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The Complex Personality of Chaucer's Reeve and the Problems of Subjectivity Represented in his *Tale**

Yoshinobu Kudo

When a comic tale by the Miller ends, all the pilgrims fall about laughing, but the Reeve alone inwardly feels a little anger and so complains:

Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,
But it were oonly Osewold the Reve.
By cause he was of carpenteris craft,
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;
He gan to grucche, and blamed it a lite. (I, 3859-63)¹

Afterwards he begins his own tale so that he 'shal hym quite anon' (I, 3916). An implication of this dramatic setting for the *Reeve's Tale*, that is, the tale is told by an unfairly offended subject to 'answere' (I, 3911), must have some connection with the motive power of his tale itself.

What is implied here is not that the tale should be read as the Reeve's revenge on the Miller, as the dramatic setting directs us on the literal level. Reading the *Reeve's Tale* by simply emphasising the Reeve's intent to have his revenge might cause one to overlook other important aspects of this tale. For example, while summarising and reviewing the compendious studies on this tale, Dylan Jones seeks to assert the significance of the female characters, but he eventually focuses only on the role played by the women in heightening Sym-

kyn's ridiculousness and the miserable repayment for his sinfulness.²

A few decades ago, Lee Patterson regarded the *Reeve's Tale* as Chaucer's immediate restriction of 'peasant consciousness' which the previous *Miller's Tale* exposes.³ This view implies the relatively unimportant status of the tale within the sequence of Fragment I. Since then, much critical attention has only recently begun to be paid to the *Reeve's Tale*, and most recent studies present themselves as responses to Patterson's view. For example, studies of the tale in terms of gender politics have had some success in illuminating the thematic linkage among the successive tales of Fragment I as well as the importance of this tale in that sequence. Nicole Nolan Sidhu has recently demonstrated that it is the *Reeve's Tale* that effectively criticises the male-dominant ideology 'uncritically accept[ed]' by the two preceding tales while pointing out the limitation of fabliau as a form of criticism of gender ideology.⁴ Nevertheless, the dramatic framework of the *Canterbury Tales* is more than just the sequence of tales: now it is time to look at the relationship between the characterisation of the Reeve and his tale. As we shall see below, the dramatic context of the *Reeve's Tale* tells us much about the personality of the Reeve the narrator, and that can be an important key to read his tale. Moreover, from the viewpoint of gender politics, we would be able to find meanings not specifically elucidated in previous gender studies if we pay attention to the more distinctive meaning of contemporary literary representation of rape. Those meanings can also be seen as related to the Reeve's personality implied by his description in the *General Prologue* and the dramatic context surrounding the tale. By comparing the qualities of subjectivity between the Reeve the narrator, Symkyn the miller, and Malyne, this paper seeks to show that the characterisation of the Reeve and his reaction to the dramatic situation tell us about what happens in his tale in terms of subjectivity in trouble. It is the Reeve's multi-layered personality that enables him to critique simplistic quest for self-definition represented by Symkyn in his tale.

First we will examine in detail the complex characterisation of the

Reeve. Chaucer's Reeve is presented as both appropriate and problematic, struggling to form his own self-definition. This quality of the Reeve's complex self-definition will be observed clearly if we first look at the social position of the contemporary reeves as a context for this character. Historical reeves seem to have been subject to the suspicions cast by both upper- and lower-class people in society. J. A. W. Bennet explains: 'reeves were so closely watched by auditors on the one side, and on the other by their neighbours whose work they had to supervise'.⁵ John Langdon explains the financial management of a mill at Feering, Essex, from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century. Although the case is introduced as an instance of millers' payments, it includes an episode in which reeves are suspected by other classes:

