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**“MERIT WINS THE SOUL”: ALEXANDER POPE’S HUMOROUS REJECTION OF
MODERNISM IN *THE TEMPLE OF FAME****

“ERDEM HEP KAZANIR”: ALEXANDER POPE’UN *THE TEMPLE OF FAME*’İNDE MODERNİZMİN MİZAHİ
REDDEDİLİŞİ

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Abstract

The *querelle* between the Ancients and the Moderns which was introduced into pre-revolutionary France by Charles Perrault was later revived by Jonathan Swift in *The Battle of the Books*, published as a prolegomenon to *A Tale of a Tub* (1704). Swift’s revisiting the French question as to whether the Ancients championed over the Moderns or the Moderns were simply “dwarfs standing upon the shoulders of giants” in William Temple’s words, allowed an English reinterpretation of the debate. Alexander Pope, who industriously contributed to this process of reinterpretation, exposed how the eighteenth-century reception of the classics and forerunning literary models defeated the modernist upheaval in literature. In this context, the present study focuses on Pope’s rejection of this modernist upheaval in his rarely examined re-writing of Chaucer’s *House of Fame*. Identifying Pope’s poetic mission in *The Temple of Fame* as a humorous counter-argument against the moderns, the encapsulation of the idea of classical “merit” which is achieved through an imitation and re-writing of the Chaucerian poetry will be examined. In conclusion, I will consider the points of intersection between Popean humour and the poetic/political design of the eighteenth-century poem.

Keywords: *The Temple of Fame, Chaucer, Ancients and Moderns, Modernism, Re-writing, Reception, Bathos.*

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Öz

Devrim öncesi Fransa’da Charles Perrault tarafından tartışmaya açılan Antikler ve Modernler tartışması, daha sonraları Jonathan Swift’in *A Tale of a Tub*’a (1704) önsöz olarak yazdığı *The Battle of Books* isimli kısa eserinde yeniden alevlendirilmiştir. Swift’in, antiklerin modernlere üstün mü geldiği, yoksa modernlerin William Temple’in ifadesiyle “devlerin omuzlarında yükselen cüceler” mi oldukları ekseninde Fransızlar tarafından başlatılmış olan bu tartışmayı eserlerine taşımış olması, bu tartışmaya İngilizler tarafından bir yorum getirilmesinin önünü açmıştır. Bu yorum sürecine çokça katkıda bulunmuş olan Alexander Pope ise on sekizinci yüzyılın klasikleri ve antik edebi modelleri alımlayışının, edebiyatta yeni yükselmeye başlayan modernist sesleri nasıl alt ettiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma Pope’un pek nadiren ele alınan ve yeniden yazdığı Chaucer’in *House of Fame*’ini ele alarak, onun bu modernist yükselişi nasıl reddettiğini ele almaktadır. Pope’un *The Temple of Fame* isimli eserindeki poetik misyonunun modernist görüşü çürütmek için mizahi bir karşı argüman sunmak olduğu belirtilerek, Chaucer’in şiirsel modelini taklit ederek ya da yeniden yazarak klasik edebi “erdem” anlayışını taşıdığı görüşü ele alınacaktır. Sonuç olarak, Pope’un mizah anlayışı ile on sekizinci yüzyıl şiirinin poetik/politik tasarımının ne ölçüde birbirleriyle uyduğu noktasına değinilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *The Temple of Fame*, Chaucer, Antikler ve Modernler, Modernizm, Yeniden Yazım, Alımlama, Bathos.

Introduction: The good, the bad, and the reasonable: an eighteenth-century English quarrel over intellectual inheritance

Le Siècle de Louis le Grand, the poem which Charles Perrault read before the members of the French Academy, immediately caused an intellectual uproar in 1687. Boileau, La Fontaine, Racine and other dyed-in-the-wool advocates of ancient supremacy over modern invention were alarmed at Perrault’s facile and, in their not so humble opinion, almost sacrilegious pronouncement of the so-called achievements of Louis XIV’s age when he calmly recited the following lines: “Et l’on peut comparer, sans craindre d’être injuste,/Le siècle de Louis au beau siècle d’Auguste” (And one can compare, without being unfair/The century of Louis to the beautiful century of Augustus).¹ Boileau and his fellow antiquarians were rather slow and disorganised in procuring a proper response, but later Boileau himself simply “proposed that the Academy should adopt as its symbol a group of monkeys admiring themselves in a clear well, with the motto *sibi pulchri*, ‘beautiful in their own eyes’” (Highet 280). By 1699, however, the modernist camp which had been explicitly accused of blind narcissism became considerably more outspoken than it happened to be twelve years ago when Jean Le Clerc openly declared “the decay of belles-lettres” (qtd. in “Ancients and Moderns” 35) and the triumph of the modern intellectual. In the meantime, while according to some critics the “starting point of a “modern” sense of history” (“Literary History” 393) was being set across the Channel, Sir William Temple wrote *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning* in 1690 which concatenated the *querelle* between the Ancients and the Moderns setting “the terms of much of English Augustan literary debate” (“Ancients and Moderns” 46-7). As a seventeenth-century statesman who later found solace in the pastoral beauty of English landscape gardens,

¹ Translated by the author.

Temple was not only fascinated with Epicurus's placement of "a man's happiness in the tranquillity of mind and indolence of body" (Temple 20) but also was taken by the hortatory curiosities of the garden of the Antiquity. In this respect, Temple's philosophical search for mental and bodily calmness takes place against the backdrop of a garden image which emerged as an Arcadian setting inheriting directly from the philosopher's inspirational fondness of pastoral retreat.² However, it harbours both an Ancient disposition which locates the nature of happiness and virtue in "the most simple, the most noble scenes of nature" (Whately 31) of a distant but vividly familiar bygone period, and a germane discourse that rules out the modernist tendency of procuring socio-literary novelties. It is interesting to note that Temple's antiquarianism can be merely considered the product of his statesmanship since the curriculum of the seventeenth-century grammar school still referred to the classical authors as perennial sources of wisdom. Thus, he was "an ancient without a profound knowledge of antiquity, no more than a pale imitation of his beloved models" (Levine 72). Nevertheless, it appears to be equally valid that this insufficiency would eventually lead to the production of a comprehensive history of England as he considered that "it was a disgrace, therefore, universally deplored that England had no national history to measure up to the classical precepts or ancient examples" (Levine 291). This appears to be a graceful nod to the Ancient historian and Temple's admiration is a well-intentioned extension of the necessities of public life which was hardly informed by a scholarly interest in ancient texts. It rather emerges as a rhetorical manoeuvre seeking for the continuation of national political interests to which the literary interests of the nation appear to have gained an ancillary status. However, it is a respectful manoeuvre looking up to the literary standards of Epicurus and his contemporaries.

Temple's project is a pioneering one. However, the confrontation between these two intellectual camps has been more illustriously introduced to the common reader in Jonathan Swift's prolegomenon to *A Tale of a Tub* which with its typical Scriblerian sense of humour aims at "mockery of misdirected erudition and or modernist positivism" ("Pope and Augustan Verse Satire" 216). In the prolegomenon known as *The Battle of the Books*, the reader is introduced to a raucous battle between books in St. James's Library, which is caused by the Moderns who simmer gradual detestation for the Ancients who happen to be tenants of the higher top of Mount Parnassus and supposedly spoil "the prospect of theirs" (4). In the middle of negotiations between these two intellectual camps, which eventually leads nowhere but to an inescapable fight, the narrator produces an Aesopian intervention, an analogy established between the spider and the bee. The infamous spider whose lodgings are located next to a high window in the library encounters a bee who suddenly gets caught in the cobweb by entering through a broken pane in the window, engaging him in a lengthy discussion. The spider is an orator; he is a hard-headed advocate of his self-earned abilities, an ardent defender and

² Edward Burns in his *Restoration Comedy* maintains that the Epicureanism of seventeenth-century England appears to "offer an attractive rationale of 'libertine' behaviour" which was propelled by Thomas Creech's translation of *De Rerum Naturae* (1682) "to a society at once post-revolutionary and incipiently scientific." For this point see Edward Burns, *Restoration Comedy: Crises of Desire and Identity*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1987, p. 75.

upholder of intellectual authenticity. The bee, on the other hand, is a philosopher; he gives the spider credit for excelling in architecture and mathematics, but he is disappointed with his opponent's claim to far superior intellectual virtues than his. Later, the bee's main point of objection to the modernist party is revealed in a socio-culinary context:

So that, in short, the question comes all to this: whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding, and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but flybane and a cobweb; or that which, by a universal range, with long search, much study, true judgement, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax (18).

In this manner, the natural pollinator's constant search for wisdom as opposed to the carnivorous arthropod's illusionary view of himself as the originator of ideas perfectly captures the mood of mutual discontent between the Ancients and the Moderns. Swift's fondness for "probing wounds to their depth, and of enlarging them to open view" (Orrery 116) exposes the Modern who is characterised by his "*inwardness*, invention, and self-sufficiency" (Atkins 3) while the Ancient offers "a traditional view of human limitation" ("Augustan Mode" 21). The Modern's disdain for traditional values along with its need for self-centeredness is for the Ancient "an instance of *amor sui*, the Augustinian sin of Pride" ("Poiesis of Non-Modern" 160). The Ancient, on the other hand, disbands boastful intervention in poetic creation in favour of following an earlier example. In this manner, this disbandment encapsulates the Augustan mode of literary conservatism locating the nature of poetic achievement in the perpetuation of a former example as derived from the poet's ability to imitate "his *exemplar* so faithfully that he became an *exemplar* himself" ("Re-Creating the Canon" 85).

It should be noted here that the French-based source of disputation, which has been handed down to the subsequent literary generation in England, has not been limited to the revivalist missions of Temple and Swift. The Ancients-Moderns dispute appears to be a rather encircling topic of conversation that catches the end of the contemporary question of criticism. For criticism in the eighteenth-century concentrated on the problem of the credentials of the critic ("Institution of criticism" 5), and critics—whether Ancient or Modern—were natural participants of this discussion. The critic who was considered eligible for criticism needed to respond to the value of the Ancient literary forerunners and the excesses of reactionary Modernist interpretations. In this context, it is barely a coincidence that David Hume raises the discussion about the limits of contemporary criticism and critics and in his "Of the Standard of Taste" and argues accordingly:

Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and, nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgements on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty (228).

In Hume's view, art criticism derives its general principles from human experience, and it should not be imagined that "on every occasion the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules" (220). He does not consider that mutual human experience would necessarily follow the shape and form of the rules pertaining to art criticism. On the other hand, Hume

puts forward the idea that to discover these rules, one should not take a historically contextualised nominalist approach but a rather object-oriented nominalist approach in evaluating an art object. In other words, he offers a reasonable path; criticism should follow the rules of nature as “certain qualities that are in objects are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings” (222). In his view, if an art object acquires a beautiful capacity from nature, only then should it be considered beautiful and complete. The ability to criticise, then, should necessarily entail the ability to see what ‘naturally’ produces beauty.³ Since this true-to-nature sense of beauty is already present in the works of the Ancients, Hume offers a reasonable -but not fully Antiquarian- position which also became a reflection on the eighteenth-century crisis of criticism with significant relevance to the debate. However, he does not overlook the fact that even the Ancients included absurdities in their works to a certain extent.

Alexander Pope’s relation to the Ancients-and-Moderns dispute, it appears, has a Humean outlook in essence.⁴ However, it might also be suggested that his association with the dispute appears to be partially an extension of his friendship with Swift. When Swift coined the term “modernism” to make a complaint of the growing commercialisation of traditional literary and moral values (Abel 125) in a letter composed in 12 October 1738, Pope assures him that he loses little by hearing very little of what “this idle and base generation” has to tell him. He adds that his gradual loss of hearing and memory should not be a cause of pain to him in the least (368). Even more so, Pope declares that he opted for making a living on his country’s past literary glories and humbly advises his dear friend to do likewise. Interestingly enough, however, his personal disagreement with the Moderns appears to show a closer affinity with Humean reasonableness since this discontent is documented in one of his earliest major poems, *An Essay on Criticism* where he appears to have already warned the Moderns against trespassing the rules of nature:

But tho’ the Ancients thus their rules invade,
 (As Kings dispense with laws themselves have made)
 Moderns, beware! or if you must offend
 Against the precept, ne’er transgress its End;
 Let it be seldom, and compell’d by need;
 And have, at least, their precedent to plead (lines 161-6)

³ Patey maintains that the eighteenth-century critic did not allow an overreaching, limitless sense of criticism as “Whether in the more rationalist model of Dennis, Shaftesbury’s theory of an internal sense, or Pope’s effort to harmonize all alternatives, criticism has standards (the ‘rules’) - the republic of taste is no anarchy - but these are internal to taste itself” (14).

⁴ Although I do not suggest that Hume is primarily responsible for coming up with the idea of ‘standards of the taste’. On the contrary, Patey argues that “Hume’s rhetoric of immediacy, his formulations, in fact, echo Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (1711), his chief model in that essay” (“Institution of criticism” 5).

The Humean context of revering the natural standards of aesthetic judgement which informs much the critical interests of Pope's *Essay* obviously assigns a set of "rules for the Conduct of Manners in a Critic", "according to criticism's internal demands (the demands of taste)" ("Institution of criticism" 15). However, Pope locates the natural standards of aesthetic judgement in the Ancient literary models' ability to spot a 'naturally' beauty-evoking literary form/content. Surprisingly enough, elsewhere in the Popean canon, Clarissa's defence of the cultivation of human virtues instead in *The Rape of The Lock* openly treats Modernists with utter contempt and decries their inability to judge in accordance with natural aesthetic standards. Accordingly, the sense of contempt also becomes a decisive marker of Pope's larger philosophical-literary agenda:

And trust me, Dear! good Humour can prevail,

When Airs, and Flights, and Screams, and Scolding fail.

Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll;

Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul

(5. 31- 4, 82)

Clarissa's well-formed argument, which delivers the importance of looking beyond the female mystique, not only attempts at a revision of the early eighteenth-century ideal of femininity but also addresses Pope's early formation of an earlier version of virtue ethics.⁵ By doing so, it also signals at a discord between the modern Belinda and the ancient Clarissa. The Moderns may have a claim to intellectual charm, but since they stand in opposition to the precepts of the Ancient literary tradition, does it necessarily mean that the Modernist camp responds to the Humean standards of aesthetic judgment?⁶ If verisimilitude to nature is evocative of poetic beauty and harmony, and poetic harmony evokes virtuous representation, how virtuous is the Modernist poet in the manner Pope (and Hume) speaks of it? Or, does an intellectually reactionary mode in literature necessarily ensure intellectual merit? Pope offers a simple answer: in the manner Boileau defended "the great ancients as standards for imitation in his *Art poétique* (1674)" ("Ancients and Moderns" 35), he defends the view that poetic merit is to be gained through an imitation of the Ancient literary models. This does not denote poetic regression by copying what the Ancient poet considered true to nature, but instead implies the importance of self-schooling by imitating nature. Self-schooling, in this respect, includes closely scrutinising the Homeric or Horatian poetic standard "thereby both correcting our

⁵ G. Wilson Knight in his *The Poetry of Alexander Pope* considers architectural symbolism in *The Temple of Fame* as a marker of Pope's interest in "applied" ethics "but not to any static or theoretic virtue" (179). Although Knight's largely spiritualistic / transcendentalist interpretations overshadow Pope's ethical focal points, it contributes to the Aristotelian evaluation of *eudaimonia* which offers a strictly physical and metaphysical teleologicality. Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* argues that "Aristotle's ethics, expounded as he expounds it, presupposes his metaphysical biology" (148).

⁶ This is also related to the scepticism felt towards the Moderns' compliance with "a norm 'Nature' which is "an immutable standard" for "poetry imitates nature, that is, the universal order of things" ("Poetry, 1660-1740" 104).

understanding of nature and refining—recreating by changing—a literary tradition” (“Institution of criticism” 8-9). In this manner, it emerges as a reasonable project of criticism which promotes intertextual conversation to the point of furthering and bettering our knowledge of artistic imitation through indulging in poetic imitation. After all, “Every Art is best taught by example” as Samuel Johnson explains in a chapter he devotes to Pope due to the fact that “nothing contributes more to the cultivation of propriety than remarks on the works of those who have most excelled” (439).⁷ In this regard, Pope’s speaker in *Essay on Criticism* and Clarissa in *The Rape of the Lock* are close relatives of Swift’s philosopher bee who admires Ancient forms of imagination and understanding. They both attribute teleologicality to nature and become advocates of human and art function that look up to nature as the first *exemplar*.⁸ Following this train of thought, I should like to consider that Pope introduces a similar notion in *The Temple of Fame* in favour of an Augustan mood of antiquarianism. I will argue that *TF* takes a literary hint from the national treasure—Chaucer’s *House of Fame*—to suggest the possibility of a national literary tradition that could rival the excellence of the foreign but ancestral Ancients and also the opportunity to modify the late fourteenth-century poetic design so as to create an ancient firm ground to raise the Ancients-Moderns dispute for discussion. By exploring Pope’s reworking of the late-medieval source-text in an Augustan context, I will try to discover the humorous ways through which Pope responds to the Ancients-Moderns dispute and attempt to identify his poetic mission *contra* the Modernist upheaval of eighteenth-century England. However, before doing that, a vital question arises: why does Pope choose to work against a Chaucerian backdrop? How does a medieval poem whose dreamer/narrator is reputed as a “comic viator” (“Chaucer and Nominalist Questions” 753) furnish his spinous and tacit style of interpretation with poetic tools that speak to the Ancients-Moderns dispute?

National interpretations: Eighteenth-century Chaucer and its relation to the Ancient-Moderns Dispute

Temple’s attempt to create a national genealogy through producing a written record of the English history and the subsequent antiquarians’ mission to nationalise the Ancient position exposes to view the ambition to introduce a national interpretation of the Ancients-Moderns dispute. In this respect, it is possible to read the revival of interest in medieval English literature and Chaucer as part of this project where Chaucer is put forward as an antidote to literary Modernists who “sought to dethrone ‘the prince of poets’” and to challenge

⁷ Although he believed that “between Roman images and English manners there will be an irreconcilable dissimilitude, and the work will be generally uncouth and part-coloured, neither original nor translated, neither ancient nor modern” (435). I will touch upon this authentic Popean dilemma later in this article.

⁸ I have in mind here M.C. Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach which owes much to the Aristotelian concept of *telos* (end) and defines the function of a being as determined by its teleological end. If so, perhaps it could be argued that Pope offers a much earlier version of the capability approach as his warning to the Modern—“ne’er transgress its end”—might be interpreted as Pope’s indebtedness to Aristotle in the matter of ‘poeticising’ in harmony with human function faithful to nature. For this point, see especially *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Harvard University Press, 2011, pp. 123-43. I certainly do not evoke the meaning of Platonic ideal forms.

“the status of ancient works in the name of universal reason” (“Ancients and Moderns” 55-6). However, the literary interest in Chaucer during the eighteenth-century presents a rather mixed view. His words were often considered decayed “by Time and Custom,” (“Chaucer Allusions” 320)⁹, and his chosen subjects impudent ones (319). Attitudes towards him differ in nature, and yet he was still celebrated as “our Antiquary” (317), the bearer of the “British Lawrel” (318), and Dryden venerated him as a pioneer, “our English Ennius” (qtd. in Sowerby 13). In other words, as much as Chaucer was an outdated poet whose rhyme was difficult to follow for the refined ear of the Augustan poet, he still stood as the Ancient looking from “th’ Elysian Fields” (“Chaucer Allusions” 319). Historical evidence demonstrates the fact that Shakespeare’s fame preceded Chaucer’s rise into prominence due to the accessibility of his texts and their performability, whereas Chaucer “did not come cheap before the late-eighteenth century” (Bowden 185) due to the print culture the genre dictated. However, it did not appear to hold Dryden and Pope back from modernising Chaucer as they not only “procured for themselves the opportunity to create something original and new for a previously unaware audience” but also “produced translations in the form of modernization that carefully balanced admiration with preservation, restoring the fame of those literary masters from long ago by dressing their words in a contemporary fashion” (Larson 5). While this explains why the Augustan Chaucer emerged as a national exemplar whose excellence in the poetic art stood as a literary model, worthy of being imitated along with Milton and Spenser (“Poetry, 1660-1740” 115), it is also explanatory of the fact that the eighteenth-century antiquarian employed Chaucerian imagination as a counter-argument against the Modernist intellectual. Plainly speaking, then, the revival of the Chaucerian mood of writing was a means of tying the present to the past. It was also a means of creating a national literary tradition while carving a niche for the contemporary antiquarian. In this manner, it could be maintained that the Augustan imitation poetry was born out of the combined efforts of the English classicists who popularised the newly-found literary mission of modernising the Ancients, which also involved the attempt at imitating them. As Patey maintains, the Augustan mode of imitation stood as a means of cultural conveyance, allowing and welcoming continuous invention. In making room for literary progress, Patey suggests, the Augustan poet not only creates a space of intertextuality by attempting an imitation of Ancient writers, but also s/he explores the possibility of producing a literary custom that ties the present to the past. In other words, the Augustan poet is “recreating by changing” (“Institution of criticism” 9), thereby finds creativity in alteration. In this manner, the Chaucerian model became a valuable ancient source to be recreated, re-imagined, and re-written to come to terms with the literary past and also with the Humean understanding of the rules of poetic composition.

⁹ Also, in Henry Felton, *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics, and Forming a Just Style. Written in the year 1709, 1713* where he Felton believes “Chaucer is too old, I fear, for so young Company as Your Lordship” but considers Spenser a better option. See Richmond P. Bond, “Some Eighteenth-Century Chaucer Allusions,” *Studies in Philology*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1928, p. 320.

Pope's fondness for Chaucer, in a poetic sense, appears to show a great deal of resemblance to Dryden's. Just as Dryden venerated Chaucer as "a perpetual fountain of good sense" (11) in *The Preface to the Fables*, Pope remained "an enthusiast for Chaucer" ("Medieval revival and the Gothic" 471). However, Pope shared with Chaucer's critics that his language remained obscure for his Augustan audience,¹⁰ and yet the fact that he was provided with a Speight edition of the Chaucerian canon at the age of thirteen ("Pope's Chaucer" 180) and produced various re-writings of them indicates that he saw in Chaucer a valuable literary source to be imitated. More importantly, by attempting at an imitation of Chaucer, Pope seeks to legitimise Chaucer and establish him as a national literary model to be looked up to. Thus, he intends to put him "in recognizable costume" (Larson 5) by modernising and editing his texts. In this respect, he approaches the Chaucerian canon as "a performing modernizer" (Larson 29), as a keen-eyed scholar of English literature wishing to canonise an obscure yet fatherly figure with the aim of creating a personal working space for furthering his poetic abilities/policies. Therefore, Pope's eighteenth-century re-modelling of Chaucer's *House of Fame* can be argued to perfectly respond to the *querelle* between the Ancients and the Moderns but at a visibly humorous level. His use of humour, to which Rebecca Price Parkin refers as situated to counter "the eccentric with the concentric" pays attention to "the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual," ("Alexander Pope's Humour" 197), and corresponds to the already pronounced and significantly popularised contrast between the ancient ideal and the modern actual. In other words, *The Temple of Fame* offers a study in humour as a response to an 'early' Modernist inability to marry form with content.

Pope's Chaucerian temple: A stance against Modernisation?

House of Fame, belonging to the Chaucerian dream-vision canon, has an eccentric popularity with its shifts in tone and focus since, in Kathryn L. Lynch's words, it is "so thoroughgoing a parody of the classic literary vision that one can almost reconstruct the major conventions of that genre by working backwards from Chaucer's poem" (Lynch 62). In addition, it is considered to be the most disturbing of Chaucer's dream poems as it exposes the absurdity of attributing certainty to human reason (Lynch 82). Instead, the entirety of the poem proposes the idea that the totality of human experience presents a full picture of contingency. In addition, presented as "a parody of the classic literary vision" (Lynch 61), it comically inverts the basic philosophical content of the Dantean vision which often suggests epistemological maturity on the poetic guide's side, and epistemological strive for maturity on the pupil's side. Geoffrey, who is supposed to be the pupil, does not turn out to be "a particularly avid pupil" ("Hous of Fame" 112). Similarly, the Eagle, who is supposed to be a Virgilian substitute, does not equally "manage to inspire the same sort of trust in his charge that the other guides inspire in theirs" (112). In accordance, it has been maintained by Laurence Eldredge that this comic inversion is primarily the product of a fourteenth-century clash

¹⁰ It is also important to note that "Hayman's engraving of the dying Pope in his grotto surrounded by Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and the Muse" (Barnard "Introduction" 1) can also point towards the canonical status that had been bestowed upon Chaucer by Pope and his contemporaries.

between the *Via Antiqua* and the *Via Moderna*. For instance, “Thomas Bradwardine, a follower of the *Via Antiqua*, devoted the bulk of his *De Causa Dei* to the relation of God to man,” while as the follower of the *Via Moderna* “William of Ockham has a great deal to say on perception, on how perception moves from the senses to the intellect on what trust we can put in our abstractions” (109). In a similar manner, the Eagle directs Geoffrey’s attention to the importance of human experience while Geoffrey is a man of faith; he is faithful to truth itself and condemns the “nominalist excesses” (Lynch 78) of the *Via Moderna*. He can be hardly considered a realist in a Bradwardinian fashion, and he is a proponent of the *Via Antiqua* in the sense that he denies an extremist interpretation of the particularity of human experience. Thus, the contrast between Geoffrey, the dreamer/narrator and his guide directly reflect on the medieval estrangement between the *Via Antiqua* and the *Via Moderna* where the former insists on “granting man far less independence of will than was traditionally the case” and the latter is eager to grant “a more important position to man and to the validity of human reason” (“Hous of Fame” 108). It is this estrangement which defines the mood of comicality in the poem; the irreconcilability of the Eagle’s Modernist dogma of experientiality with Geoffrey’s non-dogmatic take on the experiential limits of human knowledge. It is this irreconcilability between these two modes of understanding of being in the Chaucerian original which turns out to be the centre of the comical survey with regards to the limits of human knowledge. The absence of a middle ground of negotiation between the Ancient and the Modern indicates a laughter-evoking incongruity between these two modes of understanding.

Pope’s *Temple of Fame* offers a re-writing of this tension between the Ancients and the Moderns with a familiar sense of Chaucerian comedy. The particular incongruity between these two stances continues to evoke laughter and produce a “piquant humour” (Lynch 64) in the Augustan counterpart. However, Pope’s version of the story leaves out the introductory books as there is “nothing in the Two first Books that answers to their Title” (6), which means that he annuls the Eagle’s Virgilian status and refuses to assign a pupillary task to his Augustan narrator. Instead, from the very beginning, the narrator prepares the reader for an “Intellectual Scene” (8) and promises to offer a first-hand experience of his arrival at a bewildering territory where he initially sees “the wond’rous Rock” shining like “Parian Marble” (9). The dreamer encounters the names of the Ancients whose “greater Part by hostile Time subdu’d” (9) and from this point onwards, he introduces the reader to a quarrel over the names inscribed on the Parian marble as he discovers that the Modernist critic has attempted to replace the Ancients’ names with their own. The tone of the poem is almost elegiac; the narrator sadly notes that the Ancients’ names are tarnished not only by the destructive forces of nature but also they are tarnished by the destructive force of the Modernist. However, the tone shifts quickly after he encounters a temple dedicated to the goddess Fame which is “Rais’d on a thousand Pillars, wreath’d around/With Lawrel-Foliage” (17). The architectural design of the temple in G. Wilson Knight’s words “shows a harmony as assured as, though less geometrical than, Dante’s” (185). The sculptures of various Ancient personalities “serve to realize an intuition of eternal validity in the great persons concerns” (201). Nevertheless, even

when the narrator describes the architectural grandeur of the sculptures and the interior magnificence of the temple, he keeps referring to the silent fame of the Ancient; he finds the Moderns' claim to fame a rather noisy one and makes an almost Clarissan comment when he mentions the silent train of fair virtue (19). At the centre of the hall of fame stands a sculpture of Homer, "Father of Verse" (20) and next to him, he finds "the Mantuan there in sober Triumph" (21) with his eyes fixed on Virgil, implying a tradition in versification. After taking a long look at all the sculptures belonging to Ancient philosophers and poets, the narrator sees goddess Fame with her handmaids singing glorifying songs in honour of the Ancients, honouring the worthy and dismissing the unworthy from her presence. However, her "blind Sister, fickle Fortune reigns,/And undiscerning, scatters Crown and Chains" (27), insinuating the unjust crowning of the Moderns by mere blind fortune. For him, the Moderns are capable of producing nothing but futile tittle-tattle and unfortunately, "living Virtue is with Envy curst" (29). This, in particular, resonates with Swift's condemnation of the Modernists in the form of a bee since the reader is introduced with a harsh streak of criticism in a waspish manner; a feature of the *Temple* which does much justice to the poet's nickname as 'the wicked wasp of Twickenham'.

Until this point, the narrator's mode/mood of narration swings between admiration and denunciation. In this manner, he skilfully addresses the *bathetic* amusement that the Moderns offer who fail to achieve artistic greatness. The narrator's observations on the Moderns in the *Temple*, then, is on a par with what Pope identifies as their weaknesses in *Peri Bathous* as follows:

Their true Design is Profit or Gain; in order to acquire which, 'tis necessary to procure Applause, by administering Pleasure to the Reader: From whence it follows demonstrably, that their Productions must suited to the Present Taste; and I cannot but congratulate our Age on this peculiar Felicity, that tho' we have made indeed great Progress in all other Branches of Luxury, we are not yet debauch'd with any high relish in Poetry [...]. (11)

The Modernist effort to surpass the intellectual excellence of the Ancients, then, offers nothing but a study in laughability. In this respect, Pope rewrites the Chaucerian poem in support of a contemporary debate, mostly overlooking the epistemological crisis with which the medieval source-text is engaged. However, Pope's versification acquires from the Chaucerian original the humorous tone which largely emanates from incongruity as the Scottish common-sense philosopher James Beattie would later observe in his *Laughter and Ludicrous Composition* in 1764 as the source of laughter. Towards the end of the poem, however, a more violent tone appears to take over as the "the Learned World" (28) is opposed by a troop of "Villains, whom no Faith can fix/Of crooked Counsels and dark Politics" (36). Here, we learn that the members of this troop are arrogant, presumptuous, vicious, and capable of immoral behaviour as well, as they start plotting against the learned crew, spreading rumours here and there. In the end, they leave the temple with the knowing consent of goddess Fame since she "points them out their Course,/Their Date determines, and prescribes their Force" (41). What we get here is a sense of injustice as the truth and lie have become inseparable due to the Modernists' foul work (42). However, this gives rise to an impregnable argument made

in favour of “Th’ Estate which Wits inherit after Death” (42) echoing Geoffrey’s laughter which defames the extra confident nominalist’s—and realist’s—reductive, and perhaps extremist, strive for logicism.

Conclusion

Pope’s *Temple* is an Augustan successor to its Chaucerian ideal. As being an imitation of an ancient design, it stands as a contemporary acknowledgment of the medieval *exemplar*’s poetic authority while preserving the image of Chaucer as a perpetuator of Ancient literary standards. In this context, it heavily acquires from the Ancient Roman tradition which considered *imitatio* as “a form of creativity” (Hutcheon 20) as “*imitatio* is neither plagiarism nor a flaw in the constitutions of Latin literature. It is a dynamic law of its existence” (Wittkower 143, qtd. in Hutcheon 20). It is complimentary, revering of an older mode of composition and rich in an almost elegiac ethos. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the *Temple of Fame* is a modernised version. Its claims to literary continuity, traditionalism, and even conservatism do not shadow the fact that it is a poetic perpetrator. In this sense, his revisiting of the Chaucerian ‘first example’ does not simply offer a faithful re-making. He invents new ways of meaning-making with “calculating precision” (Larson 24) to imitate Chaucer. It certainly presents a humorous view of the tension between the Ancient and the Modern—humorous in the sense that it is a display of the incompatibility of these two separate modes of knowing—but also it documents, not so peacefully, an early modern rejection of the Modernist disavowal of merit and its entailments which he considers a species of facetiousness. In other words, he expands the meaning of the Chaucerian temple by reforming the medieval onto-epistemic tale to his own advantage. Ironically enough, then, it stands as a modernising project that refuses to abide with the Modernist’s revolutionism which would have taken Boileau and his fellow antiquarians aback. In the end, Pope leaves us with another humorous dilemma: does this revisionary/reformist attitude make him an ‘early’ Modernist? The answer remains hidden in Pope’s unique aptitude for amalgamating tradition and individual talent throughout the poem without resting on an argument *ad antiquitatem*.

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Extended Abstract

Bu makale, Alexander Pope'un *The Temple of Fame* isimli eserini on sekizinci yüzyıl İngiltere'sinde çokça tartışılan Antikler-Modernler tartışması bağlamında değerlendirmeyi ve bu şiirdeki mizah kullanımının yazarın anti-Modern eğilimini nasıl gün yüzüne çıkardığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, öncelikli olarak bu tartışmanın Fransa'daki kökenleri ortaya konulacak ve daha sonra İngiltere'deki yansımaları incelenecektir. On yedinci yüzyıl Fransa'sında Antik edebiyat eserlerinin ve yazarlarının değerine vurguda bulunan Antikçiler, ya da bir diğer deyişle, klasisistler, edebiyatta yeni gelişen türlerin ve yazım biçimlerinin savunucuları olan Modernleri çokça eleştirmişler ve Modernleri kör bir narsisizm ile suçlamışlardır. Buna karşılık, Modernler de Antikçileri edebi yeniliğin, değişimin ve gelişimin önünde durmakla suçlamışlardır. Bu tartışmanın Fransız kökenli olup olmadığı konusu tartışmalıdır, ancak yine de bu iki taraf arasındaki gerilimin en belirgin olarak gözüktüğü yer Fransa olmuştur. Kanal ötesindeki bu tartışmanın daha sonraki yansıması ise en belirgin olarak İngiltere'de Sir William Temple'in 1690 yılında kaleme aldığı *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning* başlıklı yazısında görülmüştür. Temple burada, daha sonraları Augustus dönemi İngiliz edebi eleştirisinin ana hatlarını ortaya koyduğu söylenen fikirlerini öne sürerken, aynı zamanda kendisinin Epikürosçu erdem ve mutluluk anlayışına olan ilgisini ve dolayısıyla da Antikçi pozisyon almasını sergilemiştir. Temple'dan sonra bu fikrin ve tartışmanın okuyucuya sunulduğu en çarpıcı örneklerden biri de Jonathan Swift'in *A Tale of a Tub* isimli öyküsüne yazdığı giriş olan *The Battle of the Books*'tur. Burada, Swift can alıcı bir tasvir ile Antikçiler'i çalışan, üreten, eski edebi gelenekten kopmadan çalışan arılar olarak betimlerken, Modernleri ise arıyı tuzağına ve ağına çekmeye çalışan kötücül bir örümcek olarak betimlemiştir. Swift burada neredeyse, Modern örümceği aç gözlü ve hırslı olarak tarif ederek aslında bu tartışmada Augustus dönemi edebiyatçılarına St. Augustus'un daha önce tarif ettiği kibir günahından kaçınmalarını öğütlemektedir. Bütün bu tarihsel bağlamın önemi ise şurada yatmaktadır: Alexander Pope böylesi bir tartışmanın içerisine doğmuş, bu tartışmanın içerisinde yetişmiş bir yazardır ve gerek içinde bulunduğu tarihsel bağlam ve gerekse de Jonathan Swift'le olan yakın arkadaşlığı nedeniyle, bu edebi tartışmanın tam ortasında durmaktadır. Ayrıca, yine Pope'un on sekizinci yüzyılda kurulmuş, resmi olmayan bir edebiyat çevresi olan The Scriblerus Club'la olan yakın ilişkileri dolayısıyla da Antikçi taraf ile yakın edebi bağları bulunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Alexander Pope'un on dördüncü yüzyıl İngiliz şairi Geoffrey Chaucer'in *House of Fame*'ini yeniden yazmaya kalkışması bir rastlantı değildir ve aksine onun Antikler-Modernler tartışmasındaki duruşunu ortaya koymuştur. Çünkü on sekizinci yüzyıl İngiliz edebiyatının en önemli yazarlarından ve İngiliz edebiyat eleştirisinin kurucusu olarak anılan John Dryden'dan itibaren, Geoffrey Chaucer'in edebi kanonu bir çekim merkezi olmuş ve döneminin edebiyat anlayışına göre değişiklikler yapılarak, Dryden da dahil olmak üzere birçok yazar tarafından şiirleri okuyucuya sunulmuştur. Burada dikkat çeken şudur ki, her ne kadar on sekizinci yüzyıl İngiliz edebiyatçıları çokça Chaucer'in dilinin iyi anlaşılmasından, eski oluşundan ve hatta gereksizce müstehcen oluşundan yakınmışlarsa da onun şiirlerini okuma ve anlama uğraşına devam etmişlerdir. Bu noktada, İngiliz edebiyatının kurucusu olarak anılan Chaucer'ı, Antik Yunan ve Roma yazarlarına eş değer bir milli edebi öncü, kahraman ve ilk örnek olarak görmüşlerdir. On sekizinci yüzyıl yazarları tarafından neredeyse bir milli "Antik" olarak ilan edilen Chaucer, aynı Antik Yunan ve Roma yazarları gibi taklit edilmeye ve yeniden yazılmaya değer bir kaynak olarak görülmüştür. Alexander Pope da *The Temple of Fame* isimli eserinde böyle bir bakış açısıyla, *House of Fame*'i özgün eserin ilk iki bölümünü atıp üçüncü bölümden itibaren yeniden yazmış ve gerek G. Wilson Knight'ın söylediği gibi Fame tapınağının Antik mimarisine dikkat çekerek ve gerekse de Antikleri öven şarkıcıların şarkılarına odaklanarak, Antikler ve Modernler tartışmasını milli bir Orta Çağ eseri

üzerinden tartışmıştır. Bunu yaparak Pope, son derece ağıtvari bir biçimde nasıl Antik eserlerin, kişiliklerin ve kavramların unutulduğunu, bunun yerini Modern aşırılıkların aldığını ifade eder. Bu bakımdan, Pope tam bir Antikçidir ve hem Chaucer'ın şiirinin on sekizinci yüzyıl edebi bilincine aktarılmasına ve hem de Antikler-Modernler tartışmasının devamlılığına katkıda bulunmuştur. Ancak, makalenin sonuç bölümünde şu düşünce tartışılmaktadır: Pope, *The Temple of Fame*'de her ne kadar Antikçi bir tavır sergilemiş olsa da Antik bir şiiri yeniden yazarak acaba tam da Antiklerin karşı olduğu şeyi mi yapmaktadır yoksa yeniden yazım yoluyla Antik mirasın taşınmasına yardımcı mı olmaktadır? Bu sorunun yanıtı gelenek ve bireysel edebi yeteneği bir araya getirmekte çok başarılı olan Pope'un bu ağıtvari çerçevenin arkasına ustalıkla gizlediği mizahında aranmalıdır.