


The Monsters of Geoffrey Chaucer: The Miller in *The General Prologue* and the Miller in *The Reeve's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales**

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Abstract

The medieval universe was captivated by composite monsters like manticores and centaurs which adorned the margins of manuscripts and tales of medieval man. Medieval monsters were at the same time the Others of the society. Medieval Others are largely treated under the monster studies which begin with the dichotomy of "Us" (human beings) and "Them" (monsters). The Others of the Middle Ages were not limited to beasts, but embraced Saracens and Jews as the monstrous Others alongside heretics, pagans, homosexuals, lepers and witches. With their atypical social positions, millers were among those monstrous Others or "Them" of the Middle Ages as they could not be fitted into any of the three estates; namely the clergy, the nobility and the commoners. They were the unwanted upstarts and leading rebels of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. In accordance with their monstrous presence, the chronicles depicted the millers of the revolt with animal-like qualities. Similar to their historical counterparts, the most notable feature of Chaucer's Miller in *The Canterbury Tales* is his animal-like appearance with a hairy face and a gigantic mouth. Aggressive and disruptive, rather than a human, the Miller looks like a wild animal bringing down doors-literally social boundaries- with his head. Parallel to the Miller in *The General Prologue*, the miller in *The Reeve's Tale* possesses an animal-like appearance and a disobedient nature that grows into a threat to the social order. In this respect, this paper discusses Chaucer's Miller in *The General Prologue* and his miller in *The Reeve's Tale* as medieval monsters who are man-animal composites and defiant Others.

Keywords: *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer's Miller, monster, otherness, *the Reeve's Tale*.

Geoffrey Chaucer'ın Canavarları: *Canterbury Hikâyeleri*'nde Genel Giriş ve *Kâhya'nın Hikâyesi*'ndeki Değirmenci Karakterleri

Öz

Ortaçağ âlemi elyazmalarının kenarlarını ve Ortaçağ insanının hikâyelerini süsleyen mantikorlar ve sentorlar gibi kompozit canavarlarla doludur. Ortaçağ'ın canavarları aynı zamanda toplumun Ötekileriydiler. Ortaçağ'ın Ötekileri genellikle "Biz" (insanlar) ve

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“Onlar” (canavarlar) dikotomisiyle başlayan canavar çalışmaları altında incelenebilir. Ortaçağ’ın Ötekileri sadece canavarlarla sınırlı değildi ve bu gruba kâfirler, putperestler, homoseksüeller, vebahılar ve cadılarla beraber canavar Öteki olarak görülen Müslümanlar ve Yahudiler de dâhildi. Atipik toplumsal konumlarıyla, Ortaçağ’ın ruhban sınıfı, soylular ve köylülerden oluşan üç sınıftan hiç birinde yer bulamayan değirmenciler de Ortaçağ’ın bu canavar Ötekileri veya “Onlar” grubuna dahildiler. Onlar istenmeyen sonradan görmeler ve 1381 Köylü Ayaklanması’nın önde gelen isyancılarıydılar. Canavarsı varlıklarına uygun bir biçimde, kronikler ayaklanmaya katılan değirmencileri hayvansı özelliklerle resmettiler. Tarihteki emsallerine benzer bir şekilde Chaucer’ın *Canterbury Hikâyeleri*’ndeki Değirmenci karakterinin de en öne çıkan özelliği yüzündeki kıllar ve kocaman ağzıyla hayvansı görünüşüdür. Değirmenci saldırgan ve kargaşaya yol açan karakteriyle bir insandan ziyade kafasıyla kapıları- gerçek anlamda toplumsal sınırları- deviren vahşi bir hayvana benzer. Bu *Genel Giriş*’teki Değirmenci karakterine benzer bir şekilde, *Kâhya’nın Hikâyesi*’ndeki değirmenci de hayvansı bir görünüşe ve toplumsal düzene karşı bir tehdite dönüşen asi bir mizaca sahiptir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale Chaucer’ın *Genel Giriş*’teki Değirmenci karakterini ve *Kâhya’nın Hikâyesi*’ndeki değirmenci karakterini insan-hayvan karışımı ve başkaldıran Ötekiler olan Ortaçağ’ın canavarları olarak incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Canterbury Hikâyeleri, Chaucer’ın Değirmenci karakteri, canavar, öteki kavramı, Chaucer’ın *Kâhya’nın Hikâyesi* öyküsü.

I. INTRODUCTION

Characterised by the three-estates and feudalism, the Middle Ages witnessed a great social change and mobility in the fourteenth century which radically weakened its building stones. Accordingly, Geoffrey Chaucer's unique work *The Canterbury Tales* depicts the upwardly mobile characters as the products of this social transformation and mobility. Along with monsters, Jews and Saracens, heretics, pagans, homosexuals, lepers, and witches, these characters were also the Others of the Middle Ages since they did not completely belong to the traditional three estates structure and lived on the peripheries of the acknowledged identities of the three estates, without achieving a full identification with any of them. More importantly, the concepts of the Other or Otherness in the Middle Ages are largely associated with the monster studies which begin with the dichotomy of "Us" (the human beings) and "Them" (the monsters).¹ Thus, the Other is mostly examined along with monstrosity in the medieval texts.²

There are very few studies discussing monstrosity in Chaucer. In general, monstrosity in Chaucer was dealt with in relation to the women's studies. To exemplify these studies, with a feministic point of view, Klerks analysed Chaucer's woman characters in *The Miller's Tale*, *The Reeve's Tale*, *The Merchant's Tale* and *The Shipman's Tale* as female grotesques in that women in the Middle Ages were mostly perceived as Evelike figures and creatures rather than human beings. In another study, Urban examined the Middle English Romances including the Constance tale as adapted by Chaucer and depiction of Medea in the works of Chaucer and concluded that these works used female monstrosity to depict the concerns emerging in a patriarchal society which put the female in an abnormal category as Others and monsters. Therefore, women have been discussed as the Others and monsters of the medieval society. Furthermore, apart from the women's studies, a great number of medievalists have focused on the depiction of the Other in *The Canterbury Tales*. The studies of the Other in *The Canterbury Tales* mainly depict the Jews and the Saracens as the religious or cultural Other. Within the context of the Other, *The Squire's Tale* and *The Man of Law's Tale* were largely analysed by the scholars.³ Yet, the monstrosity or Otherness of Chaucer's characters in *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* is not addressed and the studies have focused on the Other in relation to monstrosity within the scope of religion, race and gender. Hence, this article examines the two miller characters of Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* as monstrous Others of the Middle Ages. With respect to the depiction of the Other in the Middle Ages, Bleeth observes,

¹ For detailed information on the relationship between the dichotomy of "Us" (the human beings) and "Them" (the monsters) and the concept of Otherness in the Middle Ages, see particularly Chapter 3 and 7 in Asa Mittman's *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

² On the Otherness and the monstrosity in the Middle Ages, see, among others, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1996) 3-25; *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1999); David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill Queen's UP, 1996).

³ On the depiction of the Other in *The Canterbury Tales*, see Albrecht Classen, *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Kenneth Bleeth, "Orientalism and the Critical History of the Squire's Tale." *Chaucer's Cultural Geography*. Ed. Kathryn Lynch (New York: Routledge, 2002) 21-31; and Khalid Mosleh Alrasheed, "The Postcolonial Middle Ages: A Present Past." MA Thesis, University of Wyoming, 2009.

[. . .] *the Middle Ages has a special role, both as self and Other – both as the source of later attitudes toward difference and as the origin that stands prior to them, against which the “enlightened” present can be defined.* (2002, p. 4)

Thus, according to Bleeth, the Middle Ages were the beginning point of the construction of self and other. Similar to Bleeth, Akbari points out that the colonial dichotomy of “Us” and “Them” dates back to the Middle Ages especially to the fourteenth century (2000, p. 19-34). As stated, widely identified with the monster studies, the notions of the Other or Otherness in the Middle Ages were shaped by the dichotomy of “Us” (the human beings) and “Them” (the monsters). Upwardly mobile medieval people, as depicted in Chaucer’s millers, tore down the medieval dichotomy of “Us” and “Them”. They, then, like Cohen’s monsters, “[d]well [ed] at the gates of difference” (1996, p. 7) and belonged to a different category (1996, x) rather than to a certain estate. Cohen also defines monster as “an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond” which underlines its “displacement” (1996, p. 7). Monsters belongs to a category of “an extreme version of marginalization” (1996, viii) and they are “resistant Other[s]” (1996, x). According to Cohen, the monster

signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again. (1996, p. 4)

Chaucer’s millers in *The General Prologue* and in *The Reeve’s Tale* are “resistant Others” and the spearheads of the monstrous Others of the Middle Ages with their animal-like appearance, rebellious nature and atypical social position. Like Cohen’s monsters, Chaucer’s millers “resist[...] any classification built on hierarchy or a merely binary opposition, demanding instead a system allowing polyphony, mixed response (difference in sameness, repulsion in attraction), and resistance to integration” (1996, p. 7). For example, similar to his historical counterparts —playing an active role in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, the Miller in *The General Prologue* figuratively pulls down the social order and the “Us” and “Them” dichotomy with his head. Likewise, in his tale, the Miller, as Patterson argues, deals with the rebellion of the peasants and repudiates the blue-blooded and chivalric ideals of the Knight (1991, p. 244), one of the “Us”. Thus, he resists the medieval hierarchy set by the nobility. To use Cohen’s words for the monster, the Miller’s “very existence is a rebuke to boundary and enclosure” defined by the nobility and he is a “transgressive, [. . .] a lawbreaker; and so the [Miller] and all that it embodies must be exiled or destroyed. The repressed, however, [...] always seems to return” (1996, p. 7, 16). Similar to the Miller in *The General Prologue*, the miller in *The Reeve’s Tale* is a resistant outsider and lawbreaker who claims his place in the nobility. In fact, the Peasants Revolt of 1381 was the most significant arena where the medieval “Us” and “Them” came face to face and conflicted with each other as, in Cohen’s words, the nobility (Us) “monsterized” the commoners (Them) including millers.

II. THE PEASANTS’ REVOLT OF 1381 AND MONSTROSITY

To be able to examine Chaucer’s Miller in *The General Prologue* as a monster, the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 and its relation to monstrosity must be covered. The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 was a very significant turmoil which entirely altered medieval social structure. The peasants demanded more rights and freedom from their lords. The peasants included the social climbers who gained wealth and social status due to the social, economic and political changes of the time. Especially social climbers, like millers, were protesting not only the

taxes but the fact that they were still seen as serfs in the eyes of the nobility. According to the general consensus, the revolt “owed much of its impetus to men who were rising in the world and striving to be free from archaic restrictions” (McKisack, 1959, p. 342). For Holmes, the objections against the traditional hierarchical structure were at the very heart of the Peasants’ Revolt since its stimulus was equality (1966, p. 131). Indeed, the Peasants’ Revolt was so startling that “those in authority thought that the lower orders had gone mad” (Saul, 1997, p. 165). The rebels were not only from the helplessly pauper, there were peasants and artisans who became rich after the Black Death, yet, were troubled due to the social restrictions and violation of their rights as the people of higher ranks did not want them to gain power. The nouveau rich such as millers, reeves, jurors, and constables also did not want to be counted as outcasts since they kept noteworthy positions in society. In brief, the oppression on the peasants and social climbers of the time led to the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381—an uprising of people who did not believe in feudal structure anymore. Thus, the rebellion bore a radical character which threatened the social order (Bishop, 1971, p. 300; Whittle and Rigby, 1987, p. 71; Saul, 1997, p. 165) and the authority of “Them”.

The heavy taxes were the most prominent causes of the revolt. After Edward’s claim to French throne, England had hard times due to the heavy taxes collected to fund wars. In 1377, 1379, and 1380, Parliament imposed three different poll taxes to finance the war against France. The third tax was three times as much as the first tax and people refused to pay it. When royal commissioners wanted to collect the taxes and arrest those who resisted, the villagers came together from the different parts of the kingdom; they shot arrows at the king’s men, who ran away to London. Other villages joined the rebellion, making it more aggressive. The city gate of London was unlocked by the people of London to the rebels. The rebels let the prisoners free, destroyed the official documents, and set the Savoy Palace of John of Gaunt, the king’s uncle, on fire. When the rebels entered London on Wednesday, 12 June, the king and his advisors made themselves safe in the Tower. The rebellious tenants assaulted the lords and their possessions and devastated manor houses and other riches of lords along with the feudal records (Dillon, 1993, p. 1; Justice, 1994, p. 2; Childress, 2000, p. 59; Schofield, 2003, p. 165; Turner, 2006, p. 19). To halt the uprising, King Richard granted freedom to the villeins, yet, changing his mind, as Strohm puts it, he determined the destiny of the defeated rebels through his well-known words: “Rustics you were and rustics you are still; you will remain in bondage, not as before but incomparably harder” (2008, p. 98). The king’s words for the rebels voiced the views of the people of high rank about the peasants. They were the people of rural origin lacking the refined manners of the upper classes and deserved to live in bondage.

The revolt revealed “in strict terms [. . .] the economic, political, and legal oppression of the upper class over the lower class” (Eberhard, 1990, p. 8). As Abram observes, the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 was the rejection of the lower orders of the long-accepted supremacy of the upper orders (2013, p. 2). This situation was disclosed by John Ball, the leader of the revolt, with these words: “Whan Adam dalf [delved] and Eve span; Wo [who] was thanne a gentleman?” (Dobson, 1983, p. 374). The main demand of the rebels was the abolition of serfdom. Wat Tyler, one of the leaders of the revolt, declared that “no man should be a serf, nor do homage or any manner of service to any lord [...]” (Keen, 2003, p. 149). The Peasants’ Revolt was scandalous for the nobility; many of them believed that it was a punishment of God as documented in the chronicles as well as the literature of the time (Turner, 2006, p. 18). However, although Chaucer witnessed the Revolt, he scarcely handled

it in his works. In *The Knight's Tale*, Chaucer tells about a "cherles rebellyng" (CT, I, 2459)⁴ or in *Troilus and Criseyde*, he writes the "blase of strawe" (IV, 184). Yet, these are implicit references and one cannot be sure whether Chaucer really speaks of the Revolt or not. There is only one possible reference of Chaucer to the Revolt in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, when he describes a noisy farmyard rush:

So hydous was the noyse-- a, benedicitee!--
 Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee
 Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille
 Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
 As thilke day was maad upon the fox.

(CT, VII, 3393-7)

It is again hard to make out clearly what Chaucer means with these words. Yet, it is doubtless that the peasants are likened to screaming animals, and these animals had a lawful target: the fox, the vice killer of the tale. The fox is a common symbol of lawyers, and the lawyers were one of the main figures whom the rebels hated much. These ambiguous references to the Revolt also indicate Chaucer's unwillingness to make open political declarations (Turner, 2006, p. 19, 23). For Strohm, Chaucer's avoidance of making explicit personal and social criticism in his works is also a sign of political pressure on the writers at that time (1990, p. 84). Like in the previous revolts of the lower classes in the Middle Ages, the animal images were used for the rebels who joined the Revolt of 1381. When the London artisans and workers assaulted the queen, mayor, and aldermen in the thirteenth century, their action was described as "roaring abuse" and with different repulsive attributes in the chroniclers (Hanawalt, 1998, p. 12). The chronicles also described the rebels as the "fools of the vulgar herd" and the oppressive rulers of London thought that the rebellion was a barbarian threat of the peasants who were liberated and disrupted the boundaries of social hierarchy and law. In accordance with the animal imagery, in the chronicles, the rebels "roar" rather than talk; they were believed to attack literacy by destroying court records. Thus, the rebels were farmyard animals who devastated the civilisation of the cultured (Hanawalt, 1998, p. 12).

As Prescott points out, the Revolt of 1381 was better documented than the other revolts in the Middle Ages.⁵ The Revolt was recorded by the well-known chroniclers of the Middle Ages. For example, *The Anonimale Chronicle*, a sixteenth-century chronicle, includes an in-depth account of the rising. The chronicle was most probably compiled by someone close to the government (1998, p. 5-6). According to *The Anonimale Chronicle*, the rioters from Kent headed by Wat Tyler together with the rebels who joined them from Deptford passed London Bridge and they proceeded to London without giving any damage till they reached Fleet Street. Then, the rebels of Kent set the convicts of the Fleet Prison free. They set shops on fire (qtd. in Dobson, 1983, p. 156).

In fact, according to the chronicles, as Prescott further states, in 1381, the menace to the social order was so severe and the rebels were so savage that there was a binge of ferocity and ruin. They rushed to the Tower of London. They beheaded Simon Sudbury and

⁴ All Chaucer quotations are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer* (2008). Ed. Larry Dean Benson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵ For detailed accounts on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, see R. B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*. Ed. Gwyn A. Williams. 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1983).

Robert Hales, some Fleming merchants, detested lawyers and officials and many others on Tower Hill. For two days, London was left at the mercy of the insurgents. The chronicles depicted the insurgents as animals without control and with irrational hostility (1998, p. 3). The Westminster Chronicle likened the rioters to “the maddest of mad dogs” which terrorised the realm (1982, p. 2). Jean Froissart claimed that many of the rioters did not even know the reason for the rising, yet they foolishly pursued the others (qtd. in Prescott, 1998, p. 98). In fact, it was John Gower who used a very influential animal-like description about the rebels. In his *Vox Clamantis*, he divided the rebels into various groups of mad animals as if they were monsters and narrated that in his dream he saw that people in a mob turned into domestic animals and the animals away from their tame nature grew into wild beasts (1902, p. 36). Furthermore, the animalistic nature of the rebels was associated with their odd cries which are identified with the dwellers of hell. Thomas Walsingham pictured the scene before the beheading of Sudbury and the others as such:

a most horrible shouting broke out, not like the clamour normally produced by men, but of a sort which enormously exceeded all human noise and which could only be compared to the wailings of the inhabitants of hell. Such shouts used to be heard whenever the rebels beheaded anyone or destroyed houses... Words could not be heard among their horrible shrieks but rather their throats sounded with the bleating of sheep, or, to be more accurate, the devilish voices of peacocks. (qtd. in Dobson, 1983, p. 173)

As Sthrom states, the chroniclers made use of various methods to vilify the rebels (1992, p. 34). One of those methods was to describe them as if they were the representatives of the devil. To exemplify, in his account of the beheading of Sudbury, Walsingham depicted the rioters as ruined vulgars and hustlers of Satan with demonic character (qtd. in Dobson 1983, p. 173). Moreover, Walsingham states that they had staffs, tarnished swords, axes and bows and arrows (qtd. in Sthrom, 1992, p. 42). In *The Knighton's Chronicle*, Henry Knighton describes them as “lying scattered about in open places, or under walls, like so many slaughtered swine” (qtd. in Prescott, 1998, p. 4). That is how the rebels, medieval “Them” or Others are depicted as monsters, as inhuman brutes in the chronicles of the Revolt of 1381. The Revolt was not successful and in the end, the traditional responsibilities of peasants were restored. Yet, the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 let the voice of medieval “Them” heard by “Us” of the society. Similar to the depiction of the rebels of 1381, the animal imagery characterizing the rebels as Others and a part of “Them” used in the press in 1981 at the six-hundredth anniversary of the Revolt. Prescott writes: On 11 April 1981, on my way back to London after giving a talk about the riot at Canterbury, I was bewildered that in Brixton, cars and shops were on fire and crowds dispersed on the streets. It was as if the spirits of 1381 returned to take vengeance upon today’s people (1998, p. 1).

Prescott further states that “[a] frequent reaction to the sight of rioting crowds like those of 1981 is to depict them as dehumanized monsters” (1998, p. 1). In numerous ways, the depiction of the rebels as animals and monsters was repeated in press (1998, p. 1). To exemplify, *A Daily Mail* front-page writes “[a]t midnight, by the red light of the fires they have lit, the young of Liverpool look truly scary, like stunted demons emerging from the shadows with their arms raised” (1981, p. 1). Under the headline “[t]hey were like animals. I was sure we would be killed” (1981, p. 4). *A Daily Mail* accounts the observations of a policeman in the Brixton riots under the title of “He was ablaze- the People were Animals” as follows: I don’t mind what other people think. A sane enlightened person does not walk

around with a bomb. The most awful part was that they were all singing and laughing each time someone got injured (1981, p. 4).

Thus, the rebels of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in the chronicles and their successors of 1981 in the press were like animals with wild nature who were totally different from the human beings. Their strange cries were like those of the giants and even their physical appearance were similar to beasts. With their animal-like appearances, analogous to the portrayal of Chaucer's millers, they were against the traditional social order and had no place in the civilized society. In other words, they became the animalistic Others of the society. They were inhuman and excessively violent as if they were monsters or the devils of hell. They, then, belonged to "Them" part of the society.

III. THE MILLER IN *THE GENERAL PROLOGUE*: A MONSTER IN GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S *THE CANTERBURY TALES*

The Miller in *The General Prologue*, with his atypical social position, animal-like appearance and rebellious nature, is the fictional representative of the rebels of 1381 and the medieval monstrous Others who are the members of "Them" of medieval society. The Miller occupies a paradoxical status in the medieval social strata due to his non-gentle status and prosperity. The Miller is a peasant who rises on the social ladder through wealth, and regards himself as the member of the nobility. Yet, the Miller is not welcomed either by his former estate or by the estate he aspires to and occupies an atypical position on the social hierarchy (Homans, 1975, p. 362; Lambdin & Lambdin, 1996, p. 272, 274; Fossier, 1988, p. 100) designating his position as the Other. In fact, Chaucer's well-off and pretentious miller is a typical fourteenth century miller. The Miller's rising social status seems to attract much criticism: since most peasants "never threatened to compete with the propertied classes, it was not necessary to ridicule their ambition. The miller, on the other hand, had money to spend and was better able to overstep the barriers which had gradually developed between the classes" (Jones, 1955, p. 6). Millers mainly belonged to the labouring class; yet, through their wealth, they also had a place in the gentry. Thus, both the labourers and the gentry detested them. More importantly, millers "had lots of money to spend and were able to step above the boundaries that had evolved between the classes, but nobody wanted them [as] they were still seen as serfs in the eyes of the gentry" (Lambdin & Lambdin, 1996, p. 275). Thus, with their mentioned qualities, millers became the essential participants of the Peasant Revolt of 1381. Similar to the representation of the rioters of 1381 in the chronicles, the most notable feature of Chaucer's Miller in *The General Prologue* is his animal-like appearance:

His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
.....
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.

(CT, I, 552-57; 559)

The Miller's red head is largely identified with deception and dishonesty which were associated with the rebels (Mann, 1973, p. 162). The ugliness is also commonly characterized with "red hair, bristly hair, hair on the face, a huge mouth and a prominent

beard" (Mann, 1973, p. 162) as in the Miller's depiction above. As stated above, the chronicles tended to ascribe animal qualities to the peasants of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The Miller is an ill-mannered man, never bows to anyone and overturns the social hierarchy (CT, I, 545-51). Indeed, there is no doubt that millers participated in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. For example, John Fillool, a miller from Hanningfield, Essex, was hanged as he took part in the Revolt. When the mutineers of Bury St. Edmonds decapitated John Cavendish, a King's Justice who had implemented the Statute of Labourers with extreme harshness, the slayer was named Matthew Miller; referring to the physical strength of millers and their fame for rampage (Patterson, 1990, p. 128; Phillips, 2000, p. 61). Besides his physical ugliness, the Miller, hence, is described as physically strong in *The General Prologue*:

The millere was a stout carl for the nones;
 Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.
 That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,
 At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
 He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
 Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
 Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.

(CT, I, 545-51)

The Miller is a well-built man and he is always the winner of the wrestling tournaments. He can bring doors down with his head alone. As Pearsall states, while aggressive and disruptive, the Miller embraces the knightly activity of fighting with his wrestling, knives, shield, and capacity to bring down doors with his head (1985, p. 75). Thus, there seems to be the implication that the Miller forces and violates the social boundaries. Additionally, a knightly imitation is also suggested in the demeanours of the Miller. The doors probably signify the social boundaries which oblige social climbers not to exceed their limits. For Wetherbee, breaking the doors with his head refers to the capability for unplanned and possibly devastating self-assertion in a society in which conventional restraints are questioned and repudiated (2004, p. 31). Accordingly, disrupting the boundaries with his head literally and his wealth in reality, the Miller does not intend to accept the restrictions imposed on him by medieval hierarchy, that is, by medieval "Us". Thus, the Miller becomes the rebellious voice of "Them" and turns into a monstrous Other.

This defiant voice of the Miller as the Other can be more clearly traced in his tale. Although the Miller has low-class origins, he is determined to gain a place in the realm of the nobility. After the noble Knight completes his tale, each pilgrim in the company appreciates it as a noble story (CT, I, 3110-12). For the Host, it is the Monk who should tell a tale after the Knight (CT, I, 3116-18-19). Yet, the drunken and irreverent Miller does not agree with the Host and insists that his story is also a noble one and he should tell a tale after the Knight's tale (CT, I, 3120-27).

Then, the Miller in a way claims equality with the Knight. The Host, yet, reminds the Miller of his place in society: "And seyde, "Abyd, Robyn, my leeve brother;/ Som better man shal telle us first another./ Abyd, and lat us werken thriftly." (CT, I, 3129-31). It is significant that the Miller does not give up his claim and tells the next tale after the Knight (CT, I, 3133-35). In that way, a "cherles tale" (CT, I, 3169) comes after the noble story of the Knight; and, the Miller, a churl, violates the social order and tells his story after the Knight and before the Monk. Belonging to the nobility and the clergy respectively, the Knight and the Monk,

unlike the Miller, are members of the “Us” part of medieval society. Thereby, with his claim, the Miller also disrupts the dichotomy of “Us” and “Them”. As several critics have noted, the interruption of the Miller of the story telling contest works as an intentional disruption of the social order which is observed by the Host (Lambdin & Lambdin, 1996, p. 276; Selby, 1999, p. 53; Morgan, 2010, p. 493; Smilie, 2012, p. 87). By so doing, the Miller evidently equates himself with the Knight. As David suggests, the intervention of the Miller is a kind of “literary Peasants’ Rebellion” (1976, p. 72).

The rebellion of the Miller continues in his tale, too, in which the Miller challenges the aristocratic order of *The Knight’s Tale*. As Turner observes, *The Miller’s Tale* severely parodies the tale of the Knight by revealing the hypocrisy of the exalted discourse of the nobility and by asserting that the upwardly mobile people can also express their opinions as the nobility (2006, p. 29-30). In other words, again similar to his historical counterparts, the Miller revolts against the societal and political pressures of the time, and claims a place in the higher classes; thus he disrupts the border between “Us” and “Them”. In his tale, the Miller claims his own order in contrast to the Knight and asks for a place in the nobility. In fact, the Miller both challenges and imitates the Knight’s tale. Therefore, the tale of the Knight, dominated by the concept of noble order, is challenged by the tale of the Miller who suggests a natural order in society. In the order of the Miller, everything in the tale of the Knight turns upside down and romance is replaced by fabliau, tragedy by comedy, philosophy by corporal desire, and princes by clerks and carpenters. The challenge of the Miller to the Knight’s authority is actualized by the imitation of his tale, plot, characters and discourse albeit in a fabliau instead of a romance. At the centre of *The Miller’s Tale*, there is the world of the social climbers; it takes place in Oxford and tells about an old “riche gnof” John (CT, I, 3188), his yong wyf (CT, I, 3233), Alison, their tenant, a “poure scoler” (CT, I, 3190), Nicholas who knows “of deerne love” (CT, I, 3200) and Absolon a “parissh clerk” (CT, I, 3312). Both Nicholas and Absolon are in love with Alison who is very beautiful: “Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal/ As any wezele hir body gent and small.” (CT, I, 3233-34). Thus, besides the husband, it is a story of one woman and two men who want to gain the love of the woman as in the story of Emelye, and Arcite and Palamon in *The Knight’s Tale*. In his tale, the Miller specifically attacks the courtly values and aristocratic, refined manners of the nobility which are accepted as the values distinguishing the nobility from the rest of the society, particularly from the social climbers. Accordingly, in *The Miller’s Tale*, instead of the refined manners of Emelye, and Arcite and Palamon, there is the discourteous conduct of Alison, Nicholas, and Absolon.

Thus, as Rutledge states, unlike the love triangle of Emelye, and Arcite and Palamon, there are neither chivalric men or unattainable women, nor polite conduct but obscenity and lust within the love triangle of Alison, Nicholas and Absolon (6). Parodying the courtly love tradition in *The Knight’s Tale*, the Miller’s Nicholas plays a man of lovesickness and Alison an aloof mistress. When John is away from home for business, Nicholas and Alison flirt with each other which directly contradicts with courtly behaviour of the noble characters of *The Knight’s Tale*. Trying to win the love of Alison, Nicholas imitates the noble discourse, yet, with an improper language and behaviour: “And seyde, “Ywis, but if ich have my wille,/ For deerne love of thee, lemman, I spille.” (CT, I, 3277-78). Similar to Nicholas, Alison, pretending to be a noble lady, replies: “And seyde, “I wol nat kisse thee, by my fey! [. . .]/ Or I wol crie `out, harrow’ and `allas’!/ Do wey youre hands, for youre curteisye!” (CT, I, 3284; 3286-87). Yet, in the end, Alison, unlike a romance heroine, accepts the love of Nicholas:

"That she hir love hym graunted ate laste,/ And swoor hir ooth, by Seint Thomas of Kent,/ That she wol been at his comandement," (CT, I, 3290-92). After Nicholas reaches his aim without too much difficulty, as Pearsall points out, he plays his guitar like a true courtly lover (The Canterbury Tales 176): "He kiste hire sweete and taketh his sawtrie,/ And pleyeth faste, and maketh melodie." (CT, I, 3305-6). The parody or imitation of aristocratic characters and their noble way of conduct in *The Knight's Tale* are more clearly visible in the relationship between Alison and Absolon. Absolon, a parish clerk, a solicitor and barber as well, "hath in his herte swich a love-longynge" (CT, I, 3349) for Alison. A parody of the courtly lover, Absolon dresses and behaves like a noble man, he also plays the guitar and the fiddle:

Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,
 And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
 Ful streight and evene lay his joly shode.
 His rode was reed, his eyen greye as goos.
 With Poules wyndow corven on his shoos,
 In hoses rede he wente fetisly.
 Yclad he was ful small and properly
 Al in a kirtel of a light waget;
 Ful faire and thikke been the poyntes
 And thereupon he hadde a gay surplys
 As whit as is the blosme upon the rys.
 As white as is the blossom upon the branch.

 In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce
 After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
 And with his legges casten to and fro,
 And pleyen songes on a small rubible;
 Therto he song som tyme a loud quynnyble;
 And as wel koude he pleye on a giterne.
 (CT, I, 3314-24; 3328-33)

As Erol states, in his attire and talents, Absolon, disregarding the fact that he is a clerk in minor orders, imitates the courtly manners since he pays his clothing and hair a lot of attention, wears colourful clothes and has great talent for playing musical instruments and dancing ("A Pageant", 143-144). Indeed, *The Miller's Tale* can be considered to reflect the threats to aristocratic authority caused by the upward mobility of peasants in the Middle Ages (Patterson, 1991, p. 244-79; Zieman, 1997, p. 73; Phillips, 2000, p. 60), that is a threat to "Us" and "Them" dichotomy. Thus, in his story, the Miller claims a new order having a place for the social climbers like himself which is directly opposed to the superiority of the nobility including knights.

IV. THE REBELLIOUS MILLER IN *THE REEVE'S TALE* AS A THREAT TO THE MEDIEVAL "US" AND "THEM" DICHOTOMY

Similar to the Miller in *The General Prologue*, *The Reeve's Tale* presents Symkyn, a miller who, through his claims to gentility due to his wealth and his wife's so called noble origin, challenges medieval "Us" and "Them" dichotomy. Similar to Cohen's monsters, the miller of *The Reeve's Tale* is a rebellious figure of displacement owing to his rural origin, gradually increasing wealth and his claims to the nobility. Like *The Miller's Tale*, *The Reeve's Tale* is a

fabliau which is about a pretentious, tricky and violent miller who is proud of his prosperity and of his high-born wife. His wife is the daughter of a parson, thus illegitimate. Yet, the miller has great expectations for his daughter since her mother is of noble lineage. In *The Reeve's Tale*, the ostentatious miller's pride chiefly comes from the noble origin of his wife, which he believes makes him a noble and he also deserves to be a noble due to his rich yeomanry:

A wyf he hadde, ycomen of noble kyn;
 The person of the toun hir fader was
 With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
 For that Symkyn sholde in his blood allye.
 She was yfostred in a nonnerye;
 For Synkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde,
 But she were wel ynorissed and a mayde,
 To saven his estaat of yomanrye.
 And she was proud, and peert as is a pye.

(CT, I, 3942-50)

Thus, the miller's wife is also as proud as the miller since she received education in a nunnery although she is the illegitimate daughter of a parson. Since the couple regard themselves as the members of the nobility, they dress and behave like the nobility and want people to treat them in the same manner:

A ful fair sighte was it upon hem two;
 On halydayes biforn hire wolde he go
 With his typet wounde aboute his heed,
 And she cam after in a gyte of reed;
 And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
 Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but "dame";

(CT, I, 3951-56)

To Wetherbee, Symkyn's claim for noble status is so influential that his every move is to declare this status (2004, p. 55). The arrogant couple go out on holidays and walk about showing off their pretentious, colourful clothing, the wife with her red gown and the husband with his hose of the same colour (CT, I, 3951-55). The wife expects everybody to call her anything but "dame" due to her alleged noble lineage (CT, I, 3956; 3963-68). Chaucer ironically describes the wife as defiled since she is the daughter of the parson of the town who is supposed to be celibate. Yet, the wife still believes that she should be haughty like a noble in line with her education at nunnery. Hence, the miller and his wife clearly violate the border between "Us" and "Them" and try to place themselves in the nobility, in the "Us" part of the society. Owing to their alleged connections with the nobility, they keep great expectations for their beautiful, twenty-year old daughter, Malyne:

A doghter hadde they bitwixe hem two
 Of twenty yeer, withouten any mo,

 This person of the toun, for she was feir,
 In purpos was to maken hire his heir,
 Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
 And straunge he made it of hir mariage.

His purpos was for to bistowe hire hye
 Into som worthy blood of auncetrye;

(CT, I, 3969-70; 3977-82)

Therefore, it is especially the parson, the grandfather of Malyne, who is planning to make her his heir and to marry her to a man of noble blood. Apart from being a threat to social order and "Us" and "Them" dichotomy like the rebels of the peasants' revolt, the miller of *The Reeve's Tale* is also depicted as a violent, rebellious and animal-like figure. Indeed, at the beginning of his tale, the Reeve declares that his story aims to teach the Miller a lesson (CT, I, 3911-12; 3916). Then, the miller of the Reeve looks like the Miller of *The General Prologue*: They are both wealthy, bully, thief, belligerent, animal-like, they play the bagpipe, wrestle, wear arms, violate the rules, and have flat noses:

Pipen he koude and fisshe, and nettes beete,
 And turne coppes, and wel wrastle and sheete;
 Ay by his belt he baar a long panade,
 And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.
 A joly poppere baar he in his pouche;
 Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche.
 A Sheffield thwitel baar he in his hose.
 Round was his face, and camus was his nose;
 As piled as an ape was his skulle.
 He was a market-betere atte fulle.
 Ther dorste no wight hand upon hym legge,
 That he ne swoor he sholde anon abegge.
 A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele,
 And that a sly, and usaunt for to stele.
 His name was hote deynous Symkyn.