When low grain levels occurred for any particular year, the reeve was quick to give a reason [...] in 1312-13 and 1313-14 relatively low mul-ture levels of $39^{1/4}$ and $37^{1/4}$ quarters respectively were justified (by the reeve) as being so low because new windmills had just been built in 'Tey Mandeville' (Now Marks Tey) and Inworth, both within 2 to 3 miles of Feering. The higher echelons of the abbey administration, however, were clearly suspicious of this excuse, because the $39^{1/4}$ and $37^{1/4}$ figures were crossed out and replaced with 40 and 39 quarters respectively.⁶

Suspicion to reeves by other classes is further supported by Richard B. McDonald's remark based on a study on medieval villages by Frances Gies and Joseph Gies:

The lord also benefited from a capable farmer/businessman in the position of reeve, but the more competent the reeve, the more likely he would be able, if so inclined, to abuse the benefits of his office, while presenting the lord with reasonably believable books. Most nobles thought it wise to

check the reports of their reeves closely.⁷

The reeves' social position would also have had a negative influence on their stereotypical image.⁸ Summarising other works that represent or refer to reeves, Douglas Gray remarks: 'Reeves had a reputation for thieving [...]. Preachers and moralists refer to the dishonesty of reeves and bailiffs'.⁹ In short, despite and because of their important role in society, reeves tended to attract more suspicion than respect from those above or below them. Reeves must therefore have struggled to establish their social respectability, and Chaucer's Reeve can be seen as such a character. It is true that the characterisation of the Reeve draws on and expands the prevalent social stereotype. On the one hand, he is very strict with other members of the household, so that they fear him:

Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth. (I, 603-605)

On the other hand, he deceives his lord to accumulate wealth:

He koude better than his lord purchase.
Ful riche he was astored pryvely.
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood. (I, 608-12)

This stern treatment of others and cunning dishonesty both derive from the social stereotype of reeves.

However, there are also many other distinctive points about this Reeve which are not to be dismissed as stereotypical. For example, in the *General*

Prologue it is explained that the Reeve was previously a carpenter: ‘In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster: I He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter’ (I, 613-14). As Helen Cooper points out, this is a unique characteristic of the Reeve when contrasted to other pilgrims described in the *General Prologue*: ‘The Reeve is also the only pilgrim, apart from the ambiguous cases of the Yeoman and the Wife, to have a second occupation’.¹⁰ Thus, unlike many other pilgrims, whose occupational backgrounds are basically defined as singular, the Reeve is a character whose biography suggests social mobility. This undermines the premise found within the framework of the *General Prologue* that each character can or should behave as an estate.¹¹ From this viewpoint, a problem with the Reeve’s characterisation is that only his labour is reeve-like. As Bryan Carella points out, the Reeve’s appearance suggests a member of the clergy: first, his hairstyle: ‘His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn’ (I, 590); second, the way he dresses: ‘Tukked he was as is a frere aboute’ (I, 621).¹² In addition to his appearance, the Reeve speaks as if he was preaching.¹³ The Reeve’s lengthy speech in the former part of his *Prologue* is followed by the Host’s response:

Whan that oure Hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,
 He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng.
 He seide, “What amounteth al this wit?
 What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?
 The devel made a reve for to preche,
 Or of a souter a shipman or a leche. [...]” (I, 3899-3904)

Combining this explicit clergy-like behaviour with an examination of other details, Carella concludes that the Reeve ‘is an official of relatively low social status who, in both dress and behavior, aspires toward identity with the educated *literati*, while at the same time attempting to distance himself from his self-perceived humble beginnings as a carpenter’.¹⁴ It might perhaps be overly hasty to see his

clerical pretention as a sign of social aspiration because it is unlikely that the two professions are directly connected. On the low status of reeves, McDonald remarks: 'Even though a reeve held a position of authority, his legal rights differed little from those of the peasants he supervised'.¹⁵ Even though Patterson argues the Reeve's social ambition by assuming that reeves were bailiffs in effect,¹⁶ Chaucer's Reeve, at least, as D. W. Robertson points out, works under supervision by his bailiff rather than being himself a bailiff (see I, 603-605, quoted above).¹⁷ Nevertheless, Carella's argument aptly captures the Reeve's problem of self-definition. Now we can see Chaucer's Reeve in this way: suspected by those above and below, the Reeve has wanted to present himself as respectable since he became a reeve; however, he does not know exactly what kind of appearance and behaviour suit a respectable reeve (and perhaps neither does the reader). He has thus borrowed clerical behaviour as a model, but it looks merely as if he is imitating clergy.

If attention is paid to the Reeve's problem of self-definition, more implications can be found in the dramatic context of his tale. That the interaction between the Miller and the Reeve is more than mere mutual ridiculing is suggested by the fact that the Miller ridicules a carpenter, not a reeve. When the Reeve becomes angry while the rest of the audience laughs, he feels isolated (see above). The Reeve's identity is tested here. Whether or not he is conscious of it, at that moment he feels responsible for the reputation of carpenters, regardless of his present occupation. Then he begins to tell his tale 'Right in his [Miller's] cherles termes' (I, 3917), the style of his speech completely different from the previous preaching style. Here his long-repressed identity as a carpenter is revealed. At this point, the Reeve's personality appears multi-layered.

So far, the complex quality of the Reeve's personality has been mainly depicted as fragmented or decentralised; however, it can also be said that this multi-layered personality is advantageous or perhaps even necessary for a reeve's social standpoint. As McDonald points out, 'it would be the reeve's job

to represent the interests of both the community and the lord'.¹⁸ Chaucer's Reeve seems successful in this aspect, and the descriptions which we have once seen as stereotypical can be seen differently: on the one hand, he can supervise his peasants in a strict manner: 'Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage' (I, 602); on the other hand, he can cunningly please his lord: 'His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly, | To yeve and lene hym of his owene good, | And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood' (I, 610-12). In sum, the Reeve's multi-layered personality distinctively indicated by the description in the *General Prologue* and the dramatic situation in the *Reeve's Prologue* can be seen as temporarily well-adapted to his social position while still in the process of establishing the integrated self-definition appropriate to his own estate.

Both the Reeve's struggle in establishing his self-presentation as a respectable reeve and the revelation of his hidden churlish subjectivity, denoted by his description in the *General Prologue* and by his own *Prologue*, epitomise subjectivity issues represented in his own tale. First of all, the Reeve's struggle in defining himself as a reputable reeve is reflected in the character of Symkyn the miller. Similar to reeves, millers had a stereotypical image as swindlers. In order to clarify whether this negative image of millers was based on fact, Langdon has examined the criminal records of manorial courts in various parts of England in the late Middle Ages.¹⁹ There are crimes specifically related to their occupation, such as 'taking excessive tolls' and 'stealing of grains and mill parts';²⁰ on the whole, however, Langdon concludes that 'crimes committed by millers do not seem to have been wildly out of line with criminal acts committed by other members of medieval society'.²¹ Langdon convincingly hypothesises the reason why the negative image of millers is pervasive:

the sorts of misdemeanour millers committed were much more sharply focused on a particular practice (rather than on something more diffuse like trespass or even assault) and were not generally crimes committed

by the rest of society and so would tend to stand out and be remembered more. [...] Finally, the miller's intimate association with the most crucial commodity for medieval society (that is, grain) also intensified the suspicions with which both employers and customers held millers. [...] It [The mill] was the bottleneck through which the great majority of grain had to go in order to be fit for human consumption, and, as such, the controller of this bottleneck, the miller, was bound to attract the attention and distrust of the rest of society. The miller's curious position was that, although he was nominally one of the peasantry, he attracted distrust in almost equal measure from both sides, so that his image was formed not only by an upper-class view (e.g. Chaucer, Lydgate) but also by a lower-class one, which may explain the variety and richness of the characterization.²²

In short, as in the case of reeves, millers tended to invite suspicion rather than respect.

On the one hand, the characterisation of Symkyn as dishonest is in line with the contemporary representation of millers. The Reeve describes Symkyn as proud, quarrelling, and a thief:

As any pecok he [Symkyn] was proud and gay.

[...]

He was a market-betere atte fulle.

[...]

A thief he was for sothe of corn and mele,

And that a sly, and usaunt for to stele. (I, 3926, 36, 39-40)

Jill Mann points to a similar description of a miller in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, surmising that both Chaucer and Langland's millers are based on a stereotypical image of the 'swaggering, story-telling, dishonest miller'.²³ Thus

it is clear that Symkyn reflects the typical image of millers. However, we can also observe that, like the Reeve, he is striving to establish his own reputable self-definition. His struggle for social respectability can first be observed in his insistence on social status. He married his wife in order to maintain his present social rank:

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 Symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde,
But she were wel ynorissed and a mayde,
To saven his estaat of yomanrye. (I, 3942-49)

Symkyn insists on marrying a virgin with education in order to maintain his status as yeoman. He also intends to have his daughter marry into a good family, conspiring with his wife's father, the parish priest:

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;
For hooly chirches good moot been despended
On hooly chirches blood, that is descended. (I, 3977-84)

Thus Symkyn and his father-in-law intend to utilise marriage for the betterment

of their social status, something not found in any relevant analogues to this tale.²⁴ Symkyn's insistence on his social rank, therefore, can be seen both as indicating his desire to be seen as a respectable miller and as a reflection of the narrator Reeve's quest for his own respectable self-definition.

The view that Symkyn inadequately tries to establish his own respectable social standing is supported by Holly A. Crocker, who interprets this tale by comparing Symkyn's behaviour to ideal masculine conduct prescribed by contemporary advice literature. Demonstrating how Symkyn seeks to follow the prescriptions but ultimately diverges from them, Crocker argues as follows:

From the outset, Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale* shows that miller-Symkyn attempts to gain social respect through the manifest governance of his household. [...] Symkyn's visible dominance over trade, property, and women therefore appears to actualize a fully legitimate fantasy of masculinity in the late medieval imagination of the gendered household. [...] Symkyn's baseness is evident despite his attempts to emulate a respectable masculinity.²⁵

However, Symkyn further shows how unsatisfied he is with his present status in his interaction with the two young clerics. When Aleyn and John tell Symkyn that they will watch the milling process, Symkyn thinks as follows:

Al this nys doon but for a wyle.
They wene that no man may hem bigyle,
But by my thrift, yet shal I blere hir ye,
For al the sleighte in hir philosophye.
[...]
'The gretteste clerkes been noght wisest men,'
As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare.

Of al hir art counte I noght a tare. (I, 4047-50, 54-56)

In addition, when Aleyn and John dedicate themselves to retrieving their horses, which Symkyn has released, Symkyn says:

I trowe the clerkes were aferd.

Yet kan a millere make a clerkes berd,

For al his art; now lat hem goon hir weye! (I, 4095-97)

Symkyn thus indicates that he does not intend to deprive the clerics of their flour simply for profit. Instead, by deceiving them despite their caution, Symkyn attempts to beat the clerics at their 'art' and 'phylosophye'. His competitive spirit indicates his sense of inferiority with regards to the clerical class, which can be observed more clearly when it is compared with an analogue. In one version of the French analogues entitled *Le meunier et les .II. clers*, the miller, who 'trop savoit de son mestier [knew his trade too well]' (60),²⁶ hides soon after the two clerics appear (68). While the two are looking for him, he returns to the mill and steals their mares and their sack of flour (93-96). Thus he gets the better of the clerics, who 'ne se vent rien gaaignier | N'en lor país, n'en autre terre [did not know how to earn anything | either in their land or in another]' (12-13). The miller's conduct looks confident, as if he was used to stealing visitors' goods in the same way. In particular, the miller in this French tale seems confident in his own worldly knowledge as superior to that of the clerics.²⁷ In Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, by contrast, Symkyn feels inferiority towards Aleyn and John in terms of learning, suggesting his incompleteness in establishing his self-definition suitable to his own estate.

Thus, partly similar to the Reeve the narrator, Symkyn the miller is in a quest for his own admirable self-definition; nevertheless, the Reeve finally points to the limitation of simplistic attempt at constructing the respectable self-

definition represented by Symkyn's in the climax of his tale. Symkyn's pursuit of social advancement and respectability unconsciously represses his daughter, who is, paradoxically, liberated by rape. As we have seen, Symkyn's daughter, Malyne, is expected to marry someone chosen by her father and grandfather: she is subjected to these men's will. In other words, these men see her as a tool for forming social allegiances. Malyne's rebellious speech after being raped by Aleyn shows she feels liberated, revealing simultaneously that Symkyn's striving for his own subjectivity has been working within a male-dominant ideology which dismisses the subjectivity of women in society.

Rape in the *Reeve's Tale* must have an important meaning. It seems almost evident that representation of rape is carefully or consciously manipulated in Chaucer's texts. For example, none of the analogues to the *Wife of Bath's Tale* contains rape as Chaucer's *Tale* does at its beginning.²⁸ Moreover, the selection of legends in the *Legend of Good Women* could be another case of careful treatment of rape in Chaucer's texts. Jill Mann remarks:

The stories of Lucretia and Philomel are two of the four in the *Legend* (as we have it) that have no parallel in the *Heroides*. The other two — the stories of Cleopatra and Thisbe — are, like the Lucretia legend, stories of female suicides. No critic seems to have addressed the question of what dictated Chaucer's choice of these legends, but for me the fact that they contain three suicides and two rapes between them is in itself indicative of Chaucer's wish to give emotional seriousness to his work by representing female suffering in its most extreme forms.²⁹

Then it is also the case with the *Reeve's Tale*: the miller's daughter is not raped in any of the four relevant analogues edited by Peter G. Beidler. In the text A of *Le meunier et les .II. clers*, for example, the miller's daughter seems willing to have sex with one of young clerics after she receives a ring which he claims has

a magical power to preserve virginity:

Errant cele la clef li tant
Et il desferme errant la huche.
Dedanz se met, ele s'acluche.
Or puent faire lor deduit
Car ne trovent qui lor anuit. (218-22)
[Straightaway she offered him the key
and straightaway he unlocked the trunk.
He got in and she grasped him to herself.
Now they could have their fun
and they found nothing to annoy them.]

By contrast, Malyne in the *Reeve's Tale* is coerced into having sex with Aleyn.

This wenche [Malyne] lay uprighte and faste slepte,
Til he so ny was, er she myghte espie,
That it had been to late for to crie,
And shortly for to seyn, they were aton. (I, 4194-97)

Although the apparently intimate interaction between Aleyn and Malyne after sex is sometimes seen as problematic, much recent scholarship agrees that Malyne is raped by Aleyn in this scene.³⁰ This representation of rape must not be neglected as part of the comic fabliau. Comparing the violent quality of this scene both with fabliaux and with classical legends, Sidhu remarks: 'the *Reeve's Tale's* classical representation of sexual brutality eliminates the obfuscations that render fabliau rapes comic and enjoyable'.³¹

Then let us look at what the specific meaning rape might have in literary texts. According to Sidhu and Elizabeth Robertson, two conflicting views on

female subjectivity coexisted in fourteenth-century England. In gentle society, there was a strong tradition for women to be regarded as men's property and to therefore be under male control. On the other hand, the Church sought to affirm women's subjectivity; the intention was most explicit in that the Church defines marriage as being a union founded on mutual consent.³² In this complicated context, the literary representation of rape first highlights the male-centred view of women, mainly because it is the representative act that disregards a woman's will. The connection between rape and the view of women as men's property is also reinforced by legal context: as already referred to by many Chaucerian studies, rape and abduction are treated in the same way,³³ and it was to the victim's husband or father that a convicted rapist had to make recompense.³⁴ At the same time, however, rape devalues the woman as property by depriving her chastity. Thus we can see that the representation of rape has a paradoxical meaning; while the act itself elicits the male-dominant ideology that views a woman as property, it is also an event which signifies that that woman's value as property is lost. This paradoxical meaning of rape in terms of gender politics is pointed out by Elizabeth Robertson's analysis of the classical story of Lucrece:

Lucrece's liminal position as a raped woman suggests a paradox: the very event, rape, that defines a woman as an object, reveals her to be a subject, for just after rape, a woman's subjectivity is released from the social constraints that determine not only her value or worth as property, but also her identity. This places her in the unusual position of being able to define herself. Therefore, she has the potential to articulate a position that can actually counter patriarchal structures.³⁵

Therefore, Robertson argues, Lucrece is given a room for her speech just after being raped; but she eventually commits suicide. Robertson explains: 'Because patriarchal societies have afforded women no other identity outside of their

sexual roles, that momentarily released subjectivity can find no positive social place'.³⁶

Given this representation of rape as potentially subversive for male-centred ideology, Malyne's rebellious act after being raped is significant as a revelation of female subjectivity. As is already seen, Malyne is expected by her father and grandfather to marry into a good family; and, as is implied by Symkyn's insistence on marrying a virgin, it is necessary for her to maintain her own chastity as Symkyn's property. Having being raped by Aleyn, however, her chastity is lost and she is inevitably released from her own identity as Symkyn's property. It is at this moment that Malyne tells Aleyn where the cake made from the stolen flour is concealed:

But er thow go, o thyng I wol thee telle:
Whan that thou wendest homward by the melle,
Right at the entree of the dore bihynde
Thou shalt a cake of half a busschel fynde
That was ymaked of thyn owene mele,
Which that I heelp my sire for to stele. (I, 4241-46)

This suggests that Malyne has been unwillingly subject to Symkyn's control. Her act is therefore seen as a revelation of her subjectivity, previously denied in the household controlled by Symkyn. In that sense, it can be seen as reflecting the revelation of the Reeve's previous identity as a carpenter (see above).

On the other hand, Symkyn's awkwardness in seeking respectability is revealed in the inappropriateness of his reaction to his daughter's rape:

Who dorste be so boold to disparage
My doghter, that is come of swich lynage? (I, 4271-72)

Referring to the use of language concerning rapes in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* and *Physicians Tale*, Sylvia Federico demonstrates that both legal and Chaucerian discourses concerning rape are constantly connected with social class.³⁷ Given this contemporary discursive context pertaining to rape, Symkyn's reaction to his daughter's being raped might not be so strange; however, it is notable that nonetheless Symkyn is here made to look ridiculous. Thus the representation of rape in this tale functions as an intersection of two problems regarding subjectivity: the ridiculousness of Symkyn's response to the rape indicates the unfinished process of his self-definition, while also criticising patriarchal ideology which unconsciously represses female subjectivity.

In conclusion, the Reeve's complex personality presented as both appropriate and incomplete for his estate is concerned with his tales in two ways: first, the problem in his self-definition is partly reflected in Symkyn the miller's pursuit of social respect and Malyne's revelation of her subjectivity; second, the Reeve's multi-layered self-presentation can criticise a simplistic quest for self-definition as portrayed by Symkyn's acts. The portraits of estates in the *Canterbury Tales* not only replicate social stereotypes but also reflect self-consciousness, which makes the characterisation of each estate complex. The Reeve's unsuitable appearance and behaviour, which result from his quest for defining and presenting himself as a respectable reeve, as well as his churlish manner of storytelling as a revelation of his previous identity — and his pride, which has been injured by the Miller's challenge — recapitulate problems of subjectivity in his tale. Just as the Reeve has difficulty in presenting himself as a reputable reeve, Symkyn the miller struggles to attain his own form of social respect; and just as the Reeve's identity as a churlish carpenter has been repressed while he has been striving to achieve suitable self-presentation by imitating clerical dress and conduct, Malyne can begin to reveal her own subjectivity only after she is raped and thus loses her value as men's property as defined by the male-dominant ideology within which Symkyn pursues his social respect. Malyne's

revelation of her repressed subjectivity at the same time indicates the limitation of Symkyn's simplistic pursuit of his own self-definition. This criticism of Symkyn can be seen as one of the Reeve's responses to the Miller. This reading of the *Reeve's Tale* in terms of subjectivity in trouble requires an alteration of Patterson's view, in which Miller and the Reeve with their respective tales belong to the different 'realm[s]'.³⁸ Introduced as a more biographically-detailed and individualised character than the Miller, the Reeve and his tale investigate more deeply the inward recognition of self-definition including social estates, which is essentially linked with while unsettling the framework of the estates literature as one fundamental to the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole.

Notes

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- 1 All quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 2 Dylan Jones, 'Tit for Tat: Symkyn's Wymmen as Instruments of the Reeve's Revenge', *Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature*, 25 (2010), 43-60.
- 3 Lee Patterson, "'No Man his Reson Herde": Peasant Consciousness, Chaucer's Miller, and the Structure of the *Canterbury Tales*', in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530*, ed. by Lee Patterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 113-55 (pp. 147-48); and also his *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 274.
- 4 Nicole Nolan Sidhu, "'To Late for to Crie": Female Desire, Fabliau Politics, and Classical Legend in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*', *Exemplaria*, 21 (2009),

- 3-23 (quotation from p. 6). Other recent studies presented as responding to Patterson's view include Holly A. Crocker, 'Affective Politics in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*: "Cherl" Masculinity after 1381', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 29 (2007), 225-58; and William F. Woods, 'The Logic of Deprivation in the *Reeve's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 30 (1995), 150-63.
- 5 J. A. W. Bennett, *Chaucer at Oxford and at Cambridge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 89. A brief description of reeves' profession of the time is offered by D. W. Robertson, Jr., 'Some Disputed Chaucerian Terminology', *Speculum*, 52 (1977), 571-81 (pp. 573-75). See also H. S. Bennett, 'The Reeve and the Manor in the Fourteenth Century', *English Historical Review*, 41 (1926), 358-65.
 - 6 John Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy: England 1300-1540* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 239-40.
 - 7 Richard B. McDonald, 'The Reve Was a Scelendre Colerik Man', in *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in the 'Canterbury Tales'*, ed. by Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 288-99 (p. 294); McDonald refers to Frances Gies and Joseph Gies, *Life in a Medieval Village* (New York: Harper, 1990), p. 56.
 - 8 A theoretical explanation of the relationship between 'social life' and 'social stereotype' is offered by Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 8-9.
 - 9 Douglas Gray, 'The Reeve', in *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, pp. 821-22 (p. 821). Gray refers to Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, p. 164; and G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, c. 1350-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), pp. 324-25.
 - 10 Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The 'Canterbury Tales'*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 56.
 - 11 See Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, pp. 3-4.
 - 12 Bryan Carella, 'The Social Aspirations and Priestly Pretence of Chaucer's Reeve', *Neophilologus*, 94 (2010), 523-29 (p. 524).
 - 13 Carella, p. 524.
 - 14 Carella, p. 524.
 - 15 McDonald, p. 288.
 - 16 Patterson, "'No Man his Reson Herde'", p. 147 and n. 91; the same argument

