

**An inquiry into the cultural and political influences of  
English engagement with the Muslims of Morocco and  
the Ottoman Empire, in the writings of three Early  
Modern dramatists, and selected pamphleteers in the  
years between  
1578-1649**

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# Abstract

This study focuses on the cultural and political circumstances of the Early Modern era in the years between 1578- 1649. 1578 marks the crucially significant events of the Battle of Alcazar in North Africa, and 1649 is the year of Charles I's death, marking the decisive end of the Caroline monarchy and thus my period of study. With this thesis, I work to highlight the varying diplomatic stand points held by Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I of England with the Muslims of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. In doing this, it is possible to trace how each individual monarch's cross-cultural diplomacy is reflected in the literature of the period. By focusing on both a variety of pamphlets, as well as the dramatic work of three Early Modern dramatists, I work to establish that the literature written under the rule of Elizabeth I, portrays Muslims and the Islamic world in a favourable light, therefore mirroring the strong political and mercantile relationship held between England and the Muslim world at this time. James and Charles I however held a far more Eurocentric world view which did not include a place for Islam. James aimed to consolidate relations with Spain, and the volatile European climate of the early seventeenth century forced Charles to focus inwardly as well. Consequently these factors, in addition to a variable nexus of socio- political and historical circumstances distanced England from the Kingdom of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. The collapse of Anglo- Islamic relations ultimately resulted in the representation of Muslim characters and the Islamic world to fray heavily. What was once portrayed as admiration and respect, descended to mistrust and hatred under the reign of James I and Charles I, and I work to show that this political degeneration is reflected in the pamphlets and the drama which emerged during this period.

# List of Contents

Abstract.....	2.
Table of Contents.....	3.
Declaration.....	4.
Introduction.....	5.
Ch. 1: The Historical and Political Background.....	5.
Ch. 2: The Public Sphere and the Printing Press.....	10.
Ch. 3: Representations of Muslims in Elizabethan and Jacobean Pamphlet Literature.....	17.
Ch. 4: Representations of Muslims on the Early Modern Stage- “Turning Turke”.....	31.
<i>The Battle of Alcazar</i> .....	32.
<i>Lusts Dominion, or The Lascivious Queen</i> .....	36.
<i>Othello, The Moor of Venice</i> .....	43.
Conclusion.....	52.
Bibliography.....	55.

# **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

# Introduction

## Chapter. 1: The Historical and Political Background

The defining nature of English engagement with the Islamic world across the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I, was one of change. The foreign policy of James was significantly different to that of Elizabeth. The latter years of Elizabeth's reign were dominated by political volatility and economic instability. The threat of a Spanish invasion was ever present, a reality which consequently turned the Elizabeth's diplomatic hand to look beyond European territories for an ally to counteract this threat. The Queen's need for such an ally was great, and it was Ahmad Al-Mansur, Sultan of the Saadi dynasty of Morocco, who not only provided a possibility for military cooperation, but invaluable commercial ties as well. An economic necessity, as the ongoing conflict with Catholic Spain was rapidly depleting the country's finances. It was in 1583 that Lord Burghley, chief advisor to Elizabeth, wrote the Queen stating how an alliance with Morocco "could well suit your majesty."<sup>1</sup> It appears that Elizabeth heeded the words of Lord Burghley, as in 1585 the Queen granted patents for the establishment of the Barbary Company. This diplomatic manoeuvring gave way to be a hugely mutually beneficial commercial enterprise, with the Queen encouraging her merchants to export various military equipment, including gunpowder to the Barbary state. With these cross-cultural policies, Elizabeth became the first English monarch to openly exchange with Muslims, both in dialogue and resources. The Queen granted her subjects the freedom to trade and interact with Muslim merchants, without being liable to prosecution for dealing with the "infidels."<sup>2</sup> In order for this venture to be possible, Elizabeth was forced to reject a direct decree issued by the Pope which forced a complete ban on trading in war materials to Muslim states. By ignoring the Papal ruling, the Queen was consequently liable to accept and incur the wrath of King Philip II of Spain.

With relations between England and the Catholic King Philip developing with increased hostility, it was of course advantageous to seek amicable relations, not only with Morocco, but with the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire also. It is a testament to Elizabeth's political perspicacity that her discourse with the Ottoman Sultan was so positive that it was remarked upon that "no Christian Prince ever had in the Turk such great estimation."<sup>3</sup> From a mercantile stand point only, Elizabeth's astute political strategy led to the patenting of the Levant Company on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1581. The patent granted the company a complete monopoly of trade in the Levant,

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<sup>1</sup> Nabil Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, Edited by Charles Beem. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 148.