(CT, I 3927- 41)

Symkyn's atypical social position and his claims to the nobility are apparent in his depiction. Playing bagpipe, fishing and wrestling, he possesses a rural background. Yet, wearing arms -sword, dagger, knife- which is unique to the nobility, he claims his place in the nobility and disrupts the social hierarchy. His ape-like appearance and quarrelsome nature also contribute much to his existence as a figure of displacement, a monstrous Other. For Jones, the Reeve "obviously makes the miller of his tale a twin brother of the Miller of the pilgrim group" (1955, p. 4). Besides the other similarities between them, Chaucer might have used the bagpipe specifically—apart from his emphasis on lechery— to establish a link between the Miller of *The General Prologue* and the miller in *The Reeve's Tale*. To introduce him realistically, Chaucer depicts the miller by focusing on his rural background and social status (Block, 1954, p. 243). Since the miller of *The Reeve's Tale* is also a prosperous and pretentious social climber with a rebellious nature, an atypical social position, and an animal-like appearance, like the Miller of *The General Prologue*, he both becomes a threat to "Us" and "Them" dichotomy and grows into one of the monstrous Others in medieval society. Similar to his father, Symkyn, Malyne is described with a "camus nose" (CT, I, 3974) which emphasizes her rural background. Thus, parallel to his father, Malyne is introduced with an animal-like physical characteristic and aspirations to the nobility.

The end of *The Reeve's Tale* shatters the miller's claims to the nobility through his daughter. The miller is a thief who horrifies his environs including a college in Cambridge (CT, I, 3987-96). Yet, Alayn and John, two "yonge povre scolers" (CT, I, 4002) of the college

decide to bring the miller into line. Realising their plan, the miller is annoyed and disdains the clerks: "The moore queynte crekes that they make,/ The moore wol I stele whan I take./ In stide of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren." (CT, I, 4051-53). Hence, the miller again steals the grain of the clerks, to make matters worse, the trick of the miller costs them a horse (CT, I, 4071-72). However, in the end, the clerks triumph over the miller. As it gets dark, the two clerks ask the miller whether he could give them a room to stay in return for money; the miller accepts, yet, they all, the miller, his wife, his daughter and baby boy along with the clerks, stay in the same place since the miller has just one room. About midnight, they all go to bed; yet, Alayn is determined to teach the miller a lesson. He goes to the bed of Malyne and the wife mistakenly goes to bed with John. When the miller realises what happened, he catches Alan by the throat and they fight like animals on the floor:

"Ye, false harlot," quod the millere, "hast?
A, false traitour! False clerk! quod he,
"Thow shalt be deed, by Goddes dignitee!
Who dorste be so boold to disparage
My doghter, that is come of swich lynage?"
(CT, I, 4268-72)

The miller is beaten by Alayn and John. The expectations of the miller for his daughter come to an end as Alayn disparages, socially debases (Blamires, 2006, p. 99) the "swich lynage" of her. Wetherbee points out that the social ambition of the miller is even evident in his use of the French rhyme, "dispar'age" and "lyn'age" (2004, p. 18) as French is a language identified with the nobility. Wetherbee also notes that at the end of the tale, "the social structure defined by the Parson's legacy and Symkyn's ambition has collapsed" (2004, p. 56). The tale ends with the commentary of the Reeve, you reap what you sow (CT, I, 4313; 4319-20). Therefore, the miller's aspirations and his so-called noble lineage come to nothing. As Phillips highlights, "[t]he text dramatises the notion that the social ambitions of a man in his position, and any challenge they might pose within the system, are not based on sound grounds, and deserve to be trounced, [. . .]" (2000, p. 67). Indeed, both *The Miller's Tale* and *The Reeve's Tale* present medieval social climbers who seem to pose a threat to the social order depending on "Us" and "Them" dichotomy. The millers of *The Miller's Tale* and *The Reeve's Tale* turn into monstrous Others as figures of displacement due to their atypical social status, disobedient character and animal like appearance.

V. CONCLUSION

It might be argued that the medieval society was a society of "Us" and "Them", and was full of monstrous Others including the rebels of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Millers with their atypical social positions and role in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 were the foremost members of medieval "Them" and monstrous Others. In the chronicles, the rebels were depicted as animals and inhuman creatures killing people mercilessly. Chaucer's Miller in *The General Prologue* and his miller in *The Reeves's Tale* become the literary depiction of those medieval millers through their atypical social position, animal-like appearance and rebellious nature. Apart from his violence and man-animal composite being in *The General Prologue*, the Miller's fierce and disobedient nature is apparent in his tale which challenges the superiority of the nobility and the "Us" and "Them" dichotomy. Similar to the Miller in *The General Prologue*, the miller in *The Reeve's Tale* is depicted with an animal-like appearance and a rebellious nature which becomes a threat to the "Us" and "Them" division. That is how the millers become the defiant monstrous Others of medieval society and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

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