and vengeance, particularly in women (III 2001-4). The Friar of the *Summoner's Tale*, in fact, illustrates the negative aspects of anger both in his lecture and his own angry response to the trick played upon him by the angry husband of the tale. Similar to what the Parson says of anger in his sermon, anger is "Abhominable unto the god of hevene; And to himself it is destruccion" (III 2005-6), says the Friar. He, thus, cautions the sick man that "This every lewed viker or person/Can seye, how Ire engendreth homicyde. /Ire, is, in sooth, executour of Pryde" (III 2008-2010; see Tupper 260). Both the *Parson's Tale*, and the *Summoner's Tale* insist that anger must be checked and restrained.

However, in the *Canterbury Tales,* the correctives about anger fail to have a significant result in changing the pilgrims' behaviour positively. In fact, anger seems to be

freely performed. As Jill Man states, in relation to the angry performances of the Friar in the *Summoner's Tale*, "much of the pilgrim attitude is not simply *about* anger, it is also *produced* by anger" (86). It is rather the case that anger and its manifestations circulate largely in a newly forming society of change. Hence, we can observe anger as routine response to demand and realise change among the pilgrims.

Indeed, the *Canterbury Tales* is a work of change.[6] Change is marked by the Spring as the season of pilgrimage that opens the work and the *Parson's Tale* promoting an ethical religious betterment at the end of it.[7] Through the Canterbury pilgrims and their often angry exchanges, Chaucer presents an angry world populated by angry people, a world which is necessarily angered and is struggling to live a life which accepts anger as one of its components. As Griffith in *Anger in the Canterbury Tales* states, it is "a world in which everyone, from every estate, on every rung of the hierarchy, from peasant to king and even beyond to the divine, is angry" (4). When we consider the anger in the *Canterbury Tales* in relation to the unsettling changes in the social structure and the economic system of the Middle Ages we see that the *Canterbury Tales* is written in the aftermath of the main events of the second half of the fourteenth century such as the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt. Indeed, as a period of a steady but often unwanted change, particularly in the traditional hierarchies of the dominant feudal system, the middle English period is marked by a predominantly angry form of change. As a human produced pandemic, the Black Death killed one third of the population in the first strike in 1348 and continued to claim lives regularly for decades. The Black Death's toll as a drastic drop or break in the demographic continuity created a relentless demand for change in the hierarchical order of the society as it reduced the work force considerably and weakened the land-based system of feudalism (Cooper 6, Platt 177, Amtower and Vanhoutte 21-22). Especially the traditional feudal bondage system already ruptured by the development of trade started to break away, as the workers demanded higher wages, and agriculture and food production began to suffer (Hilton 150-155). The Black Death as a mass killing disease consequently created potentialities for the commoners to even out the inequalities and differences in the hierarchical medieval order. It, at the same time, alerted the system to control and manage the changes taking place. The established order tried to restore the old order and correct the newly developed anti-establishment attitudes of the working classes. The Statute of the Labourers of the 1351 and the Sumptuary Laws aim to keep things as they are and suppress the change led by the commoners as unacceptable demands. They are reminders to those usherers of the unwanted change that they should stop. They contain precise rules in their monitoring of the changing society in terms of

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[6] That the *Canterbury Tales* represents the change particularly in the tripartite structure of the medieval society is a staple of Chaucer criticism. Jill Mann's *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* is one of the early works that establish and develop this thesis. See also Rigby, "English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Deference, Ambition and Conflict" and "Ideology" for a view of the medieval estate system as disfunctional and changing; the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt as important landmarks of the change.

[7] See Patterson, "'The Parson's Tale' and the Quitting of the 'Canterbury Tales'".

wages, spending on food, clothes and entertaining (Mc Farlene 143, Gransden 165). In this context, a strong impetus for change in the fourteenth century English society comes from the Peasants' Revolt which carries and performs extreme forms of anger. The Revolt urging people to "Be war or ye be wo/Know your friend from your foe" (Olson 54) is an open declaration of the challenge to the established order and demands for reform. It demonstrates "a lack of confidence in the chivalric and spiritual leadership of the country" as well as "a discontent with agrarian policy or the Statute of Laborers" (54). The Peasants' Revolt as the representative of the widespread anti-establishment change involves many groups and vocations, "peasants, carpenters, armorers, chaplains, tailors, lawyers, sacristans, clerks, weavers, bakers, limeburners, cooks, and others," in Olson's words (56). It is indeed, as Hilton states, a collective angry attempt of people with diverse opinions and concerns about the established system that fuels it (163). As such it seems to give full expression to the demands of the society of anger the change generated.

A significant recognition of the correlation between anger and change can be observed in the contemporary accounts of the Peasants' Revolt. The contemporary presentations of the Revolt show the anger of the ruling classes as righteous anger at the anger of the peasants and condemn the Revolt because it demanded equality for the commoners. Moreover, the Revolt is considered to be unjustifiable because the change is demanded with violent and destructive anger. According to Froissart, the peasants' anger is, as the Parson states, "wikked wil to been avenged by word or by dede," and they are "out of alle juggement of reason" (X 534-36).Gower, too, concords that, through the Peasants' Revolt, the established system is destroyed, that it is an attack on what is good and lawful, and "This fury trampled our fatherland under foot,/Not only in cities but everywhere" (1353-58).

For the revolting peasants, however, anger seems to work as an effective useful emotion with the power to improve the faulty system of the rulers and the ruled. It is, as stated, partly a response to the repressive apparatuses used by the rulers to reinstate their authority. It develops, that is, as a counterproduct of the restorative and corrective measures taken by the upper classes to contain the change taking place and to monitor the responses of the commoners. The peasants' demand for change is a complex political reconstruction. Their leader, John Ball, in his angry articulation of the demands of the Revolt, urges for the release of people from bondage. According to John Ball, the authorities need to see that "things cannot go right in England and never will, until goods are held in common and there are no more villeins and gentlefolk, but we are all one and the same" (Froissart 212). Their anger encourages them to meet with the King and express the need for change. They insist that not their anger but the state they are in is "the evil" to be remedied: "Let us go to the king," John Ball suggests, "and show him how we are oppressed and tell him that we want things to be changed or else we will change them ourselves...And when the King sees and hears us he will remedy the evil either willingly or otherwise" (Froissart 212-13). And the people said, "he is right" (213).

According to the established system, the system originated by Adam and Eve is not one of equality but of superiors and inferiors and the inferiors are there to serve their life purpose by serving and supporting the system. The Parson in the *Canterbury Tales,* similarly, preaches control and restraint in his tale and calls for a calmer mutual interrelation in his confirmation of the traditional hierarchies: "God ordaiyned that some folk shoulde be moore high in estaat and in his degree, and some folk moore lough, and that everich sholde be served in his estaat and in his degree…And certes the lord oweth to his man that the man oweth to his lord" (X 771-79). It is not democracy but hierarchy that strengthens society according to the Parson (Rayner 144). A similar hierarchy seems to be at work in the performance of anger as the Friar in the *Summoner's Tale* warns, "Beth war, therfore, with lordes how ye pleye…./Singeth '*Placebo*,' and 'I shal if I kan,'/But if it be unto a povre man./To a povre man men sholde his vices telle,/But nat to a lord, thogh he sholde go to helle" (III 2074–8).

As opposed to the recommended attitude, the peasants' challenging chant goes, "When Adam Delved and Eve Span/Who was then the gentleman?", defying this order. But the King's reply does not address the peasants' question in terms of equality they seek, instead it reinstates the suppressive order and reiterates the dominant feudal discourse regarding the peasants' position: "Rustics you were and rustics you are still, You will remain in bondage not as before but incomparably harsher" (Patterson, "No Man" 134). Consequently, in the Peasants' Revolt, we observe that the peasants' anger for their state is not accepted by the authorities. Indeed, their anger with the authorities is considered as a violation of the established order and of the "scripted norms of feeling for a community-produced identity" as Burger and Crocker state in a different context (2). It seems that the authorities of the feudal system have the power to decide and teach the nonaristocratic communities, "how to feel about their state", in Fiona Somerset's words, (qtd. in Burger and Crocker 3) but the peasants aimed to develop and perform their own responses, as they were "highly organised and ideologically motivated" (Amtower and Vanhoutte 24).

It is likely that Chaucer's pilgrims experienced the anger of the peasants and wanted to join them or feared them like the authorities. Still, anger as historical contingency forming emotional regimes is not correlated with historical evidence in the *Canterbury Tales*. Indeed, "understanding the situational or topical in Chaucer's poetry is not easy," although Chaucer was much involved with the events of the time (Olson 16, 59). *Canterbury Tales,* in a way, voices and mutes the changes in the three pillars of the feudal system, the Knight and the aristocracy, the Parson and the clergy, the Plowman and the traditional workers do not have any issues with the system while we have "the anxieties raised by bourgeois and gentry attempt[ing] to develop new ethical subject positions" (Burger 91). The representation of the Plowman in the *Canterbury Tales,* for instance*,* illustrates how references to the Peasants' Revolt are muted and the anger driving the peasants' will to destroy the feudal system is not shared by the Plowman. On the contrary, he seems to be entirely unaffected by the swelling anger of the commoners that eventually

exploded in the Peasants' Revolt. The Plowman does happily, without complaint, or protest what the feudal order has assigned to his group. He is a "trewe swynkere.../Lyvnyge in pees and parfit charitee" (I 531-32). He tills the land, digs wells without complaint (I 530-541). It is a significant comment on the ravaging anger of the Peasants' Revolt that the Plowman remains entirely unaffected by anger and the changing circumstances of living in the post-plague and post- revolt period. As Rosenwein states, "[the] lack of emotions is also part of emotions history," (*Generations of Feeling* 215-21), and the Plowman says much about the social and political discontent of the period by submitting to the established order. A more articulate and direct anger generated by a self-acknowledged need for change dominates the attitudes of the Miller and the Wife of Bath.

The Miller and the Wife of Bath can be grouped together as figures sustaining ruptures in the system of the equals and unequals as they both declare their disapproval of the system and speak of the need for change. The Miller's status in medieval society is controversial. As Patterson states, the millers were brought back under the manorial control in the 13th century, and they were the participants of the Peasants' Revolt ("No Man" 126, 128). Accordingly, a particularly important instance of supporting change angrily and gaining the right consequently to speak is illustrated when the Miller refuses to observe the order established for tale telling and wants to cut in with what he claims to be a noble story like the one told by the Knight to "quit" the Knight (I 3125-26). His anger is accompanied by an extremely drunk state, as he himself admits (I 3137-40), and is thus undermined as drunken protest by the Host and his fellow pilgrims, too. When the Host "saugh that he was dronke of ale," he tells the Miller to go on with telling his tale because he is "a fool" and his "wit is overcome" (I 3134-35).The Reeve, similarly, protests that the Miller is allowed to tell an inappropriate tale in a drunken state: "Lat be thy lewed dronken harlotrye" (I 3145), he says. In this sense, the Miller performs the kind of anger the Parson and the authorities on anger consider as destructive. He, in fact, suffers exclusion and lack of regard because of his drunken anger and attempted violence. It is important that the narrator explains the reasons for including the obviously offensive tale of the Miller in his account of the tale telling. Despite the fact that the Miller is oppositional to the order agreed on, the narrator presents the Miller's anger as an emotional reaction, and his subsequent tale as an alternative that can be preferred or declined according to the taste of the pilgrims/reader, "...whoso list it nat yheere/Turne over the leef and chese another tale" (I 3176-77). The narrator stresses the fact that, as everyone knows, the Miller is a "churl", a low-born figure, and behaves accordingly (I 3182). The Prologue to the *Miller's Tale,* thus, problematises the right the Miller has to perform tale telling as a member of the pilgrim company. The narrator explains that he is responsible for including and repeating all the tales "be they bettre or werse" or he will not be able to complete his task (I 3174-75). Consequently, the Miller proceeds with his tale and in the order he wants it despite the protests and calls for observing the social hierarchy. The Miller's angry claim to the right to tell a noble tale is a clear indication of the class struggle underlying the