<sup>2</sup> Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 19.

<sup>3</sup> Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, 152.

which culminated in an annual tax income of £500. In addition to the economic benefits that this partnership enabled, William Harboure, the primary representative of the company also operated politically, serving as English ambassadors to the Ottoman world. Harboure was the “true and undoubted orator, messenger, depute and agent to the Sultan’s court.”<sup>4</sup> In the early years of the 1580’s, under the diplomacy of Elizabeth and Harboure, the Anglo- Ottoman relationship flourished, it was a relationship seemingly based on the solid foundation of a possible joint military enterprise against Spain. “The Sultan saw in Elizabeth a potential ally against Spain and said that he would never “expel from his court the foe of his foe.”<sup>5</sup>The brokering of this Anglo-Ottoman alliance became of incalculable importance during 1588. Jerry Brotton states how a letter was written by Sir Francis Walsingham to William Harboure in Istanbul, ordering the English ambassador to rally the Turks. Brotton states how “Walsingham’s plan was ultimately successful. Ottoman fleet movements in the eastern Mediterranean fatally split Phillip II’s Armada,”<sup>6</sup> a pivotal development in the battle which resulted in English victory.

The news of the Armada was celebrated throughout the Muslim world. Al Fishtali, the Moroccan court scribe of Al Mansur, writes how the war against Spain was driven by the English. Fishtali states how “the most daring in attacking his kingdoms and tightening the noose around him, was Isabella the Sutana of the Kingdoms of the lands of England.”<sup>7</sup> What is curious about Al Fishtali’s account is that he frequently writes how the Muslim God is on the side of England, he states how during the Armada, “God sent a furious wind [reehan sarsaran] against the fleets”<sup>8</sup> to hinder the advance of the Spanish. It appears that for the Moroccans, religious difference with England “was less important than political, ideological, and military cooperation. Indeed, God himself seemed to support such cooperation.”<sup>9</sup>

The Anglo- Islamic alliances, having been carefully brokered by Elizabeth progressed with increased prosperity and success. The relationship between England and Morocco was one based on similarity of circumstance, both Elizabeth and Al Mansur lived in highly charged political contexts; Protestant Elizabeth feared the Catholic Spanish, and the Moroccans feared the Hanafi Ottoman Sultans. Both the English and Moroccans, were thus “consolidating the national identity in the face of outside danger.”<sup>10</sup> Nabil Matar suggests that an additional diplomatic point to unite Elizabeth with the Muslim world was that Protestantism was perhaps far more relatable than

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred C Wood. *A History of the Levant Company*.(London: Cass Publishers, 1964): 12

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>6</sup> Jerry Brotton, “Why we must thank the Turks, not Drake, for defeating the Armada,” *The Guardian*, 2004, Accessed Mar 28, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/jun/01/artsandhumanities.arts>.

<sup>7</sup> Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, 156.

<sup>8</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes 1578-1727*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009): 159.

<sup>9</sup> Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 160.

Catholicism and the “idolatry of Rome.”<sup>11</sup> Matar goes on to state how it is also noteworthy that “in an age of religious persecution and bigotry, it is striking that neither monarch tried to subvert the other theologically or viewed cooperation as an avenue for conversion.”<sup>12</sup> Despite the patriarchal connotations associated with Islam, it is clear that Al Mansur did not view Elizabeth through gendered eyes. The fact that Elizabeth was a woman and Queen never bothered Al Mansur, they were in many ways equal.

Throughout their written correspondence, Al Mansur honoured her with the highest titles possible to a ruler- any ruler, Christian or Muslim. Al Mansur claimed how Elizabeth was greatest among those who follow the “religion of Christ,”<sup>13</sup> and Elizabeth often reciprocated his sentiments, from 1598 onwards, she had taken to signing her letters with “your sister and relative according to the law of crown and sceptre.”<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth consolidated relations from both of the Muslim states when no ties were present between themselves. The Moroccans and the Ottomans were bitter enemies, The Kingdom of Morocco became the solitary Arab state which did not fall under the rule of the Ottoman Sultan. Al Mansur frequently disparaged the status of the Turkish Sultan, he refused to refer to the Ottoman as anything other than “King.” In Al Mansur’s eyes, the Sultan’s lineage carried far less prestige than his own, as the Sultan “did not have the Caliphal status which he alone was designated.”<sup>15</sup> Al Mansur’s Saadi dynasty staunchly believed that they were direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammed and this ultimately elevated them beyond the realms of Ottoman Suzerainty. The marked respect offered to Elizabeth are shown equally by both Al Mansur of Morocco and Sultan Murad III of the Ottoman Turks, yet it appears that the respect shown, was towards her as an individual, and not due to the throne on which she sat.

