THE COOKS OF THE CANTERBURY TALES: THE BACKSTAGE OF BOURGEOIS SOCIAL DRAMA[1]

CANTERBURY HİKÂYELERİ'NİN AŞÇILARI: BURJUVA TOPLUMSAL DRAMASININ SAHNE ARKASI

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Abstract

Despite their rise in the social ladder, the newly emerging bourgeoisie of late medieval England needed to display their wealth not only to secure their place in the social hierarchy, but also to receive acceptance from noble people in their communities. Hence, the public and private lives of the medieval English bourgeoisie turned out to be arenas for social drama, as conceptualized by Victor Turner, in which their cooks and kitchens were important as backstage elements as exemplified by the cook of the Franklin and the Cook of the Guildsmen in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Therefore, this article aims at analysing Chaucer's depiction of the cooks in the Canterbury Tales, and to discuss their function in contributing to the social changes as figures at the backstage of bourgeois social drama. In line with this, this article argues that the cooks were indispensable for the medieval bourgeoisie to sustain their social drama through the use of food culture.

Öz

Toplumdaki yükselişlerine rağmen, yenice ortaya çıkmaya başlayan geç Ortaçağ İngiltere burjuvazisi sadece toplum hiyerarşisindeki yerlerini korumak için değil, aynı zamanda içinde yaşadıkları toplumdaki asil insanlar tarafından kabul görmek için de zenginliklerini sergilemeye ihtiyaç duymaktaydılar. Bu sebeple, Ortaçağ İngiliz burjuvazisinin toplumsal ve özel hayatları, Victor Turner'ın tanımladığı gibi, toplumsal drama alanları olarak ortaya çıktı, ki bu toplumsal dramada Chaucer'ın Canterbury Hikâyeleri'ndeki Toprak Sahibi ve Lonca Mensupları'nın aşçıları ile örneklendirildiği gibi, sahne arkası öğeler olarak aşçılar ve mutfaklar çok önemli idi. Bu yüzden, bu makale Chaucer'ın Canterbury Hikâyeleri'ndeki aşçı tasvirlerini incelemeyi ve aşçıların burjuva toplumsal dramasının sahne arkasındaki kişiler olarak sosyal değişimlere katkıda bulunmak için fonksiyonlarını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, bu makale Ortaçağ burjuvazisinin, yemek kültürünü kullanarak toplumsal dramalarını devam ettirebilmeleri için aşçılarının vazgeçilmez olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Introduction

Food has always been not only an element of nutrition, but something fundamental for survival. Food is also a social marker revealing class distinctions. Food choices – what one likes (not) to eat, when one likes (not) to eat, how one likes (not) to eat – and food allowances – what one is allowed (not) to eat – display specific information about individual consumers. It is due to such regulations and/or preferences that the phrase 'tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are' stands out. Food is, thus, an important component of individual identities as in the case of fasting and feasting. It was related to this idea that the Sumptuary Laws in the Middle Ages were also expected to regulate estate distinctions aiming at classifying food and drink items according to people's estates.

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The amounts and the types of food that one could consume were determined according to estate distinctions. Such regulations mainly aimed at controlling the newly emerging bourgeoisie in late medieval England. The bourgeoisie did not have noble blood like the nobility or the aristocracy, but they had achieved climbing up the social ladder owing to their monetary status. As money-made men, they claimed a higher social status, which was supported by the change in the social structure from sworn-loyalty system to monetary system. However, they did not fit into the traditional three estate structure of medieval English society consisting of the nobility, the clergy and the commoners. In order to assert their distinction from the lower estates, the bourgeoisie took advantage of their material means to display their wealth and assert their status in the social hierarchy. Food was one of the means through which they could differentiate themselves from the lower estates and claim a higher social status like the upper estates and thus ask for social acceptance. Accordingly, their cooks and kitchens gained great importance to contribute to their way of life based on display. Thus, this article suggests that cooks and kitchens were the backstage elements of the "social drama" performed by the bourgeoisie in the Middle Ages as exemplified by the cook of the Franklin and the Cook of the Guildsmen in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Victor Turner defines "social drama" as an arena where people from different social status offer their paradigms in order to work out their conflicts (*Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors...* 15; *Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama...* 34), which can be seen in societies that experience social mobility. While the uprising groups try to integrate into the upper classes, the upper classes try to assert their distinction from the uprising groups. Hence, as an extension of "the 'theatrical' potential of social life"[2] (Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre...* 9), social dramas can also be regarded as social performances, in which different social classes try to assert their social identities, which may result in a change in the established social order disrupting the social hierarchies. In such social dramas, Turner argues that there are mainly four phases: breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration or recognition (*Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors...* 37-42; *From Ritual to Theatre...* 69; *Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama...* 39).[3] 'Breach' means a social group's transgressing the traditional boundaries, which leads up to a crisis. The 'crisis' is encountered and managed by

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[2] As Turner states, "[s]ocial life, then, even its apparently quietest moments, is characteristically 'pregnant' with social dramas" (*From Ritual to Theatre...* 11).

[3] Turner relates these phases to the three rites of passages explained by Arnold Van Gennep as separation, liminality and re-aggregation (*The Anthropology of Performance* 101). Thus, also see Arnold Van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* 10-11.

the upper classes, who regard themselves as the controller of traditional systems with 'redressive action,' as a result of which the transgressing group either achieves social 'recognition' or is reintegrated into the social order. Owing to these four phases, which follow a process and do not have a clear end, social drama can also be defined as a liminal phenomenon. Turner interprets this liminality as a positive aspect of social dramas. According to Turner, "*[l]iminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities, not a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to postliminal existence*" (*Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama...* 42). Liminality has positive aspects, in that, at the end of the liminal period, the transgressing group has the potential to achieve social recognition owing to their social performance in public arenas such as pilgrimages.[4] In accordance with this, it can be argued that pilgrimage provides medieval bourgeois figures, as in the case of the Franklin and the Guildsmen in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, with the liminality to display and assert their bourgeois status in a public space.

In the background of this liminality, there were the houses of the newly emerging bourgeoisie, which were also the arenas of social drama in the Middle Ages. In the social drama performed by the bourgeoisie either in public spaces or houses, the members of the bourgeoisie not only confront their social superiors and assert their bourgeois identity, but also confront their social inferiors to display their superiority. If social dramas are, in Turner's words, "*political processes, that is, they involve competition for scarce ends – power, dignity, prestige, honor, purity – by particular means and by the utilization of resources that are also scarce – goods, territory, money, men and women*" (*From Ritual to Theatre...* 71-72), medieval bourgeois houses can be defined as the central stage of this social drama where the members of the bourgeoisie perform and display their social performances against those of the upper and lower estates in order to assert their rising social status. However, this bourgeois social drama also has a backstage, that is, the kitchen, the impact of which is as significant as the central stage. Therefore, before proceeding with a discussion of the role of cooks and kitchens as backstage figures in medieval bourgeois social drama as represented by the cook of the Franklin and the Cook of the Guildsmen in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a brief overview of medieval kitchens and cooks in general is examined below.

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[4] For an analysis of pilgrimage as a liminal phenomenon see Turner's *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors...* 166, 178).

I. A General Overview of Medieval Kitchens and Cooks

In castles or manor houses of the medieval bourgeoisie, there was a separate room for gathering and dining, which was known as either the 'Great Hall' or the 'Hall', where invitations were held.[5] The Hall was linked to the kitchen with a corridor or passageway through which servants brought hot food to serve guests (Scully 166-167).[6] In the earlier Middle Ages, kitchens were generally not separate buildings, but kitchens and dining halls constituted a big room, which was common until the thirteenth century (Adamson 59; Henisch, *Fast and Feast...* 97; Klemettilä 60).[7] Later on, especially if there was enough money and space, the kitchen was separated from the main hall by a corridor (Henisch, *Fast and Feast...* 97-98). Whether the kitchen was united with the hall or a separate place came to be interpreted as a reflection of the difference between lower and upper estates.[8] In the later Middle Ages, in order to prevent fires and noise as well as smell coming through kitchen into the hall, that is, from the backstage of bourgeois social drama to the central stage, kitchens became separate buildings in wealthy households. Kitchens were ventilated through windows, which were generally located at the roof like a lantern. These lantern windows and the heath provided light to the kitchen, which were later accompanied by candles (Adamson 59; Scully 97). Beside the hearth, which was useful for some cooking methods such as stewing, roasting or boiling, the oven was also very important for baking pies or bread (Adamson 61). If the household was not rich enough to have its own oven, they could make use of bakers' ovens. Typical kitchen utensils were flesh hooks, cauldrons, pots, stirring spoons, basins, platters, pans, ladles, and knives (Adamson 61-62, Klemettilä 60-61).

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[5] For brief information about the furnishings in the halls of medieval manor houses see Wilson, "From Medieval Great Hall" 28-33.

[6] In accordance with the expansion of wealth, although dining in halls did not disappear, "within a century [after 1240s] some families sought the warmth and privacy of smaller rooms or parlours, often on the first floor up a narrow stone staircase" rather than dining in halls (Colquhoun 73).

[7] Unlike a cottage house, which had only one room that combined dining and cooking space, the kitchen of a manor house "was generally stone-floored and walled, with great wide fireplaces where most of the cooking was done" (Black 110).

[8] When kitchens started to expand, storerooms for stuff, cellars and butteries for wine and ale and pantries for bread also started to be separate places, which were again separated by corridors (Colquhoun 64). The heart was the centre of kitchen. The hearths required firewood in order to sustain cooking. At first, dry wood was used as firewood but later this was replaced by coal in the later Middle Ages. Because of heating problems, the fire was not put out in the evenings, but rather it was covered with a pottery that had holes for ventilation. It was because of such a system that people were reminded either to put out or cover up fires by a bell ringing, from which came the name of this pottery, "curfew," that is, "*couvre-feu*" (Adamson 60).

There were generally two meals a day, which started with a dinner at noon and ended with a supper in the evening (Adamson 155, Scully 118).[9] There were usually two main courses and a desert course in these meals. There were a number of dishes in each course, which were determined not only by the regional and seasonal changes, but also by the host's social status (Adamson 163). One's place in the seating hierarchy, the food and drink he would share with the others and the number of people with whom he would share his food and drink were determined according to his social status (Adamson 163-164, 233). Like medieval English society, medieval food culture was also hierarchical.

In accordance with the importance attributed to food in bourgeois social drama in the fourteenth century, the Sumptuary Laws aimed at regulating food consumption and keeping the rising bourgeois group at their pre-Plague status by trying to prevent them from imitating the consumption ways of the upper estates (Colquhoun 68; Woolgar, *Group Diets in...* 196-197). According to the Sumptuary Laws, "[d]omestic regulation and practice used diet to mark status in myriad ways," and for instance, "[e]xcess was reserved for the aristocracy" (Woolgar, *Group Diets in...* 197).[10] Therefore, feasts were regarded "as a staged performance, choreographed by ceremonial [action]" (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 102). Furthermore, feasts enabled cooks to present themselves as "the masters of illusion and presentation" (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 162). Preparing the food for the meal was itself "a theatrical production" (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 15), in which all kitchen utensils and kitchen servants, the smell and the fire "added their own touch of theatre to the most everyday routines" (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 5). Beside cooks, there was a number of other kitchen staff such as scullions, waiters, pot boys and bottle washers as well as other stuff that helped staging the spectacle such as the steward, marshal, butler and carver (Adamson 162).[11] Like medieval food culture, this hierarchy in the kitchen also relates to the hierarchy prevalent in medieval society. As Adamson states, "*[b]ig medieval feasts were occasions when the great hall was transformed into a stage on which the diners were both spectators and actors. Along with the serving staff, musicians, singers, jugglers, jesters, actors, and*

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[9] In the Middle Ages, moralists and physicians suggested that there should be mainly two meal times to sustain health and to avoid gluttony, since "[i]t was also important to be different from animals, which ate throughout the day" (Klemettilä 14).

[10] For detailed discussions of the influence of estate hierarchy on food consumption, see Christopher Dyer, "English Diet in the Later Middle Ages" (191-216) and Miriam Müller, "Food, Hierarchy, and Class Conflict" (231-248).

[11] Scully notes that "[t]he more an individual could afford to employ persons to be responsible for various ceremonial elements connected with serving, the more complex the procedures became that were regularly observed" (240).

dancers, the guests played their part in a spectacle that was minutely choreographed" (161).[12] However, the role of kitchens in medieval bourgeois houses was of great importance for the medieval bourgeoisie to help them assert their power not only to the upper but also to the lower estates through the display of food and to contribute to the social changes that gave those bourgeois figures the means to assert their bourgeois identities, and in this social environment the most important actor was the cook in the backstage.

Because "*[t]he Great Hall was the public centre of a grandee's life*" and it "*amounted to the scenic décor for a demonstration of nobility*" (Scully 169), the most important duty fell upon cooks as backstage figures. Montanari asks, "*What distinguishes the food of men from that of the other animals? Cooking is the human activity par excellence; it is the act of transforming a product 'from nature' into something profoundly different*" (29). Similarly, the transformative skills of a cook in cooking, that is, his transforming raw materials into cooked food, stood out as the performance of his professional abilities that differentiated him from other kitchen staff in the Middle Ages. Accordingly, the role of cooks was very important in the Middle Ages. Cooks, like other kitchen servants, were generally male except for the housewives of lower households (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 9; Woolgar, *The Culture of Food...* 199). Being a cook at a noble or aristocratic household provided a cook with a number of opportunities. He might be praised for inventing a new dish which would be served at a banquet to noble guests and thus he might be recorded in the chronicles. He was the main figure who was responsible for foodstuffs and kitchen utensils. Yet, he had a number of helpers from roasters to saucers, waferers and fruiters (Adamson 58, Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 103). Although cooks did not occupy "a center-stage position" in medieval manuscripts (Henisch, *Fast and Feast...* 65), some of the cooks at noble households were fortunate enough to have some gains in return for their service, which could be either in the form of pensions or coat of arms as in the case of Taillevent, the master cook of Charles V and Charles VI (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 146). Furthermore, kings' cooks might also be rewarded with serjeanty tenure, that is, the land granted to them by the Crown, as exemplified by the Norman cooks Walter in Essex and Tezelin in Sussex (Colquhoun 47) as well as Adam, the cook of Queen Eleanor (Henisch, *Fast and Feast...* 71).

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[12] For the rituals of feasts held in the halls of either castles or manor-houses, see Wilson, "Ritual..." (8-13).

Much of the information about medieval cooks is derived from cookbooks. There were a number of cookery manuscripts that were mainly compiled for the courtly nobility in the fourteenth century[13] such as the *Forme of Cury* in England, the *Viandier of Taillevent* in France, the *Buch von gutter Spise* in Germany (Scully 5).[14] This rise in the publication of cookbooks might be related to the introduction of different culinary products such as sugar and cinnamon into the British cuisine in the Middle Ages.[15] The earliest English cookbook, *The Forme of Cury* (c. 1390), dates from the reign of Richard II and it was compiled by master cooks and physicians (Black 97, Colquhoun 56). These early forms of cookery manuscripts were compiled for the noble and bourgeois people in order to display their noble standards and were kept not in kitchens but in libraries to be copied for equally noble people to flatter them (Scully 8). The courtly origin of these cookery manuscripts reveals that they were compiled to display the social distinction of the upper estates, which was reflected and enhanced by their food choices. The most interesting feature of these cookbooks was that they listed only the ingredients not the amounts, since amounts were bound to the mastery of a cook. As well as these early cookbooks, historical documents, account books, conduct books such as *Le Ménagier*, official regulations and laws such as the Sumptuary Laws, and literary texts such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* also provide knowledge about the food culture in medieval Britain (Black 97).

As in many medieval professions, a cook started his career as an apprentice, that is, a kitchen boy. (Klemettilä 188, Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 146). Completing his apprenticeship, he could first become a journeyman and then eventually a master cook at a noble or bourgeois household (Scully 203, 236), which would also contribute to his own social status. When one became a master cook, he could either start his own cookshop, or he could work for another master in a cookshop, or he could work for some noble/gentle man in his house (Adamson 57). As an extension of the growing number of cooks, the Cooks' Guilds started to appear in London from the early fourteenth century onwards to "*govern the practice of street cooks, in towns, rather than that of cooks in private households*" (Henisch,

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[13] Although most of the cookbooks date from the fourteenth century onwards, the earliest examples are not Anglo-Saxon but Anglo-Norman because of the influence of Norman invasion (Adamson 90, 95-96).

[14] Scully defines the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the "hey-day for medieval cookery" due to the substantial amount of information about food in these periods (5).

[15] Although they were known and used in the Mediterranean and the East earlier, sugar and cinnamon were introduced to Europe in the Middle Ages (Adamson 18, 28).

The Medieval Cook 145). As Henisch notes, "*[t]he brotherhood of professional cooks shared trade secrets, which were not readily to be revealed to the outsider*" (*The Medieval Cook* 20). The emergence of the Cooks' Guilds is also important to signify cooks' search for protecting their rights and for reflecting their comparative rise in the social ladder.

Due to the close relationship between food and health, and thus cooks and physicians, cooks gained more importance as household servants. During the Middle Ages, humoral theory influenced the cooking methods and thus was an important part of a cook's profession. The humoral quality of foodstuffs was believed to influence the humoral balance of the body. Hence, for instance, cooks were required to use proper cooking methods (Adamson 62, Klemettilä 38-39). If the foodstuff was cool and moist, it should be balanced by a warm and dry form of cooking, or if it was cool and dry, it required a warm and moist form of cooking. Thus, a cook's profession was associated with that of a physician, for whom a working knowledge of humoral theory was of great importance to do his job. Furthermore, it was believed that any type of food one consumed was believed to influence the health, because food was functional in sustaining the humoral balance (Adamson 57-58).[16] It was also because of this medical aspect that there was a relation between cooks and physicians (Scully 41)[17] and, hence, "*[t]he responsibilities of the medieval cook clearly extended into the sickroom*" (Scully 195).

However, despite these positive attributes, cooks were often viewed as figures of ridicule as well as menace (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 10-11, Klemettilä 188), especially for their ability to create substitutes for dishes and for the possible poisonous aspect of the food that they cooked. Yet, substitutes were, in fact, of great importance in a cook's career. Knowing which items could be used instead of which items either because of the religious regulations or because of the social status of their master reflected not only the mastery but also the "playfulness" of cooks (Adamson 71) which implies both creativity and trickery. However, cooks' job was mainly regarded as "an obviously messy job" (Henisch, *Fast and Feast...* 65) although the *Rule of St. Benedict* praised kitchen service as it endorses charity (Chadwick 315). Their job included manual labour, not to mention bleeding the animals. Due to their manual labour and service which was mainly to appease

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[16] As Colquhoun states, "[h]umoural theories would remain at the centre of British food culture until challenged by the new sciences of the Enlightenment" (53).

[17] For the relationship between cooks and physicians and for the medical aspect of cooking, also see Woolgar (*The Culture of Food...* 210-213), Klemettilä (32-35), Strong (80), Colquhoun (52-53), Henisch (*The Medieval Cook* 21-22).

bodily hunger, cooks were regarded as socially inferior figures (Henisch, *Fast and Feast...* 67, Adamson 57). This can be associated with the idea dating back to the ancient Greek philosophy. The satisfaction of hunger was viewed as inferior to the satisfaction of the intellect. Thus, the bodily hunger was regarded as a somewhat base attribute (Reeve 153). Similarly, since cooks' role was to appease the bodily hunger, cooks were considered to be inferior. In the same line, a cook was also regarded as "*the Great Tempter of the Middle Ages*" (Scully 184) leading man to gluttony, and from there to hell. Therefore, it was not unnatural for the Cooks' Guild to stage the *Harrowing of Hell* in Beverley and Chester as their mystery play. They could easily create the atmosphere of Hell with the help of their kitchen utensils such as pots and flesh-hooks (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 11). This can also be interpreted as a reflection of the association of kitchen with hell. As an extension of this negative attitude, there were some stereotypes of cooks: "*they were accused of drinking on the job, of being hot-tempered and crotchety, and of possessing a rough sense of humor*" (Adamson 57). Apparently, cooks had both to prepare delicious meals fighting with smoke, smell and the heat of fires in their backstage working space as well as to confront social inferiority imposed on them. Thus, they needed mastery over cookery which was an indispensable part of their bourgeois masters' social drama in order to be indispensable figures at the backstage.

Accordingly, the function of cooks in medieval bourgeois social drama was to display and assert their masters' rising social status. Therefore, in line with Turner's argument that "*cultural performances are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change*" (*The Anthropology of Performance* 24), the backstage role of cooks in kitchens were of great importance for the social drama performed by the medieval bourgeoisie. Through their professional mastery, they needed to showcase not only the rising status of their masters due to the changing social structures, but also their necessity for sustaining this change. Drawing attention to the progressive aspect of liminality, Turner suggests that "*[y]esterday's liminal becomes today's stabilized, today's peripheral becomes tomorrow's centered*" (*Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors...* 16). Similarly, it can be suggested that the role of cooks in sustaining the social progress for the medieval bourgeoisie was highly significant in overcoming their liminal social status and to become more stable and central because of the importance attributed to food in medieval display culture. Hence, although cooks were regarded as socially inferior figures, they played a significant role in

contributing to the display of the social status of the medieval bourgeoisie in the backstage. As Mennell states, "*differences between the strata of society in matters of food, as in many other aspects of manners, were more striking than differences between countries*" in the Middle Ages (40). Accordingly, not only the foodstuffs that one could consume, but also the table manners were considered to be indicators of one's social status. Likewise, if one had the means to have a private cook, this meant that he had the means to display and assert his superior social status. In *Colloquy*, the Latin textbook written by the Abbot of Eynsham, Aelfric, a cook defends his profession by explaining his necessity for his master as a means to differentiate the master from servants. If everybody cooks his food, he says "Then all of you are servants, and no one is a master" (qtd. in Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 9). Hence, cooks were significant for the newly rising medieval bourgeoisie, a situation which can be seen in the representation of the cooks of the Franklin and the Guildsmen in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

III. The Cooks of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as Backstage Figures

In the *Canterbury Tales*, cooks are introduced, or referred to, not as individuals but as figures attached to the bourgeois figures such as the Franklin and the Guildsmen. In this respect, their representation can be likened to the kitchens attached to the great halls in manor houses. There are two types of cooks in the *Canterbury Tales*: one a servant at home (the cook of the Franklin), whose function is to contribute to the social drama at a medieval bourgeois house; the other a travelling servant (the Cook of the Guildsmen), whose function is to contribute to bourgeois social drama in the public space of a pilgrimage. As the servants of the bourgeois Franklin and Guildsmen, these cooks not only display social changes that have contributed to the rise of these bourgeois figures in the social ladder, but also contribute to the social changes that have influenced the social status of their masters as figures at the backstage. Before proceeding with the analysis of the cook of the Franklin, it is necessary to analyse the characteristic features of the Franklin as a bourgeois man.[18] The Franklin is a somewhat old man, as implied by his white beard (I (A) 332),[19] and he is sanguine (I (A) 333). His bourgeois status is reflected by a number of public offices he has held such as presiding over court sessions, being a knight of the shire, a sheriff, a contour and a

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[18] For a detailed discussion of the Franklin as a bourgeois figure, see Oya Bayıltmış Öğütcü, "The Self-Fashioning of Chaucer's Franklin: The Performance of Bourgeois Identity" (49-57).
[19] Throughout the article, all the references to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford UP., 2008.

vavasour (I (A) 355-356, 359, 360). As a bourgeois man, the Franklin also stands out as a "gourmet" (Coss 229). Thus, his portrait in the "General Prologue" lists a number of foodstuffs, behind the creation and the service of which is his cook. As "Epicurus owene sone" (I (A) 336),[20] the Franklin likes bread dipped into wine in the mornings (I (A) 334), he has plenty of good quality bread and ale,[21] wine,[22] baked

pies, fish[23] and flesh[24] at his house (I (A) 341-345) as well as patridges (I (A) 349).[25] He is such a rich man that "[o]f alle deyntees that men koude thynke, / After the sondry sesons of the yeer, / So chaunged he his mete and his soper" (I (A) 346-348). Since the quantity of food, rather than the quality of food, was important in medieval food culture (Mennell 33), the reference to the food snowing in the Franklin's house draws attention to his wealth and social superiority. In this respect, the reference to the seasonal food on the Franklin's table is also of great importance. Seasonal food might be associated not only with freshness and

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[20] Mann indicates that Epicurus "appears in Latin satire as a type of good living" and represents "selfish materialism" (156).

[21] Bread and ale were two very important items of medieval food culture, because both were rich in calories and thus nutritional values (Colquhoun 49). Since it was difficult to find clean water to drink, people of all estates mostly drank ale (Hammond 7, Colquhoun 50, Adamson 48-49). It was "the drink of the English" (Adamson 49). Ale was so common that some cooks even used it "as an alternative for wine" (Adamson 97).

[22] Since wine was mostly imported, especially from France (Hammond 12-15), it was very expensive and thus, unlike the commonly consumed ale, was reserved for special religious or social occasions and mostly drunk by the rich (Adamson 49). Hence, "[a]lcohol was at first used mainly as a medicine, distilled by apothecaries, but was being used in the fourteenth-century England as '*Aqua vitae*' (water of life) in recipes for spiced wine" (Hammond 55). Furthermore, wine was also used by cooks while preparing sauces (Scully 80).

[23] Because of the religious limitations on meat eating (Scully 58-64) and the Church's arguments for fasting against gluttony (Mennell 27-30), the search for an alternative to meat was met by fish (Scully 74). Fish was the saviour of people not only during Fridays, but also during Lent when dairy products were forbidden, which "meant that half the days in the year everyone had to eat fish" (Black 100). Nevertheless, Mann argues that the reference to fish in the Franklin's portrait is derived from gluttony satire (153).

[24] Although meat was very rich in protein like dairy products, it was a rare item on the tables of many before the Black Death and the diets of many people were based on cereals (Woolgar, "Meat..." 100). Following the Black Death, due to the increase in the animal products owing to the increase in the amounts of grazing lands (Adamson 174) and thus due to the increase in the amount of meat to be consumed (Klemettilä 63), there was an increase in meat consumption (Mennell 25) although it was very expensive and religiously not that approved. As Mennell states, "[i]f, however, at the close of the Middle Ages meat was not a luxury reserved exclusively for the tables of the very rich, one must not jump to the conclusion that the social distribution of nourishment suddenly became quite equal. On the contrary, hierarchical differences in what people ate remained more striking than geographical ones" (45). The Church criticised consuming especially the red meat, since excessive red meat consumption was believed to be unhealthy, leading to illnesses such as gout (Klemettilä 63).

[25] There were mainly four ways for the lords to have birds on their tables: they could either hunt, or rear, or buy, or take them as a form of payment coming from their tenants (Stone 149).

preservation issues, but also with necessary substitutes for religious issues on fasting days (Scully 101).[26] Hence, seasonal food both implies that the Franklin is rich enough to buy seasonal food and that he might be paying attention to the religious regulations of food (Jonassen 101). Yet, it should be noted that the social and religious messages conveyed by the seasonal food can only be materialised on the table of the Franklin through the work of his cook.

As a bourgeois man, rich enough to have a cook at his house, the Franklin is not only able to spend a lot of money on food and drink, he is also a great householder and thus has gained the title "Seint Julian" in his country (I (A) 340). As Anderson states, food has two main messages: "*solidarity*" and "*separation*" (125, emphasis original). Food is associated with "solidarity," because people eat together to share. It also means "separation," because differences in the foodstuff consumed signal social, ethnic, regional and religious differences (Scully 116-117). Likewise, the Sumptuary Laws in the fourteenth century aimed at sustaining the dominant social hierarchy. However, trying to regulate the social distinctions of the haves and have-nots, the Sumptuary Laws could not prevent the newly emerging bourgeoisie, or in other words, the money-made man such as the Franklin, from displaying their wealth in the form of generosity. Thus, hospitality stood out as an important aspect of medieval display culture as exemplified by the Franklin, who likes showing off his material means to assert and display his rising social status.[27] It is also for this reason that the Franklin's "table dormant in his halle alway / Stood redy covered al the longe day" (I (A) 353-354). Due to the limited space even in bigger manor houses, dining tables were generally not permanent (Adamson 156, Klemettilä 60, Scully 166).[28] However, the Franklin has a dormant table embellished by the mastery of his cook, which becomes the tangible proof of his bourgeois status.

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[26] For the importance of seasonal food also see Scully (54) and Klemettilä (36-38).

[27] Hospitality was a very important aspect of medieval culture, in that, "[r]enown for hospitality was as precious as renown for courage" (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 3), because hospitality enhanced the social bonds through feasts (Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 4). Accordingly, Mann argues that the information about the Franklin's food preferences is "not unusual," but "totally different from normal gluttony satire" as it does not signal "the nauseating enumeration of dish after dish, and the emphasis on the vomiting and excretion by which the overloaded stomach relieves itself" (155). Mann argues that the emphasis on food in the Franklin's depiction in the "General Prologue" *fuses* satire on gluttony and estates satire," since "Chaucer's picture of the tyrannised cook suggests not only the description of the glutton giving detailed orders for his meals, but also estates satire on the exacting demands that masters of his class make of their servants" (155, emphasis original).

[28] Like the hierarchy in society, there was also the hierarchy of seating and food allowances (Strong 103-104). The lord and his noble guests would sit at their table, which would be followed by the hierarchical structure of seating occupied by people according to their social status.

Thus, added to the offices he has held, the Franklin's public relations as implied by his dormant table, which is probably visited by both his social superiors and inferiors, reveals how "manners facilitated promotion" (Colquhoun 75). As a hospitable man, he knows how to behave to assert and display his social status. Furthermore, he has the means to have a private cook at his home who makes it possible for the Franklin to easily show his hospitality through food served on his dormant table. Apparently, his cook's mastery both displays and enhances the Franklin's bourgeois social drama.

Since the Franklin's cook has an important role in contributing to his master's social performance, he is expected to perform his backstage duties to contribute to and sustain the Franklin's bourgeois social drama. Otherwise, "[w]o was his cook but if his sauce were / Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere" (I (A) 351-352). At this point, the reference to the spicy sauces, which are expected to be prepared by the cook is of great importance. Sauce-making was a significant feature of a medieval cook. Sauces accompanied the dishes of the upper estates and there were special sauces for each dish. Sauces could either be poured over dishes or could be served for dipping. It was the duty of the carver to choose the proper sauce for the proper dish which was prepared by a cook. Sauces were very important for medieval food culture, in that, there were special spaces in kitchens for sauce-making, known as the "*sawsery*" (Klemettilä 87, emphasis original).

Furthermore, the "General Prologue" refers to "[p]oynaunt and sharp" sauces, which draws attention to spices. Spices were important ingredients of sauces.[29] Because of the fact that spices were imported from the East, they were very expensive and could be used in small amounts (Scully 83; Colquhoun 54), and therefore they had "an almost mythical status" (Colquhoun 54). Among the spices that were known as "luxury food" were pepper, ginger, cinnamon and saffron (Adamson 65). However, as imported products, spices were very expensive[30] and could only be bought by the rich people. The poor peasants used certain garden

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[29] Spicy sauces were signifiers of "good living" dominant in gluttony satires (Mann 154).

[30] Therefore, spices could be mixed with other substances to increase their weight. For instance, saffron was sometimes either mixed with sandalwood to make it cheaper or mixed with gold dust to reach the desired weight, which reveals that saffron was one of the spices that was believed to be "more precious even than gold" (Adamson 66). Likewise, "[a]nother, more mundane way of increasing the weight of spices was to wet them. Peppercorns were adulterated with a whole range of different substances, ranging from unripe juniper berries to vetch (climbing vines of the bean family) to mouse droppings" (Adamson 66).

herbs such as leeks, onions or garlic as substitutes (Adamson 65).[31] Thus, spices became markers of social distinction (Scully 205, Klemettilä 90-92),[32] which is also revealed in the idea that "the word 'spice' (*épice* in French) came from the Latin *species*, meaning 'money'" (Klemettilä 91). Accordingly, his cook is expected to prepare spicy sauces, so as to hold a mirror to the Franklin's wealth.

Apparently, as well as his dagger and silk purse (I (A) 357-358), which assert the Franklin's social status materially (Erol, *A Pageant of Well-Dressed...* 104; Ege 346), the Franklin needs his cook to display and assert his rising status in his bourgeois social drama. Although the "General Prologue" emphasises the Franklin's love and display of food and refers to his cook at his home only once, it should be noted that the Franklin is bound to his cook for the display of food listed in his "General Prologue" portrait. In other words, while the "General Prologue" attributes a shadowy position to the cook in accordance with his shadowy existence as a backstage figure of bourgeois social drama, the Franklin's "pleyn delit" and "felicitiee parfit" are bound to his abilities as a professional cook (I (A) 337, 338). As a bourgeois man, rich enough to have a cook at his house, the Franklin is able not only to spend much money on food and drink, but also to keep his table ready for service throughout the day, which has earned him the title "Seint Julian" in his country in return for his hospitality (I (A) 340). However, it should be emphasised that while hospitality stood out as an important aspect of medieval display culture as exemplified by the Franklin who likes showing off his material means to assert his generosity and display his rising social status, the role of his cook at the kitchen to sustain this portrait of the Franklin should not be undermined.

For a more profound understanding of the role of the Cook of the Guildsmen in medieval bourgeois social drama, the depiction of the Guildsmen as bourgeois figures in the "General Prologue" should be revisited. Rather than describing them individually, Chaucer presents the Guildsmen as a group although he lists their specific professions.[33] The Guildsmen are a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer and a Tapestry-Maker. They are dressed in a uniform-like manner, their livery

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[31] Besides these herbs, poor people also made use of wine, vinegar, verjuice, lemons or pomegranates as flavour (Adamson 67).

[32] Spices were also used "to mask the taste of partly rotten flesh" (Colquhoun 55).

[33] Mann interprets this depiction as a reflection of estates satire (103-104).

representing their attachment to their parish guild (I (A) 363-364).[34] Their bourgeois status is revealed, first of all, by the material possessions that they have:

> Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
>
> Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras
>
> But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,
>
> Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel. (I (A) 365-368)

The references to these possessions exhibits that although the "General Prologue" does not give much information about the personality of the Guildsmen, it gives much information about their possessions. As Lisca states, "*ordinary tradesmen and craftsmen were forbidden the use of precious metals for such ornamentation*" (321), a situation which, as Mann indicates, reveals satire (105). However, the function of these material possessions is to display the social status of the Guildsmen and their urge for being recognised as the members of the bourgeoisie who have achieved rising in the social ladder.

In accordance with the idea that they had enough money and material possessions as bourgeois figures, each of the Guildsmen "semed […] a fair burgeys / [t]o sitten in a yeldehall on a deys" (I (A) 369-370) and "[w]as shaply for to been an alderman" (I (A) 372).[35] Their social ambitions are also practised by their wives who want to be called "madame" (I (A) 376) and join public processions to display their wealth (I (A) 377). They want to "have a mantel roialliche ybore" (I (A) 378). The Guildsmen's bourgeois status is displayed and enhanced by the Cook, who accompanies them during the pilgrimage to Canterbury. At this point, it should be noted that, among the Canterbury pilgrims, only the Knight and the Prioress have attendees in pilgrimage except for the Guildsmen, which reveals their social ambitions. Although there is no information about the fact that they have a cook at home, the Guildsmen are rich enough to hire a cook during a pilgrimage as a group, even if not individually, which points out the superiority of the Franklin over the Guildsmen. Still, their cook has a significant contribution to bourgeois social drama of the Guildsmen in the public space of pilgrimage.

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[34] Harwood suggests that fraternity might be interpreted as a reference to religious community and the Guildsmen might be honorary members of this community (Harwood 413-417). Yet, Burçin Erol interprets their costume as a reflection of Chaucer's satire of the Guildsmen and states that "[t]hey have completed all the items that fashion required" ("The Garb…" 163). Accordingly, Erol regards the Guildsmen's interest in costume as a reflection of "self-importance and vanity" (*A Pageant of Well-Dressed…* 105).

[35] Mann, thus, states that "[i]n the Guildsmen […], Chaucer satirises self-importance rather than Fraud" (103).

It has been suggested that Chaucer modelled the Cook of the Guildsmen, Roger of Ware, on a real-life figure, Roger of Ware, who was defined as "a common nightwalker," since he was accused of having relations with the prostitutes and spending time with the thieves (Lisca 323, Hieatt 203).[36]

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[36] See *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls, 1364-1381* (158). This association is implied by the Host as well (IX (H) 15-19). Actually, there is a conflict between the Host and the Cook, which can be defined as a reflection of "the occupational antipathy that existed between innkeepers and cooks" (Bertolet 233). The conflict between the Cook and the Host was a result of the association of cooking with hospitality and with the service of food by innkeepers as part of their business (Scully 238). It is also because of this conflict that the Cook intends to tell "[a] litel jape that fil in oure citee" (I (A) 4343), which is about an innkeeper (I (A) 4360). Similarly, when the Host starts speaking following the Cook's words in his prologue to his tale, he lists a number of accusations about the Cook's professional abilities. Accusing him of selling stale Jack of Dover, which is a type of pie (I (A) 4346-4348), the Host says that the Cook has been cursed especially for the bad parsley which he has served with his stubble-fed goose (I (A) 4349-4351) in his shop where "many a flye loos" (I (A) 4352). It was forbidden to use rotten items, and using rotten items while cooking would result in punishment (*Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, 1323-1482*), but the Host implies that the Cook sold stale pies and rotten parsley. Pies were, in fact, among the popular food. They could be made either as pastries seasoned with red or white meat or fish, or as tarts with fillings of meat or fish as well as closed pies filled with red or white meat or with spices and egg yolks (Hieatt 207). Parsley was a popular herb throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. As a warm and dry herb, it was regarded as healthy, generating good blood and used not in sauces and dishes (Adamson 11-12). Yet, the interesting aspect of the Host's accusation is that the Cook does not reject his accusations. On the contrary, the Cook accepts the Host's accusations as true and says that "[t]hou seist ful sooth [...] by my fey! / But 'sooth pley, quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith" (I (A) 4356-57). Despite the fact that "good fame is what all traders, including the Cook, desire" (Bertolet 242), the Cook does not pay attention to the Host's accusations. After all, he is presented as "a successful commercial agent anyway by selling his allegedly questionable skills to the Guildsmen" (Bertolet 235). Thus, compared to the depiction of food in the Franklin's depiction in the "General Prologue," the depiction of food in the Cook's portrait reveals "the difference between the pleasure and the business of food. The Franklin enjoys both the preparation and presentation of food while the sore-ridden Cook regards food merely as a commodity. As a result, the Cook's food is good because he says it is good; the Franklin's food is good because it is" (Bertolet 233).

Although he appears as a drunk man during the Canterbury pilgrimage (I (A) 4345-4342),[37] he seems to be a professional cook. Although the Cook is reported by the Host to come from a cookshop full of flies (I (A) 4352), there were a number of famous cookshops in medieval London (Colquhoun 61).[38] Owing to his professional necessity for medieval bourgeois social drama in the public arena of pilgrimage, the Cook's "General Prologue" portrait "advertises more what he can do than what he is" (Bertolet 230), since it is his professional ability, not his personality, that is indispensable for the backstage of the Guildsmen's bourgeois social drama.

As the servant of the Guildsmen, the Cook "*is perhaps the only pilgrim who comes on the Canterbury pilgrimage not out of desire for travel or atonement […]. His presence then is strictly business*" (Bertolet 229). The reason of his existence among the Canterbury pilgrims is to contribute to the social drama of the bourgeois Guildsmen. Therefore, even from his very first introduction, the Cook's depiction reveals that his "*portrait is not individual; it belongs rather to his work-life, that is, to his estate*" (Mann 170), whose function is not only to reveal his professional abilities, but also to display the idea that his masters, the Guildsmen, are keen on what they eat during travels, even if on a pilgrimage.

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[37] In accordance with the stereotypes of the cooks, the Guildsmen's Cook appears as a drunken man. In the Manciple's prologue to his tale, the Host starts talking about the drunken Cook. According to the Host, the Cook is so drunk that "[a] theef myghte hym ful lightly robbe and bynde" (IX (H) 8). The drunken Cook has started sleeping and is about to fall down from his horse. The Host almost looks down upon him and asks: "Is that a cook of Londoun, with meschaunce?" (IX (H) 11). The Host implies that he is sleeping either because he is drunk or he has spent the night with a prostitute (IX (H) 15-19). In return for this sarcastic attitude, the pale Cook just says that he prefers sleep rather than "the beste galon wyn in Chepe" (IX (H) 24). Thus, the Manciple says that he excuses the Cook from telling tale as he is sleeping. Yet, the Manciple's depiction of the Cook's appearance is also reflexive of his condemnation of the Cook. The Manciple addresses the Cook as "dronken wight" (IX (H) 35) and says that the Cook's face is "pale" (IX (H) 30), his eyes are "daswen" (IX (H) 31) and his breath is stinking (IX (H) 32). Moreover, he defines the Cook as "stynkyng swyn" (IX (H) 40), "lusty man" (IX (H) 41) and says that "I trowe that ye dronken han wyn ape, / And that is whan men pleyen with a straw" (IX (H) 44-45). Hearing these words, the Cook gets very angry, but because of his drunkenness, he falls down from his horse and could only be lifted up with the help of other pilgrims (IX (H) 46-55).

[38] Hieatt notes that "[t]he average London cook shop was a very small place of business, occupying a frontage on the street of from 6 to 12 feet" where the prices were set by ordinances (204).

The Cook knows how to "boille the chiknes with the marybones" (I (A) 380).[39] The Cook is also good at making "poudre-marchant tart and galyngale" (I (A) 381).[40] Furthermore, he can choose the good quality of London ale (I (A) 382). The Cook is competent at a number of cooking methods from roasting[41] and boiling to broiling and frying (I (A) 383), which are, according to Mann, derived from satire on gluttony (86). The Cook can also make "mortreux, and wel bake a pye" (I (A) 384).[42] He can also make the best "blankmanger" (I (A) 387).[43] Although implying the gluttony in the Guildsmen, all these details in relation to the Cook's professional abilities contribute to the bourgeois social drama of the Guildsmen as backstage elements. His professional mastery signals the quality of food favoured by the Guildsmen as a form of social display. As a reflection of the food items in the list of the Cook's mastery, it can be suggested that the Guildsmen is keen on not only displaying their social status, but also securing their health.

Despite his professional efficiency, the Cook has "a mormal" on his shin (I (A) 386). The Cook's skin-disease, the mormal on his shin, signals that although he is a "High-Class" cook, he is a "vitally defective cook" (Lisca 323). Curry suggests that the mormal, "*malum mortuum*," was "a species of ulcerated, dry-scabbed apostema

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[39] Chicken was a favourite dish on the tables of wealthy people not only for its meat, but also for its eggs. Furthermore, since white meat was regarded by physicians as healthy and nutritious warm dish, chicken constituted an important part of medieval food culture. Moreover, chicken was ideal for making white dish, that is, the substitute of *blankmanger* on feast days (Adamson 33-34). Additionally, these lines remind the Pardoner's preaching against gluttony (Biebel 24):

> Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,
> And turnen substaunce into accident
> To fulfille al thy likerous talent!
> Out of the hard bones knokke they
> The mary, for they caste noght awey
> That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote. (VI (C) 538-543)

[40] Adamson states that "[c]lassified by physicians as extremely warm and dry, galingale was recommended for a cold stomach, as a digestive aid, a breath freshener, and an aphrodisiac" (17).

[41] As Scully notes, "roasting was the ideal method of cooking a cool and moist meat such as pork and some waterfowl" (95).

[42] Mortreux and blankmanger, both of which were made with poultry or fish on fast days, were two of the dishes attributed to the noble tables in the cookbooks (Hieatt 205). As for pies, tortes and pastries, they could be enclosed either with flesh, cheese, vegetables, herbs, or nuts according to preferences (Adamson 87, Scully 96). Thus, "the bakery was one of the most active areas in the kitchen complex" (Scully 96).

[43] Blankmanger, also known as the white dish, was one of the popular foods. Its ingredients were rice, chicken meat and almond (Scully 207-211, Colquhoun 58, Adamson 84). On fast days, rather than chicken meat, pike meat was used for blankmanger (Adamson 72). It is interesting that blankmanger was not only consumed by noble or rich people, but it was also advised for the sick as reflected in *La Ménagier de Paris* and Taillevent's *Viandier* (Adamson 84).

produced by corruption in the blood of natural melancholia or sometimes of melancholia combined with *salsum plegma*" (48). Resulting from the combination of corrupted melancholia with salt phlegm, his mormal might cause itching for the Cook (Curry 49). Thus, Curry states that the Cook's "*unsightly physical impediment,*" that is, his mormal, is "*offensive to the eye*" (47). Such physical maladies on the face or body are also reflective of moral maladies, since mormal is also caused by uncleanliness, excessive eating and drinking wine as well as having relations with women (Curry 50-51), an idea which tends to reinforce the negative stereotypical image ascribed to cooks. Likewise, Mann interprets the Cook's mormal as "an image of moral corruption," which is also indicated by the Host's implications about the Cook's interest in women and wine as well as his uncleanliness (169).[44] Still, despite his physical defect, this "povre man" (I (A) 4341), the Cook, stands out as an important element of the social drama performed by the Guildsmen as a professional figure at the backstage. As an extension of the idea that the Guildsmen are not as socially recognised as the Franklin, their cook is made visible to the society represented by the Canterbury pilgrims. Although it is implied that the Cook is the embodiment of medieval cook stereotypes, his professional efficiency is indispensable for the bourgeois social drama performed by the Guildsmen to assert and display their rising social status.

IV. Conclusion

Apparently, the improvements in the standards of food from "security" to "variety" influence not only the quantity and quality, but also the "regularity" of food consumption, all of which influence "[the] civilising of appetite" (Mennell 32).[45] In the same line, Mennell argues that "*[a]ppetite [...] is not the same thing as hunger. Nor is it the same thing as eating. Hunger is a body drive which recurs in all human beings in a reasonably regular cycle*" (20). However, appetite implies that the person has the means to choose according to her/his taste. Similarly, Montanari notes that "*[t]he organ of taste is not the tongue, but the brain, a culturally (and therefore historically) determined organ through which are transmitted and learned the criteria for evaluations*" (61). Food preferences, hence, not only reveal differing tastes, but also have underlying messages to convey. They become a reflection of the consumer's cultural, social and religious identity. Therefore, as Anderson notes,

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[44] Likewise, Woolgar interprets the Cook's mormal as a reflection of "unsavoury elements of the catering trades" (*The Culture of Food...* 195).

[45] Similarly, Mennell states that, "[i]t seems no coincidence that gastronomic theorising as a genre first appeared during the period when the insecurity of food supplies ceased to be of catastrophic proportions, and burgeoned fully during the nineteenth century" (34).

food stands out "as communication," revealing messages about man's socio-cultural and socio-economic background and, thus, "it may be second only to language as a social communication system" (124). Likewise, Bourdieu defines taste as "a class culture turned into nature," because it "helps to shape the class body" as a result of which the body stands out as "the most indisputable materialization of class taste" (190). In the Middle Ages, it was for this reason that not only the types and amounts of food that each estate consumed, but also their manners were different and important. Beside the changes in society following the Black Death, the rise of the merchants and the bourgeoisie; bad harvest and famines from the fourteenth century onwards also influenced the relation between taste/appetite and estate (Mennell 25). It is at this point that the role of cooks stand out as an important reflection and practice of class tastes, because they not only differentiated the upper classes from the lower classes, but also enhanced their difference as important actors at the backstage in one of the three forms of displaying "consumption," that is, "food, culture and presentation (clothing, beauty care, toiletries, domestic servants)" (Bourdieu184). Accordingly, Owen Meredith's praise of cooks summarises the indispensability of cooks for medieval bourgeois social drama:

> We may live without poetry, music and art;
>
> We may live without conscience, and live without heart;
>
> We may live without friends; we may live without books;
>
> But *civilized man* cannot live without cooks.
>
>   (qtd. in Henisch, *The Medieval Cook* 1, emphasis added)

Consequently, being able to spend on food, the amounts of money spent on food, and food preferences stand out as important means to reveal and display estate distinctions in the Middle Ages. There was no space for the newly emerging bourgeoisie in the traditional three estate structure and thus their public and private lives turned out to be proper places for social drama. Food was, hence, an important element in this bourgeois social drama as a reflection of estate differences. Therefore, the status of a medieval cook can be likened to that of a kitchen. The first is attached to great men, the second to great halls. Although cooks were the figures occupying the backstage of bourgeois social drama in the Middle Ages, their function was indispensable regarding the maintenance of this performance. The role of cooks to sustain, display and enhance the superior position of the bourgeoisie was thus very important to overcome their liminal status

and assert their identities in their bourgeois social drama as represented by the cooks of the Franklin and the Guildsmen in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Hence, if a cook is, as articulated by a cook in Plautus's *Pseudolus*, "the savior of mankind" (236), a medieval cook was not only a craftsman, a physician and an artist, but also an actor in bourgeois social drama, although his role was to be performed at the backstage.

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