Canterbury Tales. One of the reasons for downplaying the Miller's anger is obviously his lower status. As the accounts of the Revolt demonstrate, the anger or the angry demands of the peasants were not acknowledged and there was a tendency to label their efforts as insanity. The Friar of the *Summoner's Tale* warns that angry men should not hold high positions as their exercise of authority will do more harm than good: "It is greet harm and certes greet pitee/To sette an irous man in heigh degree" (I 2015-16), and that the angry men in general should be shunned: "Ne be no felawe to an irous man/Ne with no wood man walke by the weye/Lest thee repente" (I 2086-88). According to the nobility, the peasants were "a different race" (Hilton 34). Accordingly, the Miller is "cousin to the Revolt's Jack the Miller, seen through the eyes of the elite court" (Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject* 320)[8] and is of that different race, too. Such views of the commoners show that as a commoner, the Miller is not entitled to anger, especially to protest the authority. He is rather someone whose emotional reactions are scripted by the dominant ideology, and who is taught to restrain and suppress his anger by the medieval order. We observe that, indeed, in that sense, the Miller is angry with the system and is emboldened by his anger. The dominant system represented by the Host does not treat the Miller's demands as proper, while the Miller believes in the righteousness of his anger.[9] The Prologue to the *Miller's Tale* reads: "The Millere..gan to crie…/And swoor, 'By armes, and by blood, and bones, /I kan a noble tale for the nones/ With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale" (I 3124-27). He seems to be asking the questions John Ball directs at the aristocracy. John Ball demands to know "In what way are those whom we call lords greater masters than ourselves? How have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in bondage? If we all spring from a single father and mother, Adam and Eve, how can they claim or prove that they are lords more than us, except by making us produce and grow the wealth which they spend?" (Froissart 212). Hence, the Miller's anger at the storytelling order appears to be more forceful and functional in conveying the social discrimination of the hierarchical social order prevalent in his society. For instance, the Host seems to be exercising the control expected from the powerful authorities and finding different reasons, such as his drunkenness, for the Miller's anger. There seems to be a similarity between the *Chronicles* and *the Canterbury Tales* in their presentation of the anger of the commoners in this context. Froissart identifies the prosperous state of the peasants as the main reason for the Revolt and their claims of equality, and challenges their protests that they were not treated properly. He states, on the contrary, "it was because of the abundance and prosperity in which the common people then lived that this rebellion broke out", although the commoners, "these bad people…said, theye were held in too much subjection"

[8] Olson stresses the nobility's attitude illustrated in the *Summoner's Tale* in the case of the fart to be divided equally among four participants as an impossibility because it is suggested by a peasant. See *Chaucer and the Subject of History,* p. 320.

[9] See Paul Friedman, "Peasant Anger in the Late Middle Ages", 171-188. Also Stephen D. White, "The Politics of Anger", p. 139, about the priviledge of the rulers to publicly display their anger. White argues that the prerogative of the ruler to perform anger makes anger a powerful political force, p.152.

(Froissart 211).[10] The change thus demanded and articulated very angrily is considered to be "the greatest evils [of]disorder and anarchy" (Froissart, Introduction 21). Because "they were envious of the nobles and the rich. These began saying that the country was badly governed and was being robbed of its wealth by those who called themselves noblemen" (Froissart 213). The Host, too, is condescending; he does not respond angrily, but answers politely and invites the Miller to observe social and narrative decorum: "Abyd, Roby, my leeve brother;/Som bettre man shal tel us first another/Abyd, and let us werken thriftily" (I 3129-31). The Host is calm and kind when he reminds the Miller that he will follow the plan of telling tales as decided. But, clearly, his words to the Miller echo the Parson's, as well as the established system's, conviction that the established order is "God ordaiyned" (771) and the Miller is not good enough to tell a tale after the Knight. Thus, the proposition of the Host generates more anger for the Miller who insists that he is entitled to tell a tale when he wants. The Miller performs anger, as Jill Mann states, as "a fundamental refusal to accept the way things are" (Anger, 97). Accordingly, like the peasants described by Froissart and Gower, the Miller's anger is too strong to manage. He is relentless in his demands and does not accept any negotiation: "…That wol nat I/ For I wol speke or elles go my wey" (I 3132-33), his angry response to the Host's proposal reads. It is important to note that the Miller is aware that to tell a tale after the Knight and engage in a tale telling that does not suit his class/estate proprieties is not acceptable. His anger is generated by that precise understanding. It is where anger becomes productive of change, as he still presses for acceptance of his new position by the others. The questioning of his right to tell a tale after the Knight is accordingly countered by him with a question to the Reeve: "Why artow angry with my tale now" (I 3157). The Miller clearly not only subverts the established order and its regulations by claiming to have rights still not endorsed by the system through anger, but also manages to speak his words puncturing the established order: "He nolde his wordes for no man forbere", and tells "his cherles tale in his manere" (I 3168-69). Thus, he boastfully offers his own culture, social position and storytelling as equal, despite the abortive attempts of the Host, Harry Bailey, who would prefer the Monk to speak (I, 3138). Evidently, anger in the case of the Miller in direct inconsideration of what the others think gets the Miller what he wants. The narrative registers the struggle for equality performed with anger by the Miller and presents the Miller's attempted rupture of the system as accepted. His anger in a way gets approved, albeit because he leaves no other options to the pilgrim company. He manages to change the hierarchical order, in direct opposition to what Ganim argues to be the collectively learned response of the medieval people. The Miller shows that he does not think "in terms of an hierarchical model, in which one accepted one's place", in Gawin's words (226). He, in fact, is in direct opposition to the "complex network of loyalties

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[10] Postan, in *Medieval Economy and Society,* sees the Peasants' Revolt as a result of the prosperity of the working class, pp.201-2.

developed under feudalism" (Ganim 226), and tries for a recognition of his revisions of the system. His words, "...That wol nat I/ For I wol speke or elles go my wey" become performative of anger expressing the change of status he declares to be his right.[11] Thus doing, his prologue cuts through the complex relationship between anger and change and repositions anger as agential in the socio-political change characterising the medieval period.[12]

Anger employed for change is louder and more direct in the Wife of Bath's Prologue, particularly in her relationship with her fifth husband.[13] A powerful criticism of the established order, The Wife's Prologue opens with anger with the dominant discourse of marriage and wifehood and focuses especially on her negotiations for freedom and independence with her fifth husband Jenkyn who is a clerk. Jenkyn is interested in change, too, and tries to create a decent, submissive, obedient wife out of the Wife of Bath by reading her, every night, stories of the wicked women of the clerical tradition (III 641-42 ff). The Wife is not subdued but rather becomes violently angry at the attitude of her husband and the stories that he uses to tame her. Her response is to rip pages out of her husband's book (III 788-96). Her response to her husband's reading is, indeed, the "most remarkable instance of anger in a woman that invites empathy and remains brilliantly ambivalent" as Blamires states (35). The fight that ensues between them leaves her deaf but also wins her mastery over her husband in her marriage (III 811-25), thus she achieves a perpetual change in her position in the marriage as a wife. As Glenn Burger argues, if we take her deafness as the representation of "the disabling effects of the social on the body" (102) we can see how anger operates to correct the social as well.

It is important to note that the Wife becomes an angry figure only when provoked and in response to the pressure that will limit her rights and freedom. She, in a way, finds herself pressed for giving back what her life as a successful working woman eventually enabled her to have. As Miller states, "a trope of economic exchange" governs her subjectivity and drives her as a member of "the most dynamic segment of the English economy" (558). The relationship with her fifth husband is one of superiors and inferiors in which the husband is self-righteous and demanding. As Downes states, her husband "takes pleasure in emotionally abusing his wife by reciting anti-feminist stories and proverbs. He owns a book of "wikked wyves" (line 685) from which he frequently reads

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[11] Barbara Rosenwein, in *Anger: The Conflicted History of an Emotion*, states, "Emotion words are performative, and this is certainly true in the case of anger. When we say 'I am angry' aloud, or when the tone of our voice is angry, we are performing our anger, as if in a play" p. 67.

[12] Patterson suggests in "No Man His Reason Herde", p. 137, that the *Miller's Tale* reverses the peasants' defamation and establishes a freer world where stigmatization and suppression have no place. See also, Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, p. 264, for a similar view.

[13] Olson states that with the Wife of Bath's Prologue "we move from the political opposition generated by class inequality of Fragment I to an ideological antithesis determined by gender," *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, p. 281.

for his amusement ("his desport"), laughing uproariously ("[a]t which boke he lough alwey ful faste," lines 670–2)" (417).

The Wife's anger, thus, originates from her conviction that her life is governed by principles that deny her the right to perform freely and equally in her marriage of love, and society. Her violent anger breeds further anger as expected, but, in the end, her angry response to her fifth husband and the established order becomes productive of change in her marital and economic relations as she changes her husband, not herself. Clearly, in the case of the Wife, it is the Wife who uses anger as an agent of change. In Bryant's words, struggling to survive in "a system interested in controlling affect and controlling through affect" (120), the Wife performs as a figure of anger to obtain and have accepted what she desires. It is likely, therefore, that the Wife, too, reconstructs anger as the good anger in celebrating the consequences of her angry reaction. She is entitled to anger but she also has the power to transform the anger of the authorities represented by her clerk husband into a peaceful and life changing acceptance of the demands of the discontented. Her anger, like that of the Peasants' Revolt, is directed at the ills of the system and its abuses. She shows that what she is forced to abide by and practice as a wife "is a set of assumptions, a catalog of postures" (Dinshaw 30) that can be reconstructed and changed. Her anger consequently introduces and reinforces a necessary change in her status. As Crocker states, for the Wife, "what was an outlawed position must visibly move toward the center to achieve social or political credibility" (110). She, like the Miller, is insistent on forming an emotional community through anger that would guarantee that they are "bound together to form emotional 'regimes' [against the] …. hegemony" (Burger and Crocker 7).

In conclusion, the pilgrims speaking angry words in the *Canterbury Tales* show that anger is deeply correlated with change, it is produced by change and is simultaneously an agent of change. What we observe in the *Canterbury Tales* in terms of anger as a systematically and frequently performed emotive response is that it involves both the ones who attempt to reconfigure the established regularities and those who object to such reconstruction vigorously. Clearly, while the authorities on anger aim to present anger as a disabling socio-religious affect, the angry pilgrims consider anger as an ideological construct deeply embedded in the living conditions of the time. A reading of the representation of anger in the *Canterbury Tales*, hence, urges us to stand beside the pilgrims as Chaucer does and exercise a double vision facilitated by the often-muted socio-cultural background that seems to be taxing the people of the period and encouraging them for more equality and freedom than the established system allows. The anger as an emotive reaction observed in the interactions of the pilgrims such as the Miller and the Wife of Bath becomes the representative of emotional regimes formed through and against the established order. Accordingly, as Patricia DeMarco argues in a different context, "in order to situate their anger, we need to consider it not simply as an abstract philosophical or theological concept which pertains to every individual, but as an emotion whose complex meanings depend upon socially constructed ideas about [their

profession...], the roles and duties of [the angry subjects] and the cultural context [...]in which [their anger] operates" (57). We need to view the pilgrim anger, that is, in Sara Ahmed's terms, as "what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects" (29).

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Cruelty and Tragedy: Cathartic Journey in Peter Shaffer's *Equus*

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Abstract: The concept of catharsis has evolved much since Aristotle defined it in *Poetics* as the purgation of feelings such as pity and fear caused by an imitation of a tragic action. Drawing on Aristotelian catharsis, Freudian psychoanalysis also contributes to the understanding of the cathartic effect in Peter Shaffer's *Equus* (1973). Similarly, as Antonin Artaud argues in *Theatre and Its Double*, the theatre of cruelty aims to arouse a therapeutic effect in order to discharge the negative feelings of the audience. Although the play is widely acknowledged as an example of epic theatre, it also evokes the characteristics of theatre of cruelty with its portrayal of overt violence and its emotional reflections on the main characters. This includes both the purification of feelings and psychological clarification of these characters as represented in the play. The relationship between the psychiatrist Martin Dysart and his patient Alan Strang can be regarded as a mutual play within the play, which makes them each other's audience as well. Relying on Artaudian and Freudian frameworks, this paper aims to illustrate how the play reveals the modern facet of the concept of catharsis by claiming that both Dysart and Alan discharge their negative feelings in a therapeutic relationship.