Although “a strong willed sovereign, and much heralded in her own time,”<sup>16</sup> the rule of Queen Elizabeth was not without serious problems. The prolonged Anglo-Spanish conflict had plunged the government deeply into debt and had produced a climate of war-weariness across all ranks of society.<sup>17</sup> The death of Elizabeth saw the pacifistic James Stuart ascend to the English throne, and he sought to rectify this by consolidating relations with Spain. James decisively severed all ties and allegiances with the Islamic world, his intentions and aspirations were situated firmly within a Christian world view which did not include Islam. Elizabeth’s relations with the Ottoman Sultan were such, that she would comfortably threaten and intimidate other rulers with the might of the Grand Signor in Istanbul. Upon being rendered unable to move the hand of the Moroccan ruler

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Pomeroy, *Reading the Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*. (Hamden: Archon, 1989): 221.

<sup>15</sup> Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, 163.

<sup>16</sup> W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 32

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

through diplomatic pleasantries, Elizabeth instead turned to threat. She stated that, “If you would not grants us what we so reasonably ask from you, we will have to pay less attention to your friendship. We know for sure also that the Great Turk, who treats our subjects with great favour and humanity, will not appreciate your maltreatment of them in order to please the Spaniards.”<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the greatest testament to Elizabeth’s amicable ties with the Islamic world, lies in the fact that Al Mansur “allowed her name to be mentioned in his presence and read in the correspondence.”<sup>19</sup> This is certainly not a luxury that James I enjoyed as king. Upon visiting the Mughal court some years after the death of Elizabeth, Nabil Matar notes how, “Sir Thomas Roe discovered that any mention of his King’s name constituted as an insult to the Indian potentate who thought very little of James I.”<sup>20</sup> It is apparent that the root of James’ consciousness lay firmly embedded in European, Christian soil.

James’ mission to unite Christendom began in the early years of his reign. Within the first year of his monarchy on March 4th 1604, in a letter to the French court, James pledged “to be an active participant in a movement aimed at bringing about a new era of peace beyond their own national borders.”<sup>21</sup> His pacifism, and vision of peace and unity progressed throughout the course of his reign, and are embodied in a panegyric to peace which was published in 1618. “The Peace-Maker, dedicated by James to all our true loving and peace embracing subjects”<sup>22</sup> recounts how Spain, “that great and long lasting opposite, betwixt whom and England, the Ocean ran with blood for many years before, had shaken hands in friendly amity.”<sup>23</sup> For it was within the first two years of his English reign that James “established peace with the traditional enemy Spain.”<sup>24</sup> This treaty marked a decisive point in English diplomatic relations. Throughout his reign, James “aspired not only to keep England at peace, but to serve as a peace broker among all nations of Christendom.”<sup>25</sup> These ideals of peace did not however stretch beyond European boundaries and peoples. With the death of Elizabeth, England’s favourable diplomatic position with the Muslim world died with her.

The death of James I has a similarly negative impact on Anglo- Islamic relations as the death of Elizabeth did. In the absence of any substantial diplomacy with the Muslim world, hostile sentiments began to develop. James’ son, Charles succeeded to the English throne upon his death in 1625, and his royalist supporters were fundamentally opposed to the quelling of his royal prerogative by members of the elected parliament. As such, England’s attention turned inwards.

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<sup>18</sup> Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, 152.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>21</sup> Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>24</sup> James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000): 87

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



There was no positive diplomatic relations with the Islamic world to be praised in the same capacity as there was under the rule of Queen Elizabeth. The internal instability felt in the Caroline era forced the hand of prejudice. The conflict within England as well as the public's despair at the inadequacies of their own failing monarchy were cast onto the Muslim world.

Over the course of the Early Modern era, England's diplomatic relations with the Islamic world changed substantially. Queen Elizabeth heralded a golden age of commerce and military success, and established positive dialogue and mutually beneficial discourse with multiple Islamic leaders. James on the other hand held a far greater preoccupation with pacifism and peace amongst Christendom. His attention was crucially short sighted and unable to transcend European borders. His unwillingness to interact with the Muslim world was limiting both politically and commercially. It sewed the seed for an attitude of Islamophobia which rapidly evolved into hatred, during the highly volatile domestic climate which the Caroline era was witness to. Charles' rule was domestically unpopular and cross culturally unsuccessful. Relationships withered, and respect turned to fear, and fear rapidly evolved to hatred. Vilifying the Islamic world, and defining them as enemy.