- also appears in his *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, p. 274 and f. n. 88.
- 17 D. W. Robertson, Jr., p. 574.
 - 18 McDonald, p. 291; for the quoted line he refers to Maurice Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages 1348-1500* (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 55.
 - 19 Langdon, pp. 244-46.
 - 20 Langdon, pp. 244, 45.
 - 21 Langdon, p. 246. Although it is not an issue here, several critics also claim that both the pilgrim Miller and Symkyn's seeming prosperity cannot match the largely humble status of contemporary millers: see Richard Holt, *The Mills of Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 90-106. Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin assume millers were emulating the gentry class in terms of economic wealth, but a weak point of their argument is that they do not draw on studies specifically on fourteenth-century England. See Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin, 'The Miller Was a Stout Carl for the Nones', in *Chaucer's Pilgrims*, ed. by Lambdin and Lambdin, pp. 271-80. Langdon suggests that the social model for Symkyn was not really millers as employees but what he calls 'miller-proprietors': see Langdon, pp. 241-43.
 - 22 Langdon, pp. 247-48.
 - 23 Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, pp. 160-62 (quotation from p. 162). See also George Fenwick Jones, 'Chaucer and the Medieval Miller', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 16 (1955), 3-15.
 - 24 Various analogues were disseminated across medieval Europe, but four versions are the probable or possible sources for Chaucer's version. See Peter G. Beidler, 'The Reeve's Tale', in *Sources and Analogues of the 'Canterbury Tales'*, ed. by Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, 2 vols, Chaucer Studies, 28 and 35 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002, 2005), I, 23-73.
 - 25 Crocker, pp. 231, 36.
 - 26 Quotations and translations from *Le meunier et les .II. clers* (Text A) are from Beidler, 'The Reeve's Tale', in *Sources and Analogues of the 'Canterbury Tales'*, ed. by Correale and Hamel, I, 23-73 (pp. 28-43), with line numbers in parentheses.
 - 27 Late medieval distinctions of knowledge by usage between various professions is indicated by a conversation between a traveling cleric and a carpenter in fifteenth-century Germany, introduced in Martin Kinzinger, *Wissen wird Macht: Bildung im Mittelalter* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2003), p. 7.
 - 28 See *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 872; see also Sylvia Federico, 'New Historicism',

- in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 416-31 (p. 422). Chaucer's treatment of rape has recently been examined in detail: see Christopher Cannon, 'Chaucer and Rape: Uncertainty's Certainties', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 22 (2000), 67-92; Christine M. Rose, 'Reading Chaucer Reading Rape', in *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 21-60; William A. Quinn, 'The Rapes of Chaucer', *Chaucer Yearbook*, 5 (1998), 1-17; and Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 265-310.
- 29 Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer*, new edn (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), p. 35.
- 30 See Heidi Breuer, 'Being Intolerant: Rape is Not Seduction (in "Reeve's Tale" or Anywhere Else)', in *The 'Canterbury Tales' Revisited: Twenty-First Century Interpretations*, ed. by Kathleen A. Bishop (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), pp. 1-14; Alcuin Blamires, *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 97-101; Cannon, pp. 83-84; and Saunders, pp. 298-300.
- 31 Sidhu, p. 12.
- 32 Sidhu, pp. 6-7; and Elizabeth Robertson, 'Public Bodies and Psychic Domains: Rape, Consent, and Female Subjectivity in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Representing Rape*, ed. by Robertson and Rose, pp. 281-310 (pp. 294-95); however, this summarised view might be oversimplified because Saunders's elaborating work suggests that both within canon law and ecclesiastical law different views on women can be observed: see Saunders, pp. 33-119.
- 33 See Cannon, 'Chaucer and Rape'; and also his 'Raptus in the Chaumpaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 74-94. See also references in Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 193-94, n. 18; and also in Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer*, p. 52, f. n. 15.
- 34 Blamires, p. 98 and f. n. 68.
- 35 Elizabeth Robertson, p. 285.
- 36 Elizabeth Robertson, pp. 285-86.
- 37 Federico, pp. 420-29.
- 38 Patterson, "'No Man his Reson Herde'", p. 148.