Vahşet ve Trajedi: Peter Shaffer'ın *Küheylan* Oyununda Katartik Yolculuk

Öz: Katarsis kavramı, Aristoteles'in *Poetika*'da trajik bir eylemin taklidinden kaynaklanan acıma ve korku gibi duyguların arınması olarak tanımlamasından bu yana çok gelişmiştir. Aristotelesçi katarsisten yola çıkarak, Freudcu psikanaliz de Peter Shaffer'ın *Küheylan* (1973) oyununda katartik etkinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Antonin Artaud'nun *Tiyatro ve İkizi*'nde savunduğu gibi vahşet tiyatrosu izleyicinin olumsuz duygularını boşaltmak amacıyla tedavi edici bir etki uyandırmayı amaçlar. Oyun büyük ölçüde epik tiyatronun bir örneği olarak kabul edilse de şiddeti açık bir şekilde tasvir etmesi ve ana karakterler üzerindeki duygusal yansımalarıyla da vahşet tiyatrosunun özelliklerini çağrıştırmaktadır. Bu, oyunda temsil edildiği şekliyle hem duyguların arındırılmasını hem de bu karakterlerin psikolojik arınmasını içerir. Psikiyatrist Martin Dysart ile hastası Alan Strang arasındaki ilişki, oyun içinde karşılıklı bir oyun olarak değerlendirilebilir ve bu da onları birbirlerinin izleyicisi haline getirir. Artaud ve Freud'un katarsise bakış açılarına dayanarak, bu makale hem Dysart'ın hem de Alan'ın olumsuz duygularını terapötik bir ilişki içinde boşalttıklarını iddia ederek oyunun katarsis kavramının modern yönünü nasıl ortaya çıkardığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

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Against the backdrop of Aristotelian catharsis, the term catharsis has been revisited many times in various fields from literature to psychoanalysis. As Aristotle (384–322 BCE) defined it, the concept of catharsis emerged basically as the purification of feelings, pity and fear, through the imitation of a tragic action. In this sense, Peter Shaffer's (1926–2016) *Equus* (1973), a modern tragedy, provides the audience, the psychiatrist Martin Dysart and his patient Alan Strang, with a cathartic journey. The playwright's aim to shock the audience through Alan's violent and cruel actions towards horses is also in line with Antonin Artaud's (1896–1948) idea that theatre must evoke a therapeutic effect to purge the audience of negative feelings. Referring to Artaud's theatre of cruelty, the relationship between Dysart and Alan operates as a play within the play, where they become spectators of each other's struggles and purify their negative emotions. Furthermore, Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) theories concerning dreams and repressed feelings enrich the understanding of their interaction as a source of catharsis and therapeutic healing. As they engage in this psychological dialogue, both characters discharge their emotions, leading a cathartic journey for Dysart and Alan in *Equus*. This paper aims to explore the modern facet of catharsis through Artaudian and Freudian lenses, claiming that both Dysart and Alan are tragic characters who become one another's audience and witness their tragic downfall.

To begin with, Aristotle defines catharsis as "the pleasure derived from pity and fear by means of imitation" (40). This definition underscores the importance of mimesis within the tragic framework for comprehending catharsis. According to Aristotle, mimesis refers to the imitation of significant "complete actions" that possess a certain "magnitude" and are conveyed through a trajectory of pity and fear, culminating in the emotional purification associated with tragic events (25). Regarding "pity and fear," the former emerges from situations where individuals experience misfortune despite not being "deserving" of it, while the latter pertains to the plight of a character who is "like the rest of mankind" (38). Additionally, key elements of catharsis include "peripety" and "recognition," as well as "the pathos," which encompasses "destructive or painful actions such as deaths on stage, paroxysms of pain, wounding, and similar experiences" (37). It becomes evident that suffering and brutality serve as critical touchstones for catharsis, provided they are accompanied by a reversal of fortune and moments of recognition. Aristotle's notion of catharsis suggests that the feelings of "pity and fear" arise inherently within the audience. This implies that the experience of these emotions is an intrinsic aspect of human nature when confronted with tragic narratives. Thus, Aristotelian

catharsis emphasizes not only psychological dimensions but also aesthetic considerations.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the concept of catharsis was first introduced by Josef Breuer (1842–1925) through his work with patients suffering from hysteria. His approach involved using what he termed the "talking cure," where patients would recount their traumatic experiences and emotion. This process, termed catharsis, was thought to relieve psychological symptoms and promote healing. In *Studies in Hysteria,* Freud and Breuer argue that an individual's reaction to a traumatic incident is "cathartic" only if there is an adequate response; however, "language provides a surrogate for action and with its assistance the affect can be 'abreacted'" (39). In line with their argument, Freud and Breuer also adopted the method of hypnosis to reveal the emotional burden of the patient's trauma. They purport that "distressing things are then, under hypnosis, found to be the foundation of hysterical phenomena" (41). By allowing patients to articulate their feelings and experiences in a supportive environment, they aim to release the repressed emotions. Thus, both psychoanalysts focus on the importance of expressing feelings with a cathartic effect to explore the origin of trauma and to discharge its negative effects. From their perspective, the talking cure and hypnosis are crucial in articulating thoughts and feelings since distressed people can confront and release their emotions with this therapeutic mechanism.

Furthermore, cruelty emerges as one of the key elements in *Equus*, playing a crucial role in understanding the cathartic moments in the play. In *Theatre and Its Double*, Antonin Artaud describes cruelty as a "higher mechanism" that cannot operate without consciousness (102). Artaud discusses that cruelty is not a mere carnage, but a conscious act which has a magnitude. In his manifesto, Artaud claims that "everything that acts is a cruelty" (85) and offers a new "theatre that wakes us up: nerves and heart" (84); each act in society contains a particular violence, which alters the lives of human beings. As Artaud assumes, excessive violence is a means to release the emotions from people's inner reality in which suppressed feelings such as "obsessions" and "crimes" are stored (92). On the one hand, he states that theatre should represent a bitter reality which has influences on people's lives in order to be plausible and in line with verisimilitude; however, it should not be a mere "copy of reality":

> We want to make out of the theatre a believable reality which gives the heart and the senses that kind of concrete bite which all true sensation requires. In the same way that our dreams have an effect upon us and reality has an effect upon our dreams, so we believe that the images of thought can be identified with a dream which will be efficacious to the degree that it can be projected with the necessary violence. (86)

Artaud argues that reality and dreams are interconnected and are reflected via adequate cruelty which can be necessary so as to comprehend reality better. On the other hand, the reality mentioned before should not only be about the "external world" but also about the "internal world" (92). The internal reality, which is also metaphysical, includes "crimes,

erotic obsessions, savagery, and even cannibalism" (92). In this respect, the theatre of cruelty offers the audience to deflect their repressed feelings in order to discover the external reality via the use of their inner sources. M. K. MacMurrough-Kavanagh suggests that the goal of Artaud's theatre of cruelty is to free the audience from blindly following societal norms, reconnect them with unconscious energies linked to dreams and imagination, and cleanse them of violent impulses that can lead to chaos. Therefore, it can be understood that catharsis in this form of theatre aims to create a therapeutic effect that encourages the audience to release their negative emotions.

As a contemporary tragedy, Peter Shaffer's play *Equus* explores the complex relationship between a psychiatrist, Dr. Martin Dysart, and a disturbed teenager, Alan Strang, who has committed a violent act against horses. As Dysart delves into Alan's psyche, he uncovers deep-seated religious and sexual obsessions, leading to questions about the nature of faith, sanity, and societal norms. The play ultimately examines the tension between passion and conformity to society. In understanding how catharsis is created in *Equus*, it is crucial to focus on themes and techniques together in the analysis of the play. The most striking technique paving the way for catharsis in the play is the use of monologues. Monologues play a crucial role in illustrating how catharsis is portrayed in the play. Through his soliloquies, Martin Dysart acts as a spectator to Alan's actions, providing commentary on the unfolding events:

> With one particular horse, called Nugget, he embraces. The animal digs its sweaty brow into his cheek, and they stand in the dark for an hour – like a necking couple. And of all nonsensical things – I keep thinking about the horse! Not the boy: the horse, and what it may be trying to do. I keep seeing that huge head kissing him with its chained mouth. Nudging through the metal some desire absolutely irrelevant to filling its belly or propagating its own kind. What desire could that be? Not to stay a horse any longer? Not to remain reined up for ever in those particular genetic strings? Is it possible, at certain moments we cannot imagine, a horse can add its sufferings together – the non-stop jerks and jabs that are its daily life – and turn them into grief? What use is grief to a horse? (Shaffer 17)

At the very beginning of Act 1 Episode 1, psychiatrist Martin Dysart is introduced to the audience along with his patient Alan Strang and a horse called Nugget. Dysart portrays the relationship between Alan and the horse on the stage in his long monologue, which creates the atmosphere of a play within the play: Dysart appears as an audience who is watching Alan and the horse. Additionally, Stephen Halliwell, a British classicist, states that people derive pleasure from mimetic representations, even when they portray subjects that are distressing to behold in real life, such as the forms of the most repugnant animals and dead bodies (178). In *Equus*, Doctor Dysart experiences a cathartic connection with Alan's story, with Nugget the horse serving as a 'mimetic object' for him. Through this lens, the horse becomes a means for Dysart to examine Alan's character. Dysart empathizes with Nugget, imagining its suffering, which reflects a transference of his emotions from Alan to the horse. Although the audience may find it unclear why Dysart

struggles to envision the horse's pain, there is a layer of dramatic irony, as he hints at Nugget's impending suffering due to a cruel act. This empathy prompts Dysart to engage in self-reflection later in the play. Thus, the initial instance of catharsis functions both as a foreshadowing element and a process of identification. Moreover, he continues his speech by addressing the audience: "The thing is I'm desperate. You see, I'm wearing that horse's head myself. That's the feeling," and "It's only the extremity of this case that's made them active" (Shaffer 18). In this speech, he directly indicates that he feels the same emotions as the horse and is shocked by the extreme cruelty of the incident that Alan is involved in. Thus, both as a narrator and an audience Dysart describes and prefigures the end of the play.

Acknowledging *Equus* as a modern tragedy, it is crucial to identify the tragic hero in the play within a psychoanalytical context. Drawing on Breuer's concept of catharsis, later psychoanalytical theories expanded on the emphasis on emotional release and the exploration of the unconscious mind became central themes in psychoanalysis. In "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," Sigmund Freud emphasizes that the release of a person's emotions and the pleasure derived from fulfilling those desires align with the relief experienced from their unrestricted expression, as well as the accompanying sexual arousal ("Psychopathic Characters" 144). Following this argument, Freud proposes three principles concerning the relationship between catharsis and theatre:

> 1) The hero is not psychopathic, but only becomes psychopathic in the course of the action of the play. 2) The repressed impulse is one of those which are similarly repressed in all of us, and the repression of which is part and parcel of the foundations of our personal evolution. It is this repression which is shaken up by the situation of the play. As a result of these two characteristics, it is easy for us to recognize ourselves in the hero: we are susceptible to the same conflict as he is, "since a person who does not lose his reason under certain conditions can have no reason to lose". 3) It appears as a necessary precondition of this form of art that the impulse that is struggling into consciousness, however clearly it is recognizable, is never given a definite name; so that in the spectator too the process is carried through with his attention averted and he is in the grip of his emotions instead of taking stock of what is happening. ("Psychopathic Characters" 147)

In line with the Aristotelian definition of tragedy and catharsis in *Poetics*, the aforementioned principles imply that the audience identifies themselves with the tragic hero within a process of recognition. From Freud's perspective, the hero is not inherently psychopathic and evolves so as the play progresses. This transformation is tied to commonly shared repressed feelings, which also keeps the spectator emotionally engaged with the hero and the play. Drawing from Aristotelian catharsis, Freud views it as the clear understanding of the gap between what becomes aesthetic pleasure through representation and how the spectator reacts, with the unconscious playing a key role in creating this gap (Vives 1017). In Freudian terms, the mechanism's unconscious functions as a catalyser between what is suppressed and what is reacted. Both views emphasize that

the audience's emotional engagement with the tragic hero arises from a shared process of recognition and transformation, with Freud highlighting the unconscious as a key factor in shaping this dynamic.