## Chapter. 2: The Public Sphere and the Printing Press.

The term 'Public Sphere' was originally developed by Jurgen Habermas in his influential study, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.<sup>26</sup> In the wake of the translation of Habermas' work from German into English, the concept of a public sphere is now one which has become "ubiquitous in the historiography and in the historically oriented literary criticism of Early Modern England."<sup>27</sup> Peter Lake and Steven Pincus believe how the term public sphere can be deployed with "real efficacy in discussions of the [Early Modern] period."<sup>28</sup> David Zaret reinforces this, by stating how "evidence suggests that the idea of a public sphere [just prior to the Revolutionary era] was not entirely novel."<sup>29</sup> This can primarily be attributed to the rapid emergence of print which the sixteenth century was witness to, as well as the subsequent social advancements which this enabled.

The power and consequent effect of print cannot be overstated, Jason Peacey states how "The King's [and Queen's] very power lay in the authority of [the] word."<sup>30</sup> Queen Elizabeth utilised this power for a wide variety of her own political desires, as printing enabled "the royal word, through letters, proclamations and speeches"<sup>31</sup> to be issued to all subjects in the farthest reaches of the country. Peacey draws upon how Elizabeth "tried to limit speech in parliament by prohibiting discussion of "matters of state" such as her marriage and succession."<sup>32</sup> There are also examples of how James I exploited the power of the written word upon his ascension to the English throne. Kevin Sharpe believes how "James I's patronage of a new authorised version of the Bible [...] was as much an act of power as of piety."<sup>33</sup> The royal word, both written and spoken, had become an instrument of suppression and power under the rule of Elizabeth and James I, and yet the very "developments that led to the predominance of the word in the exercise of political authority also sowed the seeds of challenge to a monopoly or control of discourse, hence to power."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, *The politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007): 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and The Public Sphere*. (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992): 219.

<sup>30</sup> Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004): 128.

<sup>31</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England- The culture of seventeenth century politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 127.

<sup>32</sup> David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture- Printing, Petitions, and The Public Sphere in Early Modern England*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 56.

<sup>33</sup> Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England- The culture of seventeenth century politics*, 129.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 128.

The prominence of the print culture in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England can in many ways be seen to provide a bridging partition between the previously inaccessible barriers of political society. John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie write how “printing dramatically accelerated the flow of information in the vernacular, [...] and increasingly did so across class.”<sup>35</sup> The culture of print in the Early Modern era enabled vast swathes of information to be reached and accessed by a “newly literate”<sup>36</sup> class of the public. Whilst vocal “discussion of political affairs”, was heavily restricted, it is thought that “the expression of political and religious belief in drama, literature, sermons and other forms was relatively free.”<sup>37</sup> The effect of this was, to an extent the “invention of public opinion as a nominal entity. An authorial creation that exists in virtue of its instantiation in printed discourse.”<sup>38</sup> Printing provided a platform for public consciousness which was hitherto absent in a pre-revolutionary England, prior to this, “the great majority of people lay not only below the level of participation, but below the level of political consciousness as well.”<sup>39</sup> The advancements that printing enabled, such as the book trade and the pamphleteering culture, alongside the popularity of the public theatres, acted as the catalysts which led to social change on an unprecedented scale.

When studying the formation of a public political sphere in Early Modern England, it becomes apparent that the establishment of the playhouses and theatres are intertwined. This is due in part, to the very nature of Early Modern play-going, which differs greatly from that of modern society. The most substantial difference, as stated by Andrew Gurr, is that “modern play-goers are [...] solitary spectators [whereas] Early Modern play-goers were audiences, people gathered as crowds”. These audiences were able to form collective opinion and a public consciousness. John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie suggest how religious and political propagandists of the era were faced with the practical problem “of how to impart knowledge to [...] people who cannot read themselves; or, we might add, afford books.”<sup>40</sup> The plays houses thus provided the practical solution to this, they were the most inclusive and accessible sources of information and learning for the entire spectrum of society and for all levels of literacy.

As with all agents of change, the public theatres were not met without vast swathes of opposition. “Not surprisingly, there were attempts from within [parts of high society and] book culture, to keep the public theatres at a distance, by demonising them and accusing them of arousing and feeding the worst appetites of the vulgar.”<sup>41</sup> The opposition towards the public theatres was in part due to

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<sup>35</sup> John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie, *The Cambridge History of the book in Britain, Volume IV 1557-1695*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 1

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 133.

<sup>39</sup> John Walter, *Crowds and Popular politics in Early Modern England*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006): 1.

