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## ANNE FINCH AND LADY MARY MONTAGU AS “THIEVES OF LANGUAGE”


“DİL HIRSIKLARI”: ANNE FINCH VE LADY MARY MONTAGU

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p> <b>Received:</b> 09.04.2021</p> <p> <b>Accepted:</b> 23.08.2021</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Neoclassical women poets, Anne Finch, Lady Mary Montagu.</i></p> <p><b>Research Article</b></p>	<p>This paper explores the strategies of two eighteenth-century female poets to write and publish their poetry in an era when literature was dominated by male authors. In the eighteenth century, language and literature were considered male-dominated areas. For this reason, women had to face many obstacles to express themselves in literature and to be accepted as authors/poets. However, due to the critical shift from patronage to printing as a profit-making market, women's writing displayed itself from almost non-existence. Still, the female authors/poets of the century such as Anne Finch and Lady Mary Montagu needed to fabricate various strategies to write, publish, and own the authorship of their own works. Thanks to those strategies, they were able to produce poems in the very language which was often associated with male authors and oppressed them. Hence, Anne Finch and Lady Mary Montagu can be defined as “thieves of language.” In this context, this paper analyzes Anne Finch's “The Introduction” and Lady Mary Montagu's “Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace” in the context of Neoclassical poetry by investigating how these two women poets generate different strategies to insert their own voice into the masculine literary tradition in the Augustan age. Finch's “The Introduction” deals with her concerns on publishing her poems in the tradition that marginalizes and scorns women poets while Lady Montagu's “Verses” strategically and severely attacks Alexander Pope, the leading figure of Neoclassical literature, by writing back in the same style as Pope.</p>
MAKALE BİLGİSİ	ÖZET
<p> <b>Geliş:</b> 09.04.2021</p> <p> <b>Kabul:</b> 23.08.2021</p> <p><b>Anahtar Kelimeler:</b> <i>Neoklasik dönem kadın şairler, Anne Finch, Lady Mary Montagu.</i></p> <p><b>Araştırma Makalesi</b></p>	<p>Bu makale on sekizinci yüzyıldan iki kadın şairin edebiyatın erkek yazarların hakimiyetinde olduğu bir dönemde şiirlerini yazmak ve yayımlamak için oluşturduğu stratejileri araştırmaktadır. On sekizinci yüzyılda, dil ve edebiyat erkek egemen alanlar olarak görülmüştür. Bu nedenle, kadınlar kendilerini edebiyatta ifade etmek ve yazar/şair olarak kabul görmek amacıyla bir çok engelle yüzleşmek zorunda kalmıştır. Fakat, on sekizinci yüzyılda hamilikten daha kârlı olan matbaacılığa geçiş nedeniyle, kadın şairlerin eserleri kendini yokluktan var etmeyi başardı. Yine de, Anne Finch ve Lady Mary Montagu gibi o yüzyılın kadın yazar/şairlerin kendi eserlerini yazmak, yayımlamak ve bu eserlerin yazarlığını sahiplenmek için çeşitli stratejiler üretmeleri gerekiyordu. Bu stratejiler sayesinde, sıklıkla erkek yazarlarla özdeşleştirilen ve kadınları baskılayan dilde şiir üretebildiler. Böylece, Anne Finch ve Lady Mary Montagu “dil hırsızı” olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale Anne Finch'in “The Introduction” ve Lady Mary Montagu'nun “Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace” adlı şiirlerini bu iki kadın şairin sesini on sekizinci yüzyılın maskülen edebi geleneğinde nasıl ortaya koyabildiklerini araştırarak neoklasik şiir geleneği çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Bu iki kadın şair şiir yazabilmek için farklı stratejiler kullanmışlardır. Finch'in “The Introduction” adlı şiiri kadın şairleri ötekileştiren ve hor gören bir geleneğe şiirlerini yayımlamanın yarattığı kaygılara değinir. Lady Mary Montagu'nun “Verses” şiiri ise neoklasik edebiyatın önde gelen isimlerinden Alexander Pope'a tam da Pope'un kendi tarzında saldırır.</p>

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## Introduction

Alicia Ostriker (1982) borrows Claudine Hermann's phrase "*voleuses de langue*", which can be translated as thieves of language to refer to the female author/poets, who had to speak and write in a patriarchal tradition, which was inadequate to express themselves because of the male hegemony over language and literature (69). This paper assumes that Ostriker's phrase can also be used for Anne Finch and Lady Mary Montagu, who were able to produce literary works in the eighteenth century.