Freud's analyses of tragic characters shed light on Alan's emotional turmoil and his tragic downfall caused by his cruel actions in *Equus.* In accordance with their analysis, it can be interpreted that Alan's cruelty is the outcome of his repressed and obsessive feelings deriving from his childhood, rather than being his innate reality:

> **Frank** [*dryly*]: It seems he was perfectly happy raking out manure.
>
> **Dysart**: Did he ever give a reason for this?
>
> **Dora**: No, I must say we both thought it most peculiar, but he wouldn't discuss it. I mean, you'd have thought he'd be longing to get out in the air after being cooped up all week in that dreadful shop. Electrical and kitchenware! Isn't *that* an environment for a sensitive boy, Doctor? (Shaffer 32–33)

As Dysart observes, Alan is a "sensitive" boy and was not a psychopath at the beginning, yet he has become a cruel person influenced by his environment since his childhood. Alan's father, Frank Strang, tells Dysart that Alan has been "a weird lad" (33); however, Alan is not innately "weird," but he is transformed into a strange person through his mother's religious impositions, his father's atheist impacts, and the traumatic incidents he underwent in his childhood. As Maria Grazia Turri clarifies, "while the trauma itself was forgotten, the emotional response was 'repressed'," which eventually results in the expression of the repressed affect through the body (372). Thus, Alan's crime is a cruel reflection of his repressed sexual and religious feelings. His crime (blinding the horses) is performed through his bodily actions in a disguised form of sexual and religious practice. Alan's father explicitly explains why Alan has become a stranger and blames Alan's mother for this: "A boy spends night after night having this stuff read into him; an innocent man tortured to death – thorns driven into his head – nails into his hands – a spear jammed through his ribs. It can mark anyone for life, that kind of thing, I'm not joking. The boy was absolutely fascinated by all that. He was always mooning over religious pictures" (34). Frank emphasizes that "mooning over" and obsessive religious impositions have made Alan "strange" and affected his life in a bad way. Therefore, it can be claimed that there is a strong relationship between crime and obsession: Obsessive patterns repeated in childhood may cause crimes in certain phases of life such as adolescence. From these points of view, Alan employs violence as a means of expression which functions as a therapy for himself. However, this is not a therapy only for Alan but also for Dysart because as an audience he feels the cathartic effect and has a chance to explore his own unconscious to release his negative feelings such as pity and fear.

As the indicatives of unconsciousness in which the repressed feelings are stored, dreams also play a crucial role in understanding the cathartic moments in the play. In *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud asserts that "dreams often reveal themselves without any disguise as fulfilments of wishes" (156). From Freud's perspective, it can be assumed that

Dysart is a character who wants to fulfil his wishes through his identification with Alan. For instance, in Act 1 Episode 5, Dysart talks directly to the audience in an upset way explaining his own dream about Homeric Greece where he is a "chief priest" who is carrying out a significant "ritual sacrifice" (Shaffer 24). This dream can be considered a play within the play, and Dysart is both the hero and the audience of this play. As a hero, he accomplishes the tragic act as Alan has done; nevertheless, his function as an audience is more important. Although he is the chief priest conducting the ritual, he secretly feels "agitated" for the children sacrificed. The sacrifice and ritual are quite effective in influencing the audience, Dysart, and discharging his negative feelings, which is the therapeutic effect of catharsis. Secondly, his dream is the reflection of his own unconscious which is affected by the crime Alan Strang commits. In Episode 6, he tells Hesther that he has been seeing Alan's face "on every victim across the stone," which is the evidence that he is unconsciously influenced by Alan. As an audience, his dream is a reflection of what he feels for Alan's actions: He feels not only pity for the blinded horses but also fear for possible future crimes that Alan may commit. After he has seen such a dream, Dysart begins to experience a cathartic effect by identifying himself with Alan. He also continues to tell his dream: "[T]he dam mask begins to slip. The priests both turn and look at it – it slips some more – they see the green sweat running down my face – their gold pop-eyes suddenly fill up with blood" (25). It is important to state that the masks function as a determining element so as to complete the ritual sacrifice and symbolise the hidden feelings which come out of the masks as a veil for emotions such as pity and fear.

As is represented in Dysart's dream, Dysart is affected by Alan's violent actions as he identifies himself with Alan unconsciously, which creates a cathartic relationship between the two characters. However, *Equus*, as a modern tragedy, is based more on the antagonist rather than the hero. As Diana Culbertson argues, the understanding of tragic catharsis has changed and contemporary tragedy focuses more on the antagonist and the victims rather than on the hero or heroic causes (179–180). Unlike the classical tragedies, *Equus* employs the concept of catharsis through the representation of the antagonist and the victim. For instance, Alan who is a sensitive adolescent later becomes a psychopath and plays the role of both a victim and an antagonist in the play. On the one hand, Alan is a victim because he is an adolescent who tries to become an individual, but is under the influence of his family and environment. On the other hand, he becomes the antagonist in the play with his cruel actions. In both situations, Dysart witnesses Alan's process of subjectivity at first hand. As for Alan's subjectivity, both as the victim and the antagonist, referring to Lacanian concepts can be helpful to note that Alan is divided between the imaginary and the symbolic orders. Jacques Lacan argues that the images of our subject are "enmeshed in the symbolic order, in which the human subject is inducted into an event which is just as coalescing as you might imagine the original relation to be, which we are forced to admit as being a kind of residue of the real" (*The Ego in Freud's Theory* 257). As is implied, identity is intertwined with the symbolic order that shapes our understanding of events, and this connection can be seen as a remnant of the real. From this perspective,

Alan's struggle can be interpreted as his effort to reconcile his desires as the imaginary and societal structures as the symbolic order. Alan's divided subject clearly demonstrates his failure in this reconciliation.

Peter Shaffer's definition of theatre is also vital for reinterpreting the theme of catharsis in *Equus*, particularly in relation to the concept of cruelty. Firstly, according to Peter Shaffer, "the theatre should startle and absorb an audience" (MacMurrough-Kavanagh 17). Furthermore, in this formula, the theatre "should not be concerned with logic and rationality, but should satisfy audience needs associated with instinct and intuition" (17). In understanding of the definition of theatre for Shaffer, it is noted that the unconscious should be reinforced rather than the conscious. According to Shaffer, theatre should prioritize the unconscious over the conscious. He suggests that theatre transcends mere words or dialogue; it serves as a space for the cathartic release of deep-seated archetypal drives, allowing the audience to reconnect with its "memory" and cleanse itself of associated impulses (qtd. in MacMurrough-Kavanagh 18). Shaffer views theatre as a medium for the audience to purify primitive emotions. Similarly, Artaud envisioned theatre as a metaphysical realm that creates a mystical experience, enabling a collective purging of primal energies through performances that rely on an alternative form of "language" beyond just verbal communication (25). In *Equus*, the cruel and violent actions stand for the purification of those inherent and collective primal energies. To illustrate, Alan, the tragic hero, blinds six horses and then his own eyes in Act 2 Episode 34. Dysart, as Alan's immediate audience within the play, learns this tragic action through a stage direction:

> [He stabs out NUGGET's eyes. The horse stamps in agony. A great screaming begins to fill the theatre, growing ever louder. Alan dashes at the other two horses and blinds them too, stabbing over the rails. Their metal hooves join in the stamping. Relentlessly, as this happens, three more horses appear in cones of light: not naturalistic animals like the first three, but dreadful creatures out of nightmare...] (Shaffer 105)

In this stage direction, Alan's intense and suppressed emotions manifest through his violent actions. The act of blinding the horses represents his struggle to reconcile his hidden desires with societal expectations. For Dysart, this shocking moment serves as a form of catharsis, as it reveals how Alan's deep-seated instincts are unleashed in this tragic incident. This moment is pivotal in illustrating the profound internal conflict that Alan faces. His violence is not just an act of rebellion; it is a desperate attempt to express feelings he cannot articulate. Dysart's recognition of this chaos provides insight into the therapeutic process, highlighting the importance of confronting repressed emotions in order to find healing.

The cathartic effect in this scene on Dysart arises from his intense self-questioning following Alan's distressing actions in Episode 35. In a moment of desperation, he addresses Hesther, exclaiming, "All right! I'll take it away! He'll be delivered from madness. What then? He'll feel himself acceptable! What then?" (Shaffer 107). This

outburst reflects his deep questioning of his role as a doctor and the societal definitions of 'accepted' and 'normal.' Dysart feels ensnared by the constraints of societal expectations that complicate his understanding of healing. In his soliloquy, he candidly reveals his internal struggle: "I need – more desperately than my children need me – a way of seeing in the dark. What way is this? ... What dark is this? ... I cannot call it ordained of God: I can't get that far. I will however pay it so much homage. There is now, in my mouth, this sharp chain. And it never comes out" (109). His fragmented speech, laden with questions, highlights his uncertainty and deep entanglement in Alan's situation. As Act Two, Episode 22 unfolds, Dysart continues to confront his self-doubt, feeling as if he is emerging from the "black cave of the Psyche" (109). He is nearly lost in his "Psyche" with his "dim little torch" because he is so absorbed in his patient's suffering that he struggles to maintain his own identity (109). This imagery reinforces Dysart's overwhelming immersion in Alan's suffering. Finally, he calls himself "Poor Doctor Dysart" and acknowledges his failure to separate his own unconscious from Alan's actions (109).

Apart from a simple identification with Alan himself, Dysart is also enslaved by his feelings and cannot detach himself from Alan by playing the role of the antagonist. To begin with, he experiences a state of in-betweenness as he struggles between the status quo and his own passions. Dysart feels pity for Alan since he is unable to comply with what is regarded as sane and usual. He addresses the audience: "What did I expect of him? Very little, I promise you. One more dented little face. One more adolescent freak. The usual and unusual. One great thing about being in adjustment business: you're never short of customers" (21). He calls Alan an "adolescent freak" because he does not conform to the societal expectations. Dysart considers his job an "adjustment business," referring to his duty to normalise the "unusual" people by reintegrating them into the society. Like Alan, Dysart, as a professional, is also in between his desires and societal expectations. Secondly, he questions himself and his job as an "adjustment business" as he does not want to interfere with Alan's own worship, which actually points out how Dysart needs to discharge his repressed feelings by transferring his emotions to Alan. For instance, he talks to Hesther and explains how he is jealous of Alan: "Don't you see? That's the Accusation! That's what his stare has been saying all this time. '*At least I galloped! When did you*? . . . [*Simply.*] I'm jealous, Hesther, Jealous of Alan Strang" (82). He uses the word "gallop" and again identifies himself with both Alan and the horses. He is envious of Alan since he has an idiosyncratic worshipping of his horse god Equus. His worshipping is untouched and deviant according to society, yet Alan is happy in his own way. Dysart also continues his speech addressing Hesther: "What worship has *he* ever known? Real worship! Without worship you shrink, it's as brutal as that . . . I shrank my *own* life" (82). Moreover, James R. Stacy points out in his article that Dysart is in need of real worship in his life due to sexual impotence in his marriage and dissatisfaction with his life (331). He is unhappy with his "own" conditions although he is a well-respected doctor. Dysart "shrink[s]" because his hidden feelings prevent him from conforming to societal norms, and thus he needs to adopt a new type of worshipping. Thus, Dysart's therapeutic

interactions with Alan can be seen as a projection of his own desires and frustrations, complicating the healing process.

In *Equus*, worship can also be associated with the issue of deviant sexuality in understanding how Alan and Dysart have a cathartic relationship since Alan's sexual disposition is closely interrelated to his way of worshipping, through which he discharges his negative feelings. Una Chaudhuri discusses on this topic that Alan's worship of Equus is not completely spiritual, but also sexual experience as a ritual with repeated actions such as a naked gallop at midnight and orgasm (289). Apart from a religious crisis, Alan experiences sexual strife in his life. Referring to Freud and Breuer's methods of talking cure and hypnosis, Dysart makes use of hypnosis in this episode to discover Alan's unconscious and relieve his emotional burden. For instance, Dysart uses tape recordings to help Alan express his suppressed feelings, aiming to uncover his inner world and encourage him to talk about his memories. In episode 13, Dysart learns what happened in Alan's childhood and why he is obsessed with horses through Alan's recording:

> That's what you want to know, isn't it. All right: it was. I'm talking about the beach. That time when I was a kid. What I told you about… I was pushed forward on the horse. There was sweat on my legs from his neck. The fellow held me tight, and let me turn the horse which I wanted. All that power going any way you wanted… His sides were all warm, and the smell… The suddenly I was on the ground, where Dad pulled me. I could have bashed him. (Shaffer 48)

Alan talks about his memories in "a great emotional difficulty" since he suffers from mental and physical trauma (48). His feelings about the horse for the first time are related to sexual emotions in an implied way. He describes his emotions with the words "warm" and "smell" which can be associated with sexual desires. In addition, in episode 27, Dysart gives Alan a pill which is supposed to result in a placebo effect, and Alan starts to talk about his memories about Jill in the following episodes. In episodes 32 and 33, Alan continues with his story and Dysart learns that Alan cannot properly perform a sexual intercourse with Jill because he is disturbed by the horses: "I couldn't … see her [. . .] Only Him. Every time I kissed her – *He* was in the way [. . .] When I touched her, I felt *Him*. Under me… His side, waiting for my hand… His flanks… I refused him. I looked. I looked right at her… and I couldn't do it. When I shut my eyes, I saw Him at once" (102). This passage conveys the internal conflict and emotional turmoil experienced by Alan. The presence of "Him" symbolizes a profound psychological barrier, suggesting that the speaker is unable to fully engage with the person he desires due to an overwhelming sense of guilt, fear, or trauma associated with "Him." This duality reflects a struggle between longing and inhibition, illustrating how past experiences can haunt present relationships. The imagery of touch and the inability to connect highlights the depth of this conflict, emphasizing how deeply rooted feelings can complicate intimacy. Overall, this excerpt underscores Alan's psychological struggle that permeates the narrative.

In a similar vein, I. Dean Ebner states that *Equus* is a powerful critique of society, contrasting deep desires for spiritual and physical connection—such as worship and sexuality—with the influences of corporations, parents, careers, and traditional religion, all of which work together to suppress the mysteries and joys of modern existence (29). Similar to Alan, Dysart is portrayed as a middle-aged professional who experiences a turning point in his life. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan claims that "the subject sustains himself as desiring in relation to an ever more complex ensemble," and this is obvious in the scenario in which "the subject I more or less recognizable, is somewhere, split, divided, generally double, in his relation to the object, which usually does not show its true face either" (185). Lacan's assertion that the subject exists in a state of division means that our identities and desires are influenced by various external and internal factors. In a Lacanian sense, Dysart's struggle to understand Alan Strang's desire for the divine and the horse symbolizes his own search for meaning and connection:

> The Normal is the good smile in a child's eyes – all right. It is also the dead stare in a million adults. In both sustains and kills – like a God. It is the Ordinary made beautiful; it is also the Average made lethal. The Normal is the indispensable, murderous God of Health, and I am his Priest. My tools are very delicate. My compassion is honest. I have honestly assisted children in this room. I have talked away terrors and relieved many agonies. But also – beyond question – I have cut from them parts of individuality repugnant to this God, in both his aspects. Parts sacred to rarer and more wonderful Gods. And at what length... Sacrifices to Zeus took at the most, surely, sixty seconds each. Sacrifices to the Normal can take as long as sixty months. (Shaffer 65)

Dysart questions himself as a psychiatrist thinking that he removes the most "sacred" parts from the children like their "individuality" while he "relieve[s]" their "agonies" and tries to turn them into "the Normal." He understands making children 'normalised' as 'sacrifice' and feels guilty. In this respect, Dysart is confronted with the limitations of his role as a psychiatrist, representing the societal structures that seek to regulate desire. Another example that shows Dysart's struggle is his emotional identification with Alan in Episode 34 when he adopts the role of the horse god Equus: "And you will fail! Forever and ever you will *fail*! You will see ME – and you will FAIL! [. . .] The Lord thy God is a jealous God. He sees you. He sees you forever and ever, Alan. He sees you! ... *He sees you!*" (105). In this scene, Dysart is depicted as a struggling character since he cannot differentiate what is real, and cannot undertake a professional role. Within the same scene, he acts both as Equus and the psychiatrist; however, he not only simply identifies himself with Alan but also loses himself in his inner reality which is the source of all his repressed feelings. Similar to Alan, Dysart himself also purifies his unconscious by releasing his negative feelings and imitating Alan's tragic actions. Thus, this strong identification with Alan demonstrates how Dysart builds a cathartic connection with his patient and discharges his emotions at the same time as he continuously witnesses Alan's tragic actions and damaged psyche.

In conclusion, Peter Shaffer's *Equus* is a modern tragedy which reflects upon the cathartic journey of the psychiatrist Dysart and his patient Alan. The play intertwines the Aristotelian concept of catharsis with the Artaudian theatre of cruelty and Freudian concepts. On the one hand, the play offers valuable insights into the therapeutic impact of catharsis on the audience, aligning with Artaud's ideas about cruelty. Simultaneously, Freud's theories illuminate Dysart and Alan's struggles between his repressed feelings and societal norms. Moreover, this cathartic journey is also characterised by deviant worship and sexuality in terms of reflecting their subjectivities. Building on Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacanian concepts of desire and subjectivity also elucidate the inner conflicts of the characters and their mutual cathartic process. As mentioned previously in this paper, Dysart himself also undergoes a cathartic journey in which he becomes the audience to his patient upon witnessing his patient's cruel and deviant actions. Their relationship is therapeutic at the same time because they purify their negative feelings in their process of healing. Examining the affective dimensions of the cathartic journey between Dysart and Alan might also provide a deeper understanding of the themes presented in the play. Such inquiries could enhance our appreciation of *Equus* as a complex exploration of human emotion and affective depth.

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"Þat ȝet þe wynd & þe weder & þe worlde stynkes": The Sins of Richard II and the Corruption of the Crown

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Abstract: Many writings from late-fourteenth-century England reflect a popular conception that English society had deteriorated into serious dysfunction, which included the Hundred Years' War, recurrent outbreaks of the Black Death, and ongoing tensions between the King and Parliament, among other matters. Three literati who discussed this problem were John Gower, William Langland, and the Gawain Poet. All three agreed that somehow King Richard II bore responsibility for the kingdom's travails. He had engaged in a quest for a Crown which served the interests of one man, not of society. Moreover, he had tried to create a Crown in which all law flowed from the king alone and all ecclesiastical matters ultimately flowed from the king through the Crown. Richard's Crown allowed for no debate and no participation. Richard wanted the *status regni* and the *status coronæ* to merge; the king and the Crown would become one. This violated the symbol of the crown as it had already existed before Richard II's kingship. The crown symbol he had inherited was corporate, with the king and the people together negotiating the meaning of royal power and duties. In addition, the English crown was a minor with the reigning king as the crown's guardian. No king could unilaterally redefine the symbol of the crown, much less treat it as a personal possession. King Richard II's treatment of the crown destabilized the kingdom, and it would cost him his crown. Gower, Langland, and the Gawain Poet disagreed vis-à-vis which exact failures of the king had destabilized English society thus abusing the crown, and all three wrote about the different issues they had with the king, but all concurred that whatever the exact failures, King Richard II had damaged the construct of the Crown of England, and thereby the realm.

"Öyle ki rüzgâr, hava ve yer kokuştu": II. Richard'ın Günahları ve Tahtın Yozlaşması

Öz: On dördüncü yüzyıl sonu İngiltere'sinden birçok metin, İngiliz toplumunun ciddi bir işlevsizliğe doğru giderek kötüleştiği yönündeki yaygın bir anlayışı yansıtır; buna Yüz Yıl Savaşları, tekrarlayan Kara Veba salgınları ve Kral ile Parlamento arasında devam eden gerginlikler de dahildir. Bu meseleyi tartışan üç aydın John Gower, William Langland ve Gawain Şairi olmuştur. Üçü de Kral II. Richard'ın bir şekilde krallığın sıkıntılarından sorumlu olduğu konusunda hemfikirdir. Kral, bir toplumun değil de tek bir adamın çıkarlarına hizmet eden bir Taht arayışına girmiştir. Ayrıca, tüm yasaların yalnızca kraldan geçtiği ve tüm kilise meselelerinin en nihayetinde Taht aracılığıyla kralın süzgecinden geçtiği bir Taht yaratmaya çalışmıştır. Richard'ın Taht'ı hiçbir tartışmaya ve

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katılıma izin vermemiştir. Richard, *status regni* (kraliyet mevki) ile *status coronæ* (taç/taht mevki) birleşimini istemiştir; kral ve Taht bir olacaktır. Böyle bir durum, II. Richard'ın hükümranlığından önce de var olan Taht sembolünü ihlal etmektedir. Kendisine miras kalan taht sembolü, kral ve halkın birlikte kraliyet gücü ve görevlerinin anlamını müzakere ettiği kurumsal bir semboldür. İlaveten, İngiliz tacı, tahttaki kralın tahtın koruyucusu olması nedeniyle gayrireşittir. Hiçbir kral tahtın sembolünü tek taraflı olarak yeniden tanımlayamaz, hele ki ona şahsi bir mülk olarak davranamaz. Kral II. Richard'ın tahta olan yaklaşımı krallığı istikrarsızlaştırmış olup, bu durum tahtına mal olacaktır. Gower, Langland ve Gawain Şairi, kralın tam olarak hangi başarısızlıklarının İngiliz toplumunu istikrarsızlaştırarak tahtı kötüye kullandığı konusunda aynı fikirde değildir ve üçü de kralla yaşadıkları farklı sorunlar hakkında yazmışlardır; ancak hepsi tam olarak hangi başarısızlıklar olursa olsun, Kral II. Richard'ın İngiltere Tahtı'nın yapısına ve dolayısıyla krallığa zarar verdiği konusunda hemfikirdir.

Introduction: Moral Turpitude in the Late Fourteenth Century

Upheaval gripped England in the late-fourteenth century. Beginning in 1348, the Black Death had repeatedly devastated the population. Since 1337, the Hundred Years' War had engaged England in a continual conflict that drained the kingdom's coffers leading, in part, to economic uncertainty. Many of the inhabitants saw their society as somehow dysfunctional; a view reflected in the writing of the period. Three of England's literati—John Gower, William Langland, and the Gawain Poet—agreed that in some way King Richard II (r. 1377–1399) bore responsibility for the dysfunction in society, such as the Black Death, the Hundred Years' War, and the Peasants' Revolt. The three reflected differing opinions regarding which failures they believed that Richard II had committed which negatively impacted society, but all agreed on the king's responsibility for the state of society.

Richard II had engaged in a quest for a Crown which served the interests of one man, not of society. He had tried to create a Crown in which all law flowed from the king alone. Richard's Crown brooked no dissent. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for Richard, he wanted the *status regni* and the *status coronæ* to merge; the king and the Crown would become one.

This article examines the works of the three Ricardian poets from the perspective of their implied criticism of King Richard II. William Langland envisioned a corporate Crown, but one in which the king worked in tandem with the Church to guarantee peace

and prosperity in society. When either the clergy or the king (or both) failed to keep to their duties, the Crown could not function, and society fell off kilter. When society fell out of joint, the Crown suffered betrayal, although later in his life, Langland censured the Church more brutally, viewing the Church as having sold itself to Mammon. John Gower discussed a corporate Crown in which the king consulted the opinions of, but not necessarily the advice of, his subjects. Gower saw a kingdom in order only when all dissident voices found expression and through that expression felt loyalty to the Crown. The Gawain Poet, the most vociferous critic of Richard II of the three writers, visualized the king as a false guardian of the Crown, one who had betrayed his ward, and God. To this poet, Richard had seized both estates and sancta not his by right and appropriated them to the Crown in defiance of all that the Crown symbol means. In this way, the king betrayed the Crown by betraying the people, the Church, and God. In addition, the Gawain Poet saw a king who potentially engaged in the deadly sin of *luxuria*, particularly sodomy, which also qualified as heresy.

The issues of King Richard II and his abuses of power have provided historians and literary scholars with ample material for books and articles over many decades. One recent entry in this discussion by Samantha J. Rayner, *Images of Kingship in Chaucer and His Ricardian Contemporaries*, examines the theme of kingship in the works of John Gower, the Gawain Poet, and William Langland, then compares those findings to discussions of kingship in Geoffrey Chaucer's works. Thus, Rayner identifies those concerns as being common to all four writers. In contrast, this article interprets the Crown as a Geertzian symbol, in and through which the people interpreted their relations with the king. It then examines this cultural symbol through the works of three of the aforementioned writers (John Gower, the Gawain Poet, and William Langland) to find specifically how each writer thought that King Richard II had failed the Crown and his kingdom. With the Gawain Poet, political failures are accompanied by sins against God and the Church. Geoffrey Chaucer is not included in this study because, in his work, he says little, relative to the other three, to criticize King Richard II. The construct of kingship *per se* in late fourteenth-century England is not the subject of investigation, but how one king failed to maintain the crown properly and thus brought disaster upon English society. Thus, this article examines how the three writers discuss the failures of King Richard II as custodian of the crown, and in so doing shed light upon what the literate upper classes may have thought of the king's reign.

Cultural Symbols of Late Fourteenth-Century England

The Crown existed as the preeminent cultural symbol during Richard II's reign for not just royal authority, but royal relations with the people. Clifford Geertz explained a cultural symbol as an extrinsic source of information for individuals and societies, which provides a template by which humans comprehend and interpret data from their world (Geertz 92). In Geertzian terms, the Crown existed as a cultural symbol through which the people interpreted their relations with the king and the king's relations with the realm. Because

of this, the Crown symbol became infused with certain meanings and expectations. The Crown symbol did not arise as the result of one king's creation of it, or even as the product of several kings', but through a dialectic between the kings and society. For one person, even a king, to unilaterally attempt to alter the content of a cultural symbol, like the Crown, could disorient that culture and call into question the content and stability of other cultural symbols. In the case of fourteenth-century England, altering unilaterally the content of the Crown symbol could only occur corporately.

To the medieval English, the Bible, particularly 1 Corinthians 12:12, provided the basic paradigm for the corporate functioning of the three estates in medieval English society: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." But even the highest estate, the nobility, possessed a corporate character. Unlike in France or the Byzantine Empire where the king or emperor respectively possessed all effective sovereignty within his person, England evolved a constitutionalism in which Parliament acted as representative of the entirety of the realm; the king did not constitute the sole legislative and executive power in the kingdom (Kantorowicz 225).

Perhaps for this reason, the French cultural symbol of the Crown as separate from and above, if not divinized with respect to, its current holder never evolved successfully in England (Kantorowicz 364). The English constitution did recognize the separation betwixt the *status regni* and the *status coronæ* yet did not separate the two completely (368). This led to the English kings possessing, in Richard II's opinion apparently, a weaker crown with respect to the kings of France. Instead, the English Crown possessed the rights of a minor. Both Richard II and his great-grandfather Edward II (r. 1307–1327) had received allegations of "disherison [disinheriting] of the Crown" (372). The English king acted as the guardian of the Crown and could abuse it even to the point of depriving it of its rightful inheritance or due. Due to the Crown's status as a minor, kings or dynasties could not own Crowns but merely act as guardians (373). English law recognized the reigning king's relationship to his dynasty as essentially (anachronistically speaking) one of the current heads of transgenerational corporations that held temporary guardianship of the Crown (380–383). Such a state of affairs provided the English Crown with protections not afforded other crowns in Europe; for example, kings could not deprive the Crown of its property or estates (374–375).

By contrast, the Byzantine Crown symbol rested within one family by the fourteenth century. The Byzantine theory of kingship was based upon theorists like the sixth-century Agapetus the Deacon, who saw the Byzantine emperor as almost godlike in power, albeit still a mortal man in body (Tumarkin 6). God himself appointed the emperor (*basileus* in Greek) to rule as Heaven's vicegerent on Earth, and even the Church had to submit to the emperor's authority. As such, only God himself could dictate the content of the Crown-symbol. A *basileus* could not alter the Orthodox Crown; the Crown and the king seemed to exist in a hypostatic union in which the two were one but in different persons.

Even the king's sin could not taint the Crown. The French Crown symbol transcended its king. The king and the Crown did become one but in something like a union wherein each kept a separate identity. Richard II had corresponded with the courts of both Paris and Constantinople and met Byzantine Emperor Manuel II, so he knew the power of these Crowns.

Beginning in 1397, the king introduced new forms of address, vis-à-vis the crown, designed to elevate the person of the king above ordinary mortals. Richard appears to have borrowed these ideas from his father, Edward of Woodstock, whose court at Bordeaux reflected French courtly mores and addresses (Saul, "Richard II" 874–875). As a general rule, one addressed English kings in the language of lordship rather than in the language of majesty, as in France where one commonly employed titles such as *Rex Franciæ in regno suo princips est*, "The King of France is prince in his realm" (863–865). The French kings invoked their majesty as a way to claim the Byzantine imperium against the Holy Roman Emperor; Richard might have wanted to claim the imperium of the French kings and of the Byzantine *Basileis kai autokratōr ton rhōmaiōn*, "Emperor and Sole Ruler of the Romans." Richard changed convention and by the end of his reign, the king received obsequious addresses to *Exellentissimo ac Christianissimo Principi et domino nostro, Domino Ricardo Dei gratia regi Anglie*, "To the Most Excellent and Most Christian Prince and Our Lord, Lord Richard, By the grace of God King of England" (859). By contrast, earlier forms from the time of King Edward I (r. 1272–1307) employed the simpler *Excellentissimo principi*, "To the Most Excellent Prince" (863). Ever more elaborate titles of the king's majesty made Richard sound almost as if he were divinizing himself and making himself the source of all law (857).

Law fascinated Richard II. He consulted with judges in 1387 about who in England had the authority to make law, and about circumstances when law might or might not bind his subjects. Around 1390, he commissioned a book of statutes for his personal use; the manuscript survives as St. John's College, Cambridge, MS A.7 (Saul, "The Kingship" 47). Such an interest in law might have derived, in part, from the king's relations with Parliament. In 1381 and 1385, Parliament conducted investigations into Richard's household expenditures and charged another commission with finding ways to reduce those royal expenditures (Saul, "The Kingship" 48–49). Such parliamentary interference did not sit well with the young king, but what happened next sat even worse. In 1388, a cabal of the king's enemies gained ascendancy in Parliament. The Appellants, as they came to be called, temporarily contained the power of the king and manipulated Parliament to execute three of the king's favourites. Richard regained his power in May 1389, but his trust in corporate governance, whatever it may once have been, suffered permanent damage (Benson xxiii–xxiv).

The nature of the reign of Richard II changed publicly in the summer of 1397. He ordered the arrests of political opponents and ordered the sheriffs of the realm to swear new oaths to him. Around this time, Richard wrote a letter to Emperor Manuel II

Palaeologos in Constantinople in which he complained about the rebelliousness of the English lords (Saul, "Richard II" 867). In the missive, Richard rationalized his actions and demeanour vis-à-vis the lords as that of God to Lucifer and the rebellious angels. Furthermore, Richard suggested that peace within his realm equated to no internal dissent from the person of the king (Saul, *Richard II* 387). This idea had floated about the court of the young Angevin king since at least 1383 when Chancellor Michael de la Pole had informed Parliament that obedience to the king constituted "the sole foundation of all peace and quiet in the realm" (Saul, "The Kingship" 52).

Richard II's self-aggrandizement may have served, in part, to further his political ambitions. In the summer of 1397, the Dean of Köln led a mission to England. Electors from the Holy Roman Empire approached Richard about potentially replacing the King of Bohemia, Wenzel of Luxembourg, as King of the Romans, and thus becoming an accessory after the fact to a *coup d'état*. Presumably, Richard could then look forward to a papal coronation as Holy Roman Emperor at some later date. The king did express interest in supplanting his brother-in-law and spent time cultivating German allies (Bennett 197). The plot did not materialize while Richard sat on the throne, however. The electors did overthrow Wenzel in 1400, but by then Richard II had also lost his throne (Saul, "Richard II" 874).

In 1399, King Richard II lost the Crown to his cousin Henry of Bolingbroke. The king's 30 September 1399 deposition charged him with, among other things, having eight times violated his promise to keep peace toward the clergy and people. Part of this charge involved his taking of the crown jewels and seizing of church sancta when he left for his Second Irish Expedition in 1399 (Coffman 963). The new King Henry IV (r. 1399–1413), a former Appellant, found more success in his reign than had Richard II, who had not been able to rule as absolutely as he might have intended. Corporate rule had won out over sole rule, but three Ricardian writers could have told that to Richard II before he came to grief.

William Langland and Richard II's Kingship

William Langland conceived of the king and of the Crown as the lynchpins of English society, as did the other authors, but he possessed a more utopian view of the proper functioning of the Crown. Langland wrote three known versions of his poem *Piers Plowman*; the A Text dates to the 1360s, the B Text to 1376–77, and the C Text he had completed by 1387 (Pearsall 9). All Langland passages are quoted from the B-Text unless otherwise noted.

Perhaps the bedrock of Langland's concept of the king and the Crown symbol lies in his statement: "The Kyng hath mede of his men to make pees in londe" (*Piers Plowman* III.221). The king had a responsibility to ensure peace in England:

> Kynges court and commune court, consistorie and chapitle –
> Al shal be but oon court, and oon b[ur]n be justice:
> That worth Trewe-tonge, a tidy man that tened me nevere.

> Batailles shul none be, ne no man bere wepene,
> And what smyth that any smytheth be smyte therwith to dethe! (*Piers Plowman* III.320–324)

All elements in the court and in the land functioned in unity when the king upheld his duty and ensured peace. In this way, the king fulfilled an important duty to the Crown; Richard II should have created a corporate Crown that united within itself a class-segregated society. Unfortunately, King Richard did not oversee such a harmonious society. If nothing else, the Peasants' Revolt saw battles, vandalism, and the use of extreme violence such as many decapitations by the rebels (Barker 394), as well as a violent and possibly treasonous reaction by the knights in the murder of Wat Tyler at Smithfield before the king (271). Langland's "And what smyth that any smytheth be smyte therwith to dethe!" could then just as easily be applied to the knights as to the rebels of 1381.

The king could only achieve peace through his sacred duty to protect the Crown symbol, a symbol bound in a theological construct with the Church. Langland expounded the rule of orthodoxy in society:

> And se it by ensaumple in somer tyme on trowes:
> Ther some bowes ben leved and some bereth none,
> Ther is a mischief in the more of swiche manere bowes.
> Right so persons and preestes and prechours of Holi Chirche
> Is the roote of the right faith to rule the peple;
> Ac ther the roote is roten, reson woot the soothe,
> Shal nevere flour ne fruyt, ne fair leef be grene. (*Piers Plowman* XV.96–102)

Using the example of a tree with the priesthood as the roots, Langland wrote that corrupt hierarchs corrupted the entire hierarchy dependent upon them; this included corrupt kings and courtiers. Only together through the corporate Crown could the king, as head of society, and the clergy function properly. Faithful churchmen who undertook their duties properly laid the groundwork for the Crown to keep peace in society. Corruption within the Church did not remain within the Church, but like leaven expanded into the larger society until it compromised the Crown itself. Although John Ball, one of the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt and a priest who taught doctrines at variance with the Church, apparently knew of Langland's work (Barker 431–432), Langland might not have endorsed Ball's ministry. If society relied, as Langland thought, upon the king and Church standing united and bound by proper dogma, then John Ball and King Richard would both have been dangerous to society. To Langland, both King Richard and priests like John Ball would have contributed to a situation where: "the roote is roten."

As Richard II's reign reached its twentieth anniversary, the king had come to expect obedience from all quarters. He appointed Roger Walden to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1397; not a bishop, Walden had served as the Lord High Treasurer (Davies 99). Others of the king's personal associates would find themselves in ecclesiastical careers as well: Robert Waldby would become archbishop of York in 1396, and John

Burghill would become bishop of Coventry and Lichfield in 1398 (Davies 103). Such actions by Richard II would prove him the opposite of Langland's exemplar of the virtuous king who knew how to care for the Crown and society: the Roman Emperor Trajan (r. 98–117). Langland, like many Christians, envisioned the non-Christian Trajan as a virtuous ruler whom God could not allow to sink into Hell. Langland expressed how even a pagan monarch could earn God's grace through proper treatment of the Crown and society: "Ac truthe that trespased nevere ne traversed ayeins his lawe, / But lyveth as his lawe techeth and leveth ther be no better" (*Piers Plowman* XII 285–286). Trajan, according to Langland, was not above the law of his land, and neither was Richard II.

John Gower and Richard II's Kingship

Around 1385, John Gower began writing the *Confessio Amantis* at King Richard's request (Eberle 236). He completed the work in 1390 and dedicated it to the king. Sometime in late 1390 to early 1391, he revised Book 8 to delete his dedication to Richard II, and finally by 1393, Gower rededicated his work to his liege lord, Henry of Bolingbroke. Gower appears to have harbored serious reservations about Richard beginning sometime during 1390–1393 (Staley 78–79). What concerned Gower about the king, however, must have first occurred in 1390–1391.

In the tale of Solomon, Gower warned against the sin of *luxuria*; one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Solomon delighted in women and married many from among the infidel nations (*Confessio Amantis* 7.4469–4573). His lust and his need to maintain that lust made him vulnerable to the influences of the pagan wives. In Heaven, God rendered judgment against Solomon for his lust and rent the Hebrew kingdom asunder in the days of his son Rehoboam (Grady 561–562). The young king approached his councillors to inquire about the way to best govern his patrimony. The elder councillors advised leniency; the younger, severity:

> The king hem herde and overpasseth,
> And with these othre his wit compasseth,
> That yonge were and nothing wise.
> And thei these olde men despise. (*Confessio Amantis* 7.4075–78)

Presented with a clear choice between the elders and the youth, Rehoboam chose to heed the advice of his peers and imposed a harsh reign upon his subjects. His decision proved fatal to the kingdom. Gower seemed to warn that as the excesses of youth have no place in government; older councillors, such as John of Gaunt, should receive more of a hearing from the king. If so, then Gower proved prophetic. As the ten northern tribes and Jeroboam I revolted against Rehoboam, so Cheshire and Henry of Bolingbroke revolted against Richard II. Ignoring the elder councillors had led not just to disaster for Rehoboam and Richard II, but in the case of Richard to the loss of the Crown to the elder councillor's son. From *luxuria* to civil strife, the Davidic Dynasty and the Angevin Dynasty presented Gower with a strong parallel between the sins of Solomon and those of Richard II.

To Gower, the king needed to demonstrate consistency, honesty, and a good reputation. The story of Darius and Zorobabel illustrated the need for Truth to undergird any king's reign:

> The gold betokneth excellence,
> That men schull don him reverence
> As to here liege soverein.
> The stones, as the bokes sein,
> Commended ben in treble wise:
> Ferst thei ben harde, and thilke assisse
> Betokneth in a king constance,
> So that ther schal no variance
> Be founde in his condicion;
> And also be descripcion
> The vertu which is in the stones
> A verrai signe is for the nones
> Of that a king schal ben honeste
> And holde trewly his behest
> Of thing which longeth to kinghede.
> The bryhte colour, as I rede,
> Which in the stones is schynende,
> Is in figure betoknende
> The cronique of this worldes fame,
> Which stant upon his goode name.
> The cercle which is round aboute
> Is tokne of al the lond withoute,
> Which stant under his gerarchie,
> That he it schal wel kepe and guye. (*Confessio Amantis* 7.1751–1774)

Using the crown itself as a metaphor for kingship, Gower explained that a good king was constant and possessed an excellence which men revered. This king also possessed virtue and honesty. Gower actually appeared to lay on this moral lesson with a trowel to the point that one wonders if the poet might not have thought King Richard II a bit thick. Gower might have seen early indications of the young King Richard's intolerance of opposing political opinions. The poet would definitely have known of the king's handling of the Peasants' Revolt and might not have considered the outcome worthy of a King of England.

In the poem "O Deus Immense," dated between 1398 and 1402, Gower addressed kingship more directly. To Gower, the people suffered for the sins of their kings; the people suffered because God punished all for the sins of one. If the king had an interest in preserving order in his realm, Gower had a suggestion: "Consilium dignum Regem facit esse benignum, / Est aliter signum quo spergitur omne malignum" ("Worthy counsel

makes a king bounteous, / In contrast to when every kind of spitefulness is spread about.") ("O Deus Immense" 11–12). With good councillors giving good advice, the king pleased God, and the Realm prospered. The scandal would not plague such a Realm, and sin would not endanger the king or the Crown. The key, however, was that the king was bound to listen to the advice of his counsellors, even if he did not necessarily follow it. A corporate Crown required it.

No democrat, a construct unknown in late fourteenth-century England, Gower nonetheless viewed the people, the commoners, as critical components of a corporate Crown. Gower warned: "Os ubi vulgare non audet verba sonare, / Stat magis obscura sub murmure mens loqutura. / Que stupet in villa cicius plebs murmurat illa" ("When the people's voice does not dare to speak out loud, / They speak their mind more darkly in murmurs. / Whatever is silenced in court, the commons murmur it sooner.") ("O Deus Immense" 23–25). King Richard needed to allow the people to air their grievances as a corporate Crown included the grievances of the people, even if the king was not required to act upon those grievances. Gower did not write out of a Jeffersonian faith in the *vox populi*, but as a supporter of the Crown. He wrote out of the knowledge that dissatisfaction with the king had the potential to endanger the Crown (Saul, "The Kingship" 54). Outside of Gower's literary world, Richard would alienate large amounts of land and wealth for the crown's benefit from July 1397 until his overthrow in Spring 1399. Henry of Bolingbroke's estates would number among those confiscated (Dunn 179). He would seize the enfeoffed land of the Appellants in 1397 and confiscate the Lancastrian and Norfolk inheritances in 1399 (Given-Wilson 122). Not only did Richard II not allow open dissent within even the nobility, but he forced them, particularly Henry Bolingbroke, into violence. The Crown construct required the cooperation of all within the Realm. Richard's failure to heed John Gower's advice cost him his kingship. Perhaps the young king's refusal to listen to the poet's proffered lessons contributed to the poet's breaking of faith with the king in 1390–91 (Saul, "The Kingship" 54).

The Gawain Poet and Richard II's Kingship

The Gawain Poet wrote against the reign of Richard II more vociferously than the other two literati. This may be due to the fact that the poet's home county of Cheshire ranked among the more socially and religiously conservative areas of England in the Ricardian age (Bowers 52). It could also reflect a political bias as Cheshire served as the power base for the Lancastrians, who remained loyal to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Richard II's uncle and advisor, and to John's son Henry of Bolingbroke. The split between Richard II and John of Gaunt began in 1394 when John and the Earl of Arundel exploded at one another in the January parliament. Richard backed John, but their relationship became strained (Staley 95). When John died in February 1399, Richard confiscated the Lancastrian estates. Henry of Bolingbroke, exiled the year before, returned to England to claim his birthright and eventually seize the Crown from Richard. In the Gawain Poet's poem *Cleanness*, the poet overtly criticizes the person of the king in the figure of Baltazar

(the Babylonian King Belshazzar). That a Cheshire poet would so openly attack Richard in a poem could indicate a time late in the king's reign, possibly after the death of John of Gaunt and the exile of Henry of Bolingbroke.

In the episode of Belshazzar's feast, the Gawain Poet portrayed a royal court immersed in sin. The king threw a lavish party for his concubines and guests. As part of this party, Belshazzar ordered the sancta from the Temple of Solomon, which his father Nabigodenozar (the Babylonian King Nebuchadrezzar II, who was not related to Belshazzar) had seized, paraded about for the pleasure and use of his concubines. The poet specifically mentioned the use of the Temple Candlestick by the king's guests:

> As mony morteres of wax merkked withoute
> With mony a borlych best al of brende golde.
> Hit watz not wonte in þat wone to wast no serges,
> Bot in temple of þe trauþe trwly to stonde
> Bifore þe sancta sanctorum, soþefast Dry3tyn
> Expouned His speche spiritually to special prophetes.
> Leue þou wel þat þe Lorde þat þe lyfte 3emes
> Displesed much at þat play in þat plyt stronge (*Cleanness* 1487–94).[1]

This defilement of the Temple sancta, particularly of the candlestick which shone in the Holy of Holies with a divine light, was a major sacrilege which sent God over the edge, and he destroyed the Kingdom of Babylon for it. The poet might have written this portion as a thinly veiled criticism of Richard II's seizure of church sancta and crown jewels before his second Irish expedition in 1399. Although no precise dating of *Cleanness* could ever claim to rest upon irrefutable evidence, a composition during 1399 would fit the poem well to the times. If such a dating is accurate, then the Gawain Poet could have been concerned about God judging England for King Richard's violations of ecclesiastical property and the sacred regalia.

Another reason to criticize King Richard II was his personal morality, at least according to the rumour. In the poem *Cleanness*, the Gawain Poet attacked the sin of sodomy, which encompassed homosexual and lesbian relations, oral and anal sex, masturbation and bestiality, and even heterosexual acts considered *contra naturam* (Frantzen 451). Sodomy, in canon law, meant both sexual sin and heresy. The church made no distinction betwixt the two. Categorized as a form of the sin *luxuria*, sodomy became a sin with heavy theological implications (454). God condemns sodomy directly in *Cleanness*:

> I schal ly3t into þat led & loke Myseluen

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[1] For the primary texts and translations of the Gawain Poet, the following two works were consulted: (1) Andrew, Malcom and Ronald Waldron, editors. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript:* Pearl, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Liverpool University Press, 2007. (2) Finch, Casey, translator. *The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet*. Edited by Malcolm Andrew, Ronald Waldron, and Clifford Peterson, University of California Press, 1996.

> [If] þay haf don as þe dyne dryuez on lofte.
> Þay han lerned a lyst þat lykez me ille,
> Þat þay han founden in her flesch of fautez þe werst:
> Vch male matz his mach a man as hymseluen,
> & fylter folyly in fere on femmalez wyse.
> I compast hem a kynde crafte & kende hit hem derne,
> & amed hit in Myn ordenaunce oddely dere,
> & dy3t drwry þerinne, doole alþer-swettest,
> & þe play of paramorez I portrayed Myseluen,
> & made þerto a maner myriest of oþer: (*Cleanness* 691–701)

God had created heterosexual relations and taught it to humanity secretly, whatever that means, and found homosexuality particularly offensive to himself.

Sin caused natural disasters, be it the sins of a nation or the sins of a monarch. In the view of some of Richard's subjects, the threat of sin always followed the young king. The homosexual relationship between his great-grandfather King Edward II and Piers Gaveston remained in the national spiritual consciousnesses during the rest of the fourteenth century. Many in English society even saw Edward II's sexual sins as the *casus belli* for God to send the waves of the Black Death to afflict the land and feared that his sodomy did not follow him to the grave. Richard's reaction to opening the coffin of his favourite, Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who had been three years dead, along with his attempts to persuade Pope Boniface IX to canonize Edward II, gave many in England pause (Hill and Stillwell 321–322). Some at the time, including apparently the Gawain Poet, suspected that Richard II had followed his great-grandfather into the sin of sodomy. In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Gawain Poet placed particular emphasis upon the sexual slant of the story. He spoke of God's revulsion at sexual sins: "Þat 3et þe wynd & þe weder & þe worlde stynkes / Of þe brych þat vpbraydez þose broþelych wordez" (*Cleanness* 847–848). The Gawain Poet had a serious concern with ritual, and specifically sexual, purity. The poet may have encouraged submission to the Crown, but he may also have had serious problems with King Richard II, a monarch suspected in his own time of engaging in the very sexual impurities which *Cleanness* condemned (Bowers 55).

Any sins committed by the king not only impacted his minor ward, the Crown, but also God, who had given him the sacred power of healing. King Richard II inherited these functions from his predecessors. One of the king's functions was healing by touch, particularly healing scrofula, which King Edward the Confessor (r. 1042–1066) had introduced as a royal power from God. By the fourteenth century, King Edward I touched some 1000 subjects per year. English kings also healed through cramp rings, which the king hallowed at special ceremonies and then dispensed to his supplicants, who hoped for cures to rheumatism, epilepsy, convulsions, and muscle spasms. By the reign of King Edward II, blessing cramp rings had become a normal part of a king's duties (Thomas 227–228, 235). For King Richard II to be a hidden sodomite would not only potentially

compromise the healings but offend God. It would also defile the Crown entrusted to King Richard since a potential sodomite could redefine the symbol without reference to the laws of man or God.

The Gawain Poet did not merely pronounce doom upon the kingdom, however, but did suggest a simple way for kings to obey God and keep the Crown as it ought to be kept. Perhaps the poet saw the time as too late for Richard II, but another king could win God's grace by following the example of Nebuchadrezzar:

> Styfly stabled þe rengne bi þe stronge Dryȝtyn,
> For of þe Hyȝest he hade a hope in his hert,
> Þat vche pouer past out of þat Prynce euen.
> & whyle þat watz cleȝt clos in his hert
> Þere watz no mon vpon molde of myȝt as hymseluen; (*Cleanness* 1652–1656)

A true king remembered that his power came from the powerful Lord (stronge Dryȝtyn), which apparently Richard II had forgotten. The Gawain Poet seemed to view Richard II as provoking God with his arrogance and possibly with sexual sin as well. Such a state of affairs could only lead England into disaster.

Conclusion: Sins of the King, Sins of the Realm

The three writers glossed all had different views of Richard II's failures, but all agreed upon his responsibility for the welfare of English society. William Langland envisioned a corporate Crown, but one in which the king worked in tandem with the Church to guarantee peace and prosperity in society. When either the clergy or the king (or both) failed to keep to their duties, the Crown could not function, and society fell off kilter. When society fell out of joint, the Crown suffered betrayal. Langland continued to ponder his society's problems throughout his life. By the time he constructed the C Text of *Piers Plowman*, he had grown disenchanted with a Church which would not function as God had intended, that is as faithful servants to the Crown to aid it in preserving society. In the Prologue of *Piers Plowman*, Langland included a version of a medieval exemplum of the belling of the cat, with the cat representing royal power. Only a properly functioning Parliament and Church could bell the cat to prevent it from running amok. The warning appeared in the B Text and remained in the C Text, but the C Text contained additions and emendations which betrayed Langland's real opinion about the breakdown of his society (Pearsall 10, 38). In the majority of alterations and amendments found in the C Text, the Church comes in for more brutal censure. Langland's point of view becomes clear: the cat had run amok and betrayed the Crown, but the Church had sold itself to Mammon and thus ensured that the cat would not receive any belling. Both the Church and King Richard II had betrayed the Crown.

John Gower also envisioned a corporate Crown in which the king consulted the opinions of, but not necessarily the advice of, his subjects. He saw a kingdom in order only

when all dissident voices found expression and through that expression felt loyalty to the Crown. To ignore the *vox populi* endangered the kingdom's stability, and through the king's neglect, the Crown. The lust of the king could also endanger the Crown, as Gower warned in the tale of Solomon because God punished entire kingdoms for the sins of their kings. One could imagine Gower warning that when kings broke their *trowthe* with their Crowns, sin waited to enter their realms. Ignoring his elder councillors constituted another way a king could break his *trowthe* with the Crown; the king ignored the experienced voices of his senior courtiers at his own peril. Gower lived long enough to see his warnings become realities, and he watched as Richard II's abuse of the Crown cost him, and his dynasty, the kingdom.

The Gawain Poet, the most vociferous critic of Richard II of the three writers, visualized the king as a false guardian of the Crown, one who had betrayed his ward. To the poet, Richard had seized both estates and sancta not his by right and appropriated them to the Crown in defiance of all that the Crown symbol meant. In this way, the king betrayed the Crown by betraying the people, the Church, and God. In addition, the Gawain Poet saw a king who potentially engaged in the deadly sin of *luxuria*. Since a sodomite king did not, by definition, only engage in sexual sin but also in heresy, then Richard's role as guardian of the Crown lapsed. A heretic king guarding a minor Crown offended God and disrupted the heaven-ordained hierarchy. One can only wonder what rumours the Gawain Poet might have heard in Cheshire. Did John of Gaunt speak to his Lancastrians about the practices and sins of the king back in London? Whatever the poet might or might not have heard, he saw King Richard II as having betrayed the Crown, and that betrayal placed him in company with Belshazzar.

King Richard II lost his crown in September 1399 and died sometime during 1400. One hopes that the deposed king did not suffer the fate of Belshazzar:

> Baltazar in his bed watz beten to deþe,
> Þat boþe his blod & his brayn blende on þe cloþes;
> The kyng in his cortyn watz ka₃t bi þe heles,
> Feryed out bi þe fete & fowle dispysed.
> Þat watz so do₃y þat day & drank of þe vessayl
> Now is a dogge also dere þat in a dych lygges. (*Cleanness* 1787–1792)

Unfortunately, Richard II's death was very likely unpleasant, whether it was by violence like Belshazzar or by starvation while imprisoned. The new king, Henry IV, ended not only the reign of Richard II but also the concerns about Richard's failures and potential sodomy. The Crown now, at least officially, was corporate once again, under the protection of a righteous king, and served the interests of all in the Kingdom of England.

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Female Devotion and Textile Imagery in Medieval English Literature, by Anna McKay, D. S. Brewer, 2024, pp. 315, £95,00 (hardcover), ISBN: 9781843847137.

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'Woman' is a subject analysed in many fields such as literature, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. 'Woman,' whose position varies across continents, nations and communities, has generally been addressed through the lenses of patriarchy, freedom struggle, fundamental rights, and equality. Anna McKay, on the other hand, in her study titled *Female Devotion and Textile Imagery in Medieval English Literature* (2024), takes a new standpoint on women and surveys her manifestation in Medieval English Literature in the context of gender, devotion, and textile imagery. Part of the "Gender in the Middle Ages" series, her work offers a fresh take on the current academic discourse regarding the representation and construction of femininity in medieval texts. McKay's study comprehensively probes how textile-related activities served not only as symbols but also as means by which medieval women expressed and practised their devotion.

In the "Introduction," McKay sets the stage for her investigation by emphasising that textile imagery in medieval texts is not just a metaphor but a critical medium through which women engaged with theological and cultural issues. The theoretical foundation McKay establishes here underscores how textile hermeneutics invites readers to reconsider the roles of women in medieval spirituality, offering a new dimension to our understanding of their agency. In her study, McKay puts forward the idea that textile images in medieval English literature function as a hermeneutic tool. She asserts that

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clothwork and textiles act as ways of both expressing and grasping the experiences of others. They help us read and interpret those experiences (10). Apart from this, she enunciates that textile images serve as a lens that gives an idea about women. As it is known, in the Middle Ages, women were restricted from developing a discourse about themselves, and they were reduced to a subordinate/subtle position, especially in religious terms. As McKay clarifies, from the very beginning, male authority in the Church has maintained control over teaching and instruction. The written and spoken word have been reserved as privileges primarily held by men (3). By framing the ability to teach and interpret religious texts as a masculine trait, the Church has marginalised women's voices and limited their roles within religious life. McKay contends that medieval English women, often marginalised in theological discourses, were able to engage with and explicate spiritual truths through a common textile hermeneutics. She further supports her argument by meticulously tracing how figures such as Eve, the Virgin Mary, St Veronica and Jesus were symbolically associated with textiles.

McKay adopts an interdisciplinary approach rather than using a single theory. Her book benefits not only from a feminist perspective but also from literary analysis, historical contextualisation, and theological reflection. McKay utilises Judith Butler's theories of performativity[1] in her examination of the feminine (2). In parallel, she proclaims that the acts of devotion and interpretation conflated with textiles are culturally constructed as feminine rather than being inherently linked to biological sex. Grounding a theoretically powerful narrative, McKay thus introduces a new insight into the repositioning of women, marginalised by the patriarchal structures of the medieval Church, at the centre of Christian devotional practices.

McKay's book is structured in four main chapters, each focussing on a different archetypal figure or motif. As McKay states, "Chapter 1 focuses on Eve, exploring her designation as a spinner specifically as a marker of sensory femininity and transgression" (26). The depiction of Eve as a spinner amplifies her relationship to sensual femininity and transgression, suggesting that her role is deeply tied to perceptions of femininity. McKay examines the figure of Eve and investigates how her relationship with textiles and the act of weaving can be used to reflect on materiality and devotion. She stresses that Eve's weaving is not limited to the domestic sphere, but is deeply connected to the material aspects of faith. Furthermore, she remarks that her act of weaving transcends the confines of the home and represents a deeper, spiritual form of devotion.

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[1] For Butler, "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xiv-xv). Butler argues that the body is not simply a biological entity but is shaped by cultural norms and historical processes. Both Butler and McKay draw attention to how cultural constructs shape perceptions of gender. McKay's statement aligns with those of Butler when she argues that acts such as devotion and interpretation associated with textiles are culturally constructed as feminine.

In the second chapter, "'Thu art to me a very modir': Weaving the Word in Marian Literature," McKay presents a scrutiny centred on the Virgin Mary.[2] In this context, McKay draws on textile imagery in Marian literature to explore how these images intersect with the word of God and weaving. Through this examination, she reflects on the acceptance of the Virgin Mary's weaving as a metaphor for the Incarnation. She elucidates that clothwork functions as another way of interpreting or comprehending Christ's incarnate body. As Mary spins, knits, sews, and weaves, she symbolically forms her son's flesh (90). Mary's actions of making cloth can be regarded as a symbol of how Christ's physical body was formed or shaped. McKay's exegesis takes textile work from being a simple household chore to a more spiritual and meaningful form. This also indicates that a cultural act such as weaving, typically aligned with women, can also be associated with religious symbolism.

In the subsequent chapter, "'He who has seen me has seen the father[3]': The Veronica in Medieval England," McKay once again focuses on a religious figure, St Veronica, "who is commonly understood today as the woman who wiped Christ's face on the road to Calvary, miraculously taking its imprint on cloth" (145). With a distinctive slant, she discusses the symbolic meaning of St Veronica and her veil. As a result of this connection, McKay claims that the cloth/veil bearing the image of Christ's face becomes a powerful object of devotion. With this inquiry, McKay reinforces the tactile and visual aspects of devotion. More precisely, for McKay, the veil creates a concrete link between the divine and the believer.

In the final chapter, "'Blessedly clothed with gems of virtue': Clothing and *Imitatio Christi* in Anchoritic Texts for Women," McKay explores textile imagery in anchoritic texts. McKay considers the relationship between textile imagery and the concept of *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ). She argues that medieval women used textile work as a metaphor for virtue. By clothing themselves in virtue, they aimed to follow Christ's teachings and lead a devout life. Furthermore, McKay investigates how "fabric encourages a sensory, conceptually feminine, form of interpretation in Christian devotion, and . . . how women engage with fabric as a manifestation of the divine" (216). With these remarks, McKay underlines that cloth and textile held spiritual meaning for women in the medieval period. She notes that women, particularly in a male-dominated society, utilised such items to reflect their devotion and to establish their religious identity.

In the "Afterword," McKay expounds on the implications of her findings for contemporary feminist scholarship. She articulates that her exploration into textile

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[2] McKay accentuates that "From the earliest days of Christianity, the Virgin Mary has been consistently represented in iconography as a clothworker" (91). This highlights the close connection between Mary and textile work in religious art.

[3] This Biblical verse (John 14:9) is often cited to affirm the belief that Jesus is the incarnate representation of God on Earth.

imagery reveals a deeper connection between gender, materiality, and devotion, advocating for a more nuanced appreciation of medieval women's spirituality.

McKay's work, as seen in the four chapters together with the introduction and afterword parts, displays a peculiar stance on the female figure in the medieval period. Focusing particularly on medieval textile images, McKay posits that these images provide vehicles for spiritual expression and theological interpretation. In doing so, McKay employs an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis with historical and theological insights. Thus, McKay's scholarly approach makes her work relevant to scholars in various fields.

Considering the work as a whole, the first notable element of McKay's book is that she introduces seemingly complex theoretical ideas in a riveting and illustrative manner. In addition, McKay meticulously uses medieval texts, especially religious works, as primary sources for her analyses. However, a minor limitation is that while McKay covers the major figures pertaining to textile imagery, there is room for further exploration into lesser-known examples or alternative readings of this imagery in relation to gender and power dynamics. Nevertheless, McKay's research can be considered to be an outstanding scholarly achievement in that it reveals the often undervalued role of textiles in medieval devotional practices. In particular, McKay's research on 'textile hermeneutics' is noteworthy for offering a new perspective on how medieval women engaged with and interpreted medieval spiritual verities. As a final point, McKay's book can serve as an incisive resource for researchers interested in medieval literature, feminist theology, gender, and religion.

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