<sup>40</sup> Barnard and McKenzie, *The Cambridge History of the book in Britain*, 31.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

issues directly relating to social rank, much anguish was caused by “showing actors as princes, but even more insidiously rendering princes as mere actors.”<sup>42</sup> A further cause for distress was due to the vast social diversity that the audiences comprised of, “the indiscriminate mingling of Godly citizens, the professional classes and the middling sort with their apprentices and servants, and with thieves and prostitutes, hardly encouraged the establishment’s social ideal that people should know their place and stay in it.”<sup>43</sup> In addition to this, an important feature of the public theatres was that they were situated “way outside the jurisdiction of the city”<sup>44</sup> which rendered the play house as a breeding ground for opportunistic “prostitutes and cutpurses.”<sup>45</sup>

Despite the thievery and prostitution which the playhouses were accustomed to, as well as with the mingling of society’s entire spectrum amongst the audiences, the greatest source of opposition was heralded due to the political dialogue and activism which took to the stage in the early years of James’ reign. Alexander Leggat claims how what emerged on stage as “an important sub-category of popular drama, was what has recently been labelled the Elect nation play.”<sup>46</sup> The drama was designed as a patriotic enterprise celebrating the piety and power of England’s position as the dominate protestant nation in Europe. Leggat goes on to state how “surely, we might think, no authority could object to such a patriotic vision. And in a sense, no authority could. Yet it was also a subversive vision,”<sup>47</sup> full of contradictions and criticisms of James I’s foreign policy. The elect nation drama took a satirical stance to condemn the King’s move to make peace with Spain, and later to the proposed marriage for Prince Charles. Furthermore, Andrew Gurr claims how at the turn of the century, there was a whole “series of plays about Protestant heroes.”<sup>48</sup> The “drama idealised Edward VI and turned Elizabeth into the protestant champion which she never quite was in history.”<sup>49</sup> By portraying former monarchs as paragons of virtue, the inadequacies of those currently ruling are subtly highlighted. There were also recorded instances of political statements being made which lacked the necessary subtlety, “in the early years of the Jacobean period, the boys companies got into regular trouble with particular, topical jokes about Scotsmen.”<sup>50</sup> Despite this however, Alexander Leggat believe how these political statements were “all done under the guise of patriotism [, the anti-government stance which the play houses adopted was fundamental, principled, and sustained.] “It was, one might say, a subversive Patriotism.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Leggat, *Jacobean Public Theatre*. (London: Routledge, 1992): 39.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, 3rdEd. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 179.

<sup>49</sup> Leggat, *Jacobean Public Theatre*, 40.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

In addition to the incessant political dialogue which the public play houses adopted, the theatres were also avenues for public learning which transcended not only political boundaries, but geographical ones also. Thomas Platter describes Londoners as “learning at the play what is happening abroad; indeed men and womenfolk visit such places without scruple, since the English for the most part do not travel much, but prefer to learn foreign matters and take their pleasures at home.”<sup>52</sup> Andrew Gurr notes how the Elizabethan and Jacobean public attended the theatres to “learn foreign matters [thus becoming] the first great market for daily journalism.”<sup>53</sup> Gurr also draws upon the “pamphlets of news [which] became commonplace in the 1590’s.”<sup>54</sup> Both the pamphlet culture and the play houses, rapidly accelerated the public’s ability to gain an understanding of foreign affairs and international relations in a way which staggeringly surpasses all previous generations.

Jason Peacey also draws attention to the “vast numbers and bewildering variety of tracts and pamphlets, of all sizes and shapes, which emerged from the presses.”<sup>55</sup> Pamphlets presented an often cheap and practical approach to imparting religious and political propaganda to a far greater demographic. The success and prominence of the pamphlet culture of seventeenth century England was defined by its availability. “What had previously been restricted by cost and by cultural assumption to an elite group was now instantly available to anybody with a few pennies to spare.”<sup>56</sup> Michael Mendly writes in his essay *News and the pamphlet culture of mid seventeenth century England*, how “for those in the metropolis, the pamphlet culture was impossible to ignore.”<sup>57</sup> The *Short Titles Catalogue* list that between 1600 and 1604, there were 2,097<sup>58</sup> new titles printed in these years alone. The primacy of Pamphleteering as a mode of political expression was accompanied by the pamphlets of news which were able to bypass the tradition methods of “oral reports, rumours, and ballads”<sup>59</sup> as the primary method of journalism. The Jacobean fascination with current and foreign affairs is epitomised by “the common greeting “What news.”<sup>60</sup> According to David Zaret, “the nave of St. Paul’s and book stalls adjacent to the cathedral were principal meeting places outside the court where courtiers and citizens gathered to exchange news, both foreign and domestic.”<sup>61</sup> Zaret also notes how a line in a play by Thomas Dekker references this, the 1602 play “tells of a horse atop St. Paul’s Cathedral in London who asks, “What news, what

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<sup>52</sup> Clare Williams, *Thomas Platter’s Travels in England 1599*. (London: The Alden Press, 1937): 170.

<sup>53</sup> Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, 170.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron, *The Politics of information in Early Modern Europe*. (London: Routledge, 2001): 57.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Anna Bayman, *Thomas Dekker and the culture of pamphleteering in Early Modern London*. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014): 7.

<sup>59</sup> Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 101.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 103-4.

news abroad?”<sup>62</sup> In addition to being a “second rate playwright”<sup>63</sup> Thomas Dekker’s name can be attributed to a wide variety of pamphlets which span the entirety of his writing career. His pamphlet writing came as a result of various factors; the first of these being economic, we know that Dekker spent “time in prison for debt”<sup>64</sup> and thus wrote prose work to supplement his income, the second reason is a result of plague which caused the theatres to close in 1603 rendering there to be little market for playwrights.

Dekker’s pamphleteering consequently became the most substantial aspect of his writing career, but despite the numerousness of his pamphlets, very few of these expressed individual political opinions. The reason for this again appears to have its roots in Dekker’s finances, Anna Bayman states how “like many other topical pamphleteers, Dekker was too dependent on continual employment by the press and theatres to dabble too overtly and provocatively in controversial subjects.”<sup>65</sup> We see how Dekker himself references this subordination to higher political powers in one of his pamphlets, he states how “there are degrees of superiority and inferiority in our societie, as there are in the proudest company.”<sup>66</sup> There are however exceptions to this view, in a pamphlet entitled “*Warres, Warre, Warres*” written in 1628, in the closing stages of his life and career. The pamphlet is critical of “the faltering campaigns led by Buckingham”<sup>67</sup> and is ultimately full of advice and despair about the current state of warring Europe. Much of Dekker’s work is decidedly anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic, a feature which is also touched upon in many of his dramatic pieces. In much of Dekker’s work, he follows a preoccupation with the Islamic Middle East, a reoccurring and integral aspect of concern with regards to many elements of Jacobean public consciousness.

Matthew Dimmock notes how “the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century marks a high point in the production of texts of all kinds relating to the Ottoman Empire and a point at which the portrayal of the ‘turke’ on the stage had achieved an articulacy and variety,”<sup>68</sup> which surpassed any other period. Dimmock goes on to state how the role of the printing presses were integral in “developing and refining notions of the ‘turke’”<sup>69</sup> due to the sheer scale of printed manuscripts which emerged from the presses. “Some three thousand five hundred titles were

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>63</sup> Bayman, *Thomas Dekker and the culture of Pamphleteering in Early Modern London*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>66</sup> Frederick Waage, *Thomas Dekker’s Pamphlets, 1603- 1609, And Jacobean Popular Literature*. (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1977): 402.

<sup>67</sup> Bayman, *Thomas Dekker and the culture of Pamphleteering in Early Modern London*, 141.

<sup>68</sup> Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes*. (Hampshire: Ashgate publishing, 2005): 6.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

printed in the sixteenth century alone,”<sup>70</sup> many of which explored not only English engagement with the Islamic world, but the growing threat of the Ottoman Empire also.

Samuel Chew writes in his influential study, *The Crescent and The Rose*, how public propaganda against the power of Islam has existed in Europe from as early as 1193. The Latin version of the Koran which was “known in Christendom [...] during the period of the Renaissance,”<sup>71</sup> this came to be due to Peter the Venerable whom, during a “journey through Spain observed the growing power of Mohammedanism and became convinced of the need for better instructed propaganda against Islam.”<sup>72</sup> Chew goes on to state how much of this material was edited by the sixteenth century Swiss publisher, Theodorus Bibliander who’s “writing was widely read not only on the continent but in England” also. Chew believes how much of Bibliander’s writing resonates through the work of William Bedwell, a man who “is reputed to have been the father of Arabic studies in England.”<sup>73</sup> Bedwell opens his 1615 pamphlet with “*Mohammed Imposturae* a discovery of the manifold forgeries, falsehoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed.”<sup>74</sup> Despite the overt hostility that the title denotes, the pamphlet is “genuinely learned in substance, and though polemic, is by no means so fantastically hostile to Islam,”<sup>75</sup> as one may initially be led to believe. From much of the literature available to the Jacobean public, Bedwell’s account appears to be amongst the most favourable and sympathetic. There were myriad tracts of literature in circulation which adhere to the more reoccurring anti-Islamic prejudices. In 1597 appeared the most elaborate Elizabethan accounts of “Mohammedanism entitled *The policy of the Turkish Empire* [which refers to the Prophet Muhammed as the] “monster of mankind.”<sup>76</sup> In addition to the canon of pamphlets which added to the demonization of the Muslim world, the Jacobean Pulpit also echoed with the sound of anti-Muslim preaching.