In very general terms, women were barred from holding the title of a poet/author and expressing themselves in literature in the eighteenth century. Hence, women poets were obliged to define themselves in ciphers (Ostriker 1982: 69), or they had to create innovative means to write and publish their poetry. Therefore, as Alicia Ostriker (1982) rightly states, women poets had to define themselves in codes, "*disguising passion as piety, rebellion as obedience*" (69). Thus, the hindrances their gender generates lead female poets to manipulate language and even steal it from the male authors. That is, they needed to become "*thieves of language*" (Ostriker 1982: 68) to exist as female poets in the masculine literary tradition.

Although gender posed an obstacle to women's poetic career, there were also developments that affected female poets' positions in the literary market positively. For instance, the eighteenth century encountered a dramatic shift from patronage to printing. Since printing is a kind of profit-making market, it created a competitive atmosphere in literature. Due to the advent of printing as a new market, women's writing took "*a leap from near non-existence into substantial being*" (Doody 2000: 217). In addition to the positive influence of the printing market in women's poetic careers, women could not erase the pejorative views upon their identities as poets easily. Their careers as poets were denounced, and prejudiced comments on their artistic works remained. For example, women's publishing of their literary works was equated with self-exposure as well as "*a kind of sexual self-display*" (Mermin 1990: 336). Neil Keeble (2002: 198) also states that women who published were even regarded as prostitutes like the Restoration period's actresses as women's publications meant as a sort of violation of chastity. Keeble (2002) exemplifies the intolerant view upon women as authors: Earl of Rochester, for example, stated, "*[w]hore is scarce a more reproachful name, / Than poetess*" (198). Hence, many women poets in the eighteenth century were discouraged from writing and publishing their poetry because of the public view upon women poets. For this reason, they did not publish their work for the public but kept them only in manuscript form to circulate among friends for their identities and works were identified with each other (Mermin 1990: 336).

In such an atmosphere with full of disparaging comments and even insults on female poets, Anne Finch and Lady Mary Montagu were able to produce their literary works and express themselves by employing different strategies. "The Introduction" deals with Anne Finch's concerns and fears on publishing her poems in a male tradition that belittles female authors while Lady Mary Montagu's "Verses" attacks Alexander Pope and his poetic devices severely, one of the most important poets of Neoclassical literature, by making use of Pope's own sarcastic style against himself.

### Anne Finch and "The Introduction"

In the literary tradition of the eighteenth century condemning female poets, Anne Finch (1661-1720) became one of the significant and prolific women poets of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. She was well aware of her situation as a woman poet as well as the literary constraints imposed on her due to her gender. Until her marriage to Heneage Finch, she was the Maid of Honour to Mary Modena, which makes her a very learned woman because the Maids of Honour were educated in the grand tradition of Tasso and Aristo and seminal classical texts in French and Italian. She was able to translate these works to English at the end of her education (Barash 1991: 330). Anne Finch composed her poems to be circulated in manuscript form among her friends at first and later published a volume of her poems titled *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions* in 1713 (Doody 2000: 222; Mermin 1990: 335; Seber 2007: 182). With this volume including her poems, she attained a substantial reputation which later dwindled to be revived by Wordsworth's appreciation of her "Nocturnal Reverie" as a nature poem (Mermin 1990: 335). In fact, she did not intend to attract so much attention with her poetry, nor aimed an exceptional poetic success and reputation. However, she anticipated to write her poetry and attune herself and her poetry according to the male poetic tradition, which systematically excluded women poets as intruders.

Anne Finch wrote in almost all genres of the eighteenth century, namely, odes, pastorals, tales, songs, dialogues, beast fables, compositions, biblical comments, epistles, and satires (Hinnant 1994: 17; Rogers 1979: 225). As is evident from the genres she wrote in, Finch's oeuvre is quite diverse, which displays how strong her claim is in the poetic world. Actually, women poets of the time generally preferred to write lyric, poetry on specific occasions, and relatively simple narratives such as fable. They deliberately opted to write "relatively simple narratives to assume a humble voice and *"sp[oke] of themselves in self-deprecating, low-keyed tones"* (Mermin 1990: 336). As Dorothy Mermin (1990) further comments, women could not assume the roles of a bard, scholar, courtly lover or a theologian; therefore, only *"when poets imitated the tones of private life, women could join in"* (341). Therefore, in a male-oriented literary tradition, they supposed that they were required to be humble and womanly; otherwise, they were well aware of the fact that they would be discarded from the literary circles. Their probable assertiveness might cause even worse situations, that is, their reputation may be denigrated for being bold and impudent. According to Rogers' remark (1979), if the female poets did not take on a subdued identity as a poet, they must be *"prepared to cast off [their] reputation publicly like Aphra Behn [for] she was shut out by its licentiousness"* (227). In this context, Katherine Rogers (1979) asserts that,

*Obviously, she could not write to her lovers as the men could write to their mistresses. Nor could she treat love as a trivial amusement, since it was not a pastime for her but a central focus of her life. The only man respectable woman could write was her husband, and in those days of mercenary arranged marriages she might well not find him a suitable inspiration.* (227)

Here, it can be deduced that female poets had relatively limited themes to use in their poetry. As their primary duty was considered their home, husband, and children, they were not expected

and encouraged to write poems professionally. When they did, they were expected to do it properly without staining their womanly reputation. Therefore, they could not choose a random topic and write on it as their male counterparts did. They should prefer a suitable theme for their poems, which would not defame their status.

Anne Finch, conscious of all disadvantages her gender brings about, conveys her concerns in her poem “The Introduction.” To be able to share her fears concerning what would happen if she published her poem, Finch creates an introductory debate to discuss woman poet’s fear about possible hostile reception of her poems. As poetic practices are often considered the man’s job, a female poet’s composing poetry and presenting it to the public is seriously dangerous because “*it will receive accusations and criticism or even insults*” (Seber: 2007:185). Finch (n.d.) rightfully contemplates probable responses to her work in “The Introduction”: “*Some would, because such words they do affect,/Cry they’re insipid, empty, and uncorrect./And many have attained, dull and untaught*” (3-5<sup>1</sup>). Indeed, Anne Finch is quite aware of the dominant patriarchal attitude towards women poets and their writing, and she claims that many critics would censure her poem and assess her lines as “*insipid, empty and uncorrect*”<sup>2</sup> (4) as well as “*dull and untaught*” (5). All in all, they would blame the poet’s gender for the so-called shortcomings of her poem: “*they’re by a woman writ*” (Finch n.d.: 8).

Finch also questions gender roles traditionally attributed to women and men and challenges these rigid concepts of man and woman in “The Introduction.” According to Finch, literature is ordinarily associated with men; nevertheless, women’s accomplishments are mere “*[g]ood breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, [and] play*” (Finch n.d.: 14). When she transgresses these allotted actions and alleged accomplishments, she attempts to write only to become “*an intruder*” (Finch n.d.: 10):

*Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,  
Such an intruder on the rights of men,  
Such a presumptuous creature, is esteemed,  
The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.* (Finch n.d.: 9-12)

By writing, women are believed to surpass their allotted roles and spaces and enter men’s terrain without permission. This trespassing is regarded as profanity and an invasion of man’s purported literary authority. In women’s poetry, especially in Finch’s “The Introduction,” the focal point is often the gender of the poet and how it disparagingly affects the audience’s reception because male poets claim that “*their own voices [are] genderless, “universal” [while] they [women poets] never forget what they write, and will be read as women*” (Mermin 1990: 336). Once again, while male authors are celebrated as having a universal and authentic voice, female poets can never achieve such universality and authenticity in their works. Before challenging this idea, Finch first employs an Augustan literary style to be accepted to the patriarchal tradition. Only after submitting herself to this system she can find the space to insert her feminine voice and ideas. Therefore, as Rogers (1979) sustains, “*the fact that her [Finch’s] poems make a woman’s consciousness the center of awareness distinguished them in a*

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Montagu and Finch’s poems are given in line numbers.

literature where women generally appear only as an incidental part of life" (239). As such, male poets expect women to remain in their appropriate place as "incidental part of [their] life" and never transgress it. For them, women must be preoccupied with "the dull manage of a servile house" (Finch n.d.: 14), and they should not confuse themselves with intellectual occupations at all. In "The Introduction," Finch deals with these roles which are assigned to women: "Are the accomplishments we should desire;/ To write, or read, or think, or to inquire/Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time,/ [...] /Whilst the dull manage of a servile house/Is held by some our outmost art, and use" (Finch n.d.: 15-20). As Finch argues in these lines, men define women only as their helpers and do not consider them as individuals who have their own ideas and decisions. They also do not want women to develop intellectually for women should be preoccupied with themselves and their house. As Rogers (1979) illuminates, "men do not want women wasting their time and energy on anything that does not contribute to their usefulness to men, whether as sexual objects or household manages; nor do they want them to rise above trivia, lest they develop ideas of their own" (234). Thus, men define women with regard to their usefulness to their lives. For them, women are not individual beings but objects to be consumed in any means they intend to.

An equally important point in "The Introduction" is that Finch employs Biblical references and examples to prove women's wit and ability to write. She describes a scene in which women are singing songs in honour of King David and glorifying his presence. She depicts the scene by referring to a Biblical tale in the Old Testament: "A woman here, leads fainting Israel on,/She fights, she wins, she triumphs with a song,/Devout, majestic, for the subject fit," (45-47). In ancient times, as Anne Finch emphasizes, women had more privileged and esteemed roles in taking part in public occasions and celebrations (Williamson 1990: 113). Her exemplifying women's active part in those times from the Bible is highly interesting because the Bible is generally and frequently deployed to "keep woman in her place" in the eighteenth century (Rogers 1979: 234). At the same time, as Hinnant (1994) expresses, Anne Finch praises "biblical figures who are symbolic of a different kind of art: a heroic and religious poetry of national rejoicing and unity," and these are the symbols of poetry, which receive no confrontation (75). In other words, Finch becomes a member of the tradition that condemns women who claim a place in the literary world, and then she writes back from within this disempowering system.

Anne Finch in "The Introduction" also questions why women are regarded as witless when compared to men in the literary world. According to Finch (n.d.), the answer is the access to education: "How are we fall'n, fall'n by mistaken rules?/And education's, more than nature's fools" (51-52). Here, it is maintained that there is no noteworthy difference between men and women in nature and intellectual potential. Nevertheless, women's access to education is quite limited when compared to men's. As Hande Seber (2007) notes, the main difference "between a man and a woman's intellectual capacity is not a matter of inferiority or superiority in creation," but it is a matter of insufficient education women are allowed to have, and that women are barred from "the world of intellect, learning and poetry" (186). Having relatively limited access to education, women cannot fully achieve satisfaction in the art of poetry, and they are not allowed to place themselves as the poetesses in the "groves of laurel" (Finch n.d.:

63), which is the world of poetry. Subsequently, she retreats to the shades: “*Conscious of wants, still with contracted wing,/To some few friends, and to thy sorrows sing;/For groves of laurel thou wert never meant;/Be dark enough thy shades, and be thou there content*” (61-64). As Anne Finch suggests, the proper places for women are shades that lack enlightenment, which is sternly associated with men, especially in Finch’s time.

Furthermore, Finch recurrently uses the shade image in her poetry. As stated above, this image is generally interpreted as Finch’s metaphorical retreat from the enlightenment to the shades. Nevertheless, this image is more than a retreat. For Salvaggio (1998), the shade for Anne Finch is not a mere retreat, “*but the process of radical displacement that was hers both as a ‘woman’ who wrote, and as a poet who wrote ‘woman’*” (243, 244). Therefore, as a “displaced” woman poet, Finch creates a feminine space and tradition within the dominant male literary tradition. In this aspect, Finch “*was a woman clearly displaced within and from her culture, but she was also a woman whose writing – in voicing and celebrating that displacement – became a feminine process that exceeded both Enlightenment systems and the larger classical structures that they epitomized*” (Salvaggio 1998: 244). In this framework, Finch celebrates her displacement from the literary tradition for it constructs a new space for her poems. Finch makes use of her displacement to open up new paths for her poetic career in which she transgresses the limitations imposed by the Enlightenment and other systems.

The idea of femininity in the Neoclassical age, as also mentioned in “The Introduction,” accentuates the idea that women cannot and should not achieve poetic success, and they should remain in their proper place. Still, Finch (n.d.) with her “*contracted wing*” (61) claims herself a place in the poetic world despite “*the power of a hostile system of gender-based assumptions*” (Hinnant 1994: 74) of the eighteenth century. Gilbert (1977) succinctly remarks, “*this modest poetess of “Spleen” and sorrow, contending against a sense of her own contracted wing, pioneered a poetic mode for other women, a mode of reticence conquered by assertion and self-examination, a mode of self-definition within and against the context of prevailing male definitions of women*” (449). With this strategy of reticence, Anne Finch not only demands a place for herself in the poetic world highly dominated by gendered suppositions but also inspires and encourages poetic success for other women writers. Although Anne Finch did not become a part of the mainstream of English poetry, she bravely paved the way for women poets and their acceptance in the literary world, which was hostile for women writers. The strategy of reticence in her poems is one of the significant legacies she left to future women authors. As illuminated by Gilbert (1977) above, Anne Finch employs “*a mode of reticence*” as a strategy to be accepted by the oppressive tradition (449). She later asserts her identity as a female poet in the poetic world.

### **Lady Mary Montagu and “Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace”**

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) is another important female poet and author from the eighteenth century. She employs an utterly different strategy from Finch’s to be able to express her feelings of anger, love, and hate in her poems in the same time period. As explained above, Finch adopts a mode of reticence in her poems and writes her poetry both

within and against the system, which disempowers her in various ways. She initially gets accepted in the masculine literary convention by acknowledging her lack of education and assuming a modest identity. She then writes against the system by exemplifying the factors that exclude women as writers. Thus, she renounces ambition and does not aim at literary fame, which provides her with the means to claim herself a place in the literary world of the time.

However, Lady Mary Montagu's style is far from being similar to Finch's in that she does not adopt the strategy of reticence as Finch does. Unlike Finch, Montagu does not assume a low-keyed voice; on the contrary, she acts and writes boldly despite the hostile reception of her poems. Montagu does not discuss the reasons for women's banishment from the literary arena as Finch does in "The Introduction." She confidently assumes the identity of a poet and directly writes her poems. While Finch's reason for being a thief of language is her modest voice in her poetry, Montagu's is her boldness in demanding and attaining a place for her identity as a fully-developed poet. In order to examine her self-assertive voice in the literary tradition, it will be fruitful to have a brief look at her life.

Lady Montagu was the daughter of an aristocratic family, Evelyn and Mary Pierrepont, yet she was not allowed to have classical education because of her gender. She was educated at home and fascinated with the private library of their mansion. However, she felt the need to hide while studying and teaching herself Latin. She became competent in Latin, and after discovering Montagu's talent in language, her father tutored her in Italian. In her later years, she also learned French and Turkish. Although she did not have a formal education, she was quite learned. Here, the critical point to note is that she could not have access to formal education because of her gender even though her aristocratic family had any means to provide it.

Montagu's father forced her to marry Clotworthy Skeffington, but she eloped with Edward Wortley Montagu (Grundy 1999: 46). After their marriage, Edward Montagu became a Parliament member for Westminster, and then he was made the Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. This marriage was significant for her career because she had the opportunity to introduce herself to the society of George I due to her husband's position. Also, her friends were famous and influential literary figures including Mary Astell, Alexander Pope, John Gay, and Lord Hervey, with whom she is believed to have composed "Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace" ("Verses" hereafter) against Alexander Pope.

Montagu is renowned and generally appreciated for her *Embassy Letters*. She conveys her observations of oriental life in the Ottoman Empire, where she stayed a few years because of her husband's position as the Ambassador of Istanbul (Grundy 1999: 154). There, she learned Turkish and had the opportunity to have access to spaces such as baths where only women's entry was permitted. There, she observed Ottoman women's lives and comments on their lifestyles, dresses, and rights they had and enjoyed. She also witnessed the practice of smallpox inoculation. She endeavoured to practise smallpox inoculation in England, where she encountered resistance since it was an oriental practice (Grundy 1999: 209). During her years in Istanbul, she exchanged letters with her friends such as Alexander Pope.



Due to one of these letters, Montagu and Pope's friendship deteriorated. The reason for this enmity is rooted in their exchange of letters in which Pope's romantic advances are mocked and rejected by Montagu (Thomas 1994: 121). Pope is influenced by the deaths of two lovers struck by lightning, and he transforms the event into a pastoral tragedy titled *Epitaph on the Lovers Struck by Lightning* (Thomas 1994: 122). Pope, in this epitaph, depicts the victims of this incident as lovely lovers "as constant as ever were found in Romance" (Rumbold 1989: 494). In this accident, John Hewet and Sarah Drew die together while John attempts to protect his fiancé. This event influences Pope profoundly and inspires him to produce a tragedy out of it. In this pastoral tragedy, Pope attempts to associate Sarah Drew with Lady Mary and the other lover with himself. Montagu at first ignores this association and maintains their friendship, yet Pope's advances become more and more gallant. Therefore, she directly rejects him by "stripping his pastoral lovers (vulgarly called haymakers) of their romance pretensions" since she could not find anything interesting and moving in victims' love (Thomas 1994: 122). As Thomas (1994) notes, Montagu simply "rejects Pope's constructions of her as the vulnerable heroine of a romance" and "presents herself as an aristocrat with very little interest in peasants" (122). Montagu's harsh rejection of Pope's romantic advances not only ends their friendship but also transforms it into an enmity.

Montagu's rejection of Pope occasions a fierce war between Pope and Montagu. Pope attacks her as Sappho and her ally Lord Hervey as Sporus in his works after their quarrel. Likewise, Montagu is cruel in her poetic responses to Pope. She even writes an anti-*Dunciad* in which Goddess of Dullness tries to find her heir among her followers including John Gay, Joseph Addison, etc. (Thomas 1994: 124). Nevertheless, according to Lady Montagu, the heir must be the dullest, that is, Alexander Pope. Another attack of Montagu to Pope is again a poem entitled "Verses," which is "as crude and bludgeoning a lampoon as appeared in the pamphlet wars of the time" (Thomas 1994: 125). Montagu adopts Pope's own style to satirize him, who attacks people both for his/her personal quarrels and also for his/her lack of wit and dullness. The poem, as its title suggests, begins with the condemnation of Pope for being a poor translator of Horace and Homer: "In two large Columns, on thy motly Page,/Where Roman Wit is strip'd with English Rage;/Where Ribaldry to Satire makes pretence" (1-3). These lines depict the place of Pope's imitations in the journal. Pope's Horatian imitations are given and issued with Horace's Latin verses on the left side of the page while Pope's imitations take place on the right. In the poem, Horace is described as "Roman wit," yet Pope as English rage since Pope's version falls short of expectations (Montagu n.d.: 1-10).

Although Pope's translations maintained their popularity in the eighteenth century, they were criticized as insufficient in terms of language by various critics who also satirized Pope for his inadequate knowledge of Greek and Latin. Montagu supports these criticisms by employing specific references to Pope's physical deformities in her poem: "Thine is just such an Image of his Pen,/As thou thy self art of the Sons of Men" (Montagu n.d.: 11-12). Alexander Pope's version of Homer is only as close to him as he is to a person, which refers to Pope's stature and hunchback. This kind of criticism can be labelled as "typical of contemporary Pope-bashing satire" (Thomas 1994: 125). Moreover, according to Montagu (n.d.), Pope is not only an unsuccessful translator but also a poor satirist: "Ribaldry to Satire makes pretence" (3). In

Montagu's lines (n.d.), satire "*shoud, like a polish'd Razor keen,/Wound with a Touch, that's scarcely felt or seen./Thine is an Oyster-Knife, that hacks and hews*" (25-27). Once again, Lady Montagu describes Pope without wit and as a deficient satirist whose satires are not very well written to achieve its aim.

Another personal attack is Montagu's identification of Pope first with the serpent in the Garden of Eden: "*When God created Thee, one would believe,/He said the same as to the Snake of Eve;*" (54,55), and then with Cain, which can be interpreted as "*a fresh attempt by Lady Mary to contain Pope in a damning structure*" (Thomas 1994: 125). Montagu, nevertheless, most probably decided to resemble Pope to Satan. Yet, she did not do it because identifying Pope with Satan would be bestowing him too much power, which Pope did not deserve. Subsequently, Pope is personified as Cain rather than Satan in the poem:

*Like the first bold Assassin's be thy Lot,  
Ne'er be thy Guilt forgiven, or forgot;  
But, as thou hate'st be hated by Mankind  
And with the Emblem of thy crooked Mind,  
Mark'd on thy Back, like Cain, by God's own Hand;  
Wander like him, accursed through the Land.* (Montagu n.d.: 107-112)

The recurrent image of Alexander Pope with his physical deformities is also used in his identification with Cain. His disability is regarded as a reflection of his corrupted mind, which is given as a curse by God. Lady Mary Montagu disowned this poem's authorship at first because of her concerns of possible insulting replies. She was right in her anticipation that even her association with "Verses" created almost a scandal, and the readers' reception included insolent comments (Thomas 1994: 129).

Lady Mary Montagu's self-assertive voice she employs in her poems is quite extraordinary for a female poet of the eighteenth century. In an age when women were excluded from the literary arena because of their gender, Montagu subverted this gendered view upon women/poets and harshly attacked the primary poet of the Neoclassical age, Alexander Pope. Even, she uses Pope's style against himself in her "Verses."

## Conclusion

By examining Anne Finch's "The Introduction" and Lady Mary Montagu's "Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace" and their two different strategies to be accepted as poets in the Neoclassical literary tradition, which is highly male-dominated, this paper analyzes Anne Finch and Lady Mary Montagu as thieves of language, who claim and attain a space for themselves as women poets in the Neoclassical poetic tradition. In "The Introduction," Finch voices her concerns about publishing her poems as a woman poet and anticipates insulting comments on her poems only because a woman writes them. The reason for such criticism of women poets' poems, as she argues, is not their gender but limited access to education. Differently, Lady Mary Montagu does not use her pen to raise the consciousness of women poets' position in a male literary world, but she confidently asserts her ideas with her cruel and harsh satire on Pope. Strategically, she employs the style of Pope's

satires and uses it against him. In spite of the fact that these women poets employ different strategies, they fulfil to own a literary space in which they can write poetry and maintain it within the Neoclassical tradition disempowering and belittling them. Their accomplishment in poetry also encourages both themselves and other female poets of the time such as Mary Leapor, Mary Astell, and Anne Ingram, Viscountess Irwin to speak for themselves in the debates in which leading Neoclassical literary figures such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift satirize female poets for their lack of wit to be able to compose poetry.

### Ethical Statement

According to the author's statement; scientific, ethical and quotation rules were followed in the writing process of the study named "Anne Finch And Lady Mary Montagu As 'Thieves of Language' "; according to ULAKBİM TR DİZİN criteria, there was no need for data collection in the study requiring ethics committee approval.

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