The power of the pulpits were vastly important in “Jacobean religious and political culture.”<sup>77</sup> Jeanne Shami notes how the sermons were topics for “political contention for important matters of religious and national identity.”<sup>78</sup> What was spoken about in church was unequivocally important in an era of intense protestant piety. “The sermons, not Shakespearean drama [...] was the preeminent literary genre. No other literary enterprise could captivate, inspire, or even anger [...] like a sermon. There is something compelling, emblematic- and not to be ignored<sup>79</sup>” about the

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<sup>70</sup> Avignon Levy, *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire*. (Princeton: The Darwin press, 1992): 13.

<sup>71</sup> Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*. (New York: Octagon books, 1974): 434.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Alistair Hamilton, *William Bedwell The Arabist 1563- 1632*. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1985): 1.

<sup>74</sup> William Bedwell, *Mohammedis Imposturare* (London: Imprinted by Richard Field dwelling in Great wood street, 1615): 1.

<sup>75</sup> Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*, 437.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>77</sup> Jeanne Shami, *John Donne and conformity in crisis in the late Jacobean Pulpit*. (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2003):1.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 125.

dialogue held in church. Its influence over public thought is only paralleled by the numerous pamphleteers, and by the public theatres also. These combined social developments enabled public consciousness to develop and formulate opinion, not only on matters of state, but of foreign affairs also. Consciousness of the Islamic world is one which heavily influenced by multiple avenues of propaganda which formulate a collective thought of uncertainty, fear, and hatred.



## **Chapter. 3: Representations of Muslims in Elizabethan and Jacobean Pamphlet Literature.**

The late Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods were witness to a steep rise in the amount of pamphlets which appeared on the marketplace. The pamphlets which emerged from the presses were religiously and politically motivated, and marked a pivotal point in the formation of public political consciousness and activism. The pamphlet culture enabled a far greater amount of information to be available to a demographic of the public which was previously below the level of both political awareness, and political participation as well. In an introduction to *British Pamphleteers*, George Orwell attempts to define exactly what the Pamphlet is, he asserts that “to ask ‘what is a pamphlet’ is rather like asking “what is a dog.”<sup>80</sup> It is unclear whether an individual pamphlet has been domesticated, “capable of performing directed tasks, or is it, like the wolf, fierce, wild, and not susceptible to control?”<sup>81</sup> Throughout the course of this chapter I will establish, to what extent the pamphlet is either domesticated or wolf like by nature. Whether pamphlets are free of higher political influence, or alternatively, if their content derives from self-generated public opinion. In other words, I will ascertain to what extent the high politics and foreign relations of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I are able to influence the pamphlets which operated inclusively on a public level, throughout all echelons of society.

It is unclear and contradictory how independently motivated the pamphleteers of the Early Modern period truly were. Alexandra Halasz argues how the period in general “permanently altered the discursive field, not by bringing books to the marketplace but by enabling the marketplace place to develop as a means of producing, disseminating, and mediating discourse independent of the sites and practises associated with and sanctioned by University, Crown, and Church.”<sup>82</sup> Jason Peacey reasserts this by claiming how “authors could clearly operate independently of politicians and patrons, and could engage in writing and publishing for their own reasons, and in order to express their own opinions.”<sup>83</sup> Peacey goes on to suggest that “writers were prepared to use their literary skills in order to advance controversial political and religious causes, and to take such controversies and arguments in to the public domain.”<sup>84</sup> To contradict this, it is arguable that despite a certain level of freedom which was available to the pamphleteers of the era, there was also an element of

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<sup>80</sup> George Orwell and Reginal Reynolds, *British Pamphleteers- volume one- From the sixteenth Century to the French Revolution*. (London: Alan Wingate Publisher, 1948): 7.

<sup>81</sup> Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print- Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 15.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>83</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 65.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

unavoidable censorship. The censorship which the authors were subject to, was at times self-imposed, the reason for this is that “ultimately the pamphleteer could not afford to alienate any potential reader [...] this is because pamphleteering was not a paying profession, and at this time, the economic position of the author was uniquely precarious.”<sup>85</sup> The work of the playwright and pamphleteer, Thomas Dekker was essentially void of any individual political opinions. Anna Bayman states how “like many other topical pamphleteers, Dekker was too dependent on continual employment by the press and theatres to dabble too overtly and provocatively in controversial subjects.”<sup>86</sup> I would go as far as to say that the patrons and those who funded such projects were also responsible for the contents of the pamphlet.

With regards to much of the pamphleteer’s material concerning the Islamic world and Muslim characters, I expect to find that pamphleteering is not a literary field void of the influence of the higher echelons of political office. I believe like Orwell that the greatest function of the “pamphlet is to act as a sort of foot note or marginal comment on official history.”<sup>87</sup> I would suggest that that the pamphleteer’s engagement with, and opinion of the Islamic world will be somewhat reflective of the monarchy’s political standpoint at the time of the pamphleteers writing. That is to say, the work printed during the reign of Elizabeth, when English relations with the Islamic world were positive, will portray Muslim characters as equally positive and respectful. Alternatively, the work printed during the reign of James I and Charles I, will be fearful and intolerable to mimic the country’s frayed relations during that era.

The summer of 1578 marked a significant event in the Muslim world which would have diplomatic effects stretching northwards into England. The Battle of Alcazar fought for the rule of the territory surrounding Marrakech, Fez, and Sus in what is in present day Morocco. The battle was fought between the current rulers Abd el Malek and Al Mansur, and the usurper, Mulai Mohammed el-Meslokh. The usurper recruited a small band of Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, and most significantly a wayward Englishman named Thomas Stukeley. The resulting victory by Abd el Malek and Al Mansur successfully cemented the rightful line of succession. The Saadi dynasty was re-established and consequently saw Al Mansur (the victorious), with whom Elizabeth had such strong political ties, ascend to the Moroccan throne. By the time of the battle, Morocco had already become of great commercial significance to Elizabeth and much of the country’s merchants. James Alday, travelling with Thomas Wyndham, professed ‘himsefe to have bene the first inventer’ of the ‘traffique into the kingdom of Morocco in Barbarie, begun in the yeere 1551’<sup>88</sup> Emily Bartels

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<sup>85</sup> Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers, Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640*. (London: The Athlone Press, 1983): 30.

<sup>86</sup> Bayman, *Thomas Dekker and the culture of Pamphleteering in Early Modern London*, 117.

<sup>87</sup> Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 15

<sup>88</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. (London: Penguin Books, 1972): 145.

claims that because of this significance, “In England, Alcazar was news from almost the moment it happened.”<sup>89</sup> Not only did the events at Alcazar provide grounds “for the very first representation of Moors on the Early Modern English stage,”<sup>90</sup> but there was a wide variety and tracts of pamphlets which were available to the English Public also.

The events were entirely sensationalised due to their exotic and exciting nature, the market place of print cast the events of the battle into the forefront of the English public’s consciousness. English pamphleteers drew on eye witness accounts from multiple sources including from various Europeans who had fought there. The battle is documented in the anonymous work of 1579, “*A Dolorous Discourse of a most terrible and bloody Battel fought in Barbarie*,”<sup>91</sup> the author attempts to first familiarise his reader with the state of Barbary assuming unfamiliarity with the Muslim world before noting both the intricacies of the battle, and the list of captives. The pamphleteer objectively states how “Barbary is a country situate in Affricke with a people observing the lawes of Mohamet.”<sup>92</sup> The pamphleteer also makes note of Al Mansur’s current rule of Morocco, how he is “belloved by his people”, but most significantly, the pamphleteer does not simply allude to a positive diplomatic relation between Al Mansur and Elizabeth, he categorically states how he is “much favouring to Christians and those especially from our nation”<sup>93</sup> of England. The public perception of the Moroccan ruler must unquestionably be one of respect. The prestige of Al Mansur is widely documented throughout many other pamphlets and literary tracts.

The Battle of Alcazar in North Africa also prompted the writing of “*Strange newes out of Affricke*” which is referenced by the anti-theatrical polemicist Stephen Gosson in 1586, but no copies remain.<sup>94</sup> The battle is also documented and historicised in both George Whetstone’s prose tract, “*English Myrror*”<sup>95</sup> and also in historian, John Polemon’s *Second Part of the Booke of Battailes* (1587)<sup>96</sup> Polemon’s work provided the inspiration and historical factuality for George Peele’s stage adaption *The Battle of Alcazar*, which I explore in a later chapter. Throughout John Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s essay “*Against Idlenesse, or Doing Nothing*” (1600),<sup>97</sup> there are numerous references which crucially describe Abd el Malek and Al Mansur as moral champions who “stoutly and vigorously made use of his undanted courage, and who caused himselfe to be carried and haled, wherever need called for him while he was dying, lest the soldiers hearing of his

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<sup>89</sup> Emily C. Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008): 21.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>91</sup> Anon, *A Dolorous Discourse of a most terrible and bloody Battel fought in Barbarie*. (London: John Charlewood and Thomas Man, 1645).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Stephen Gosson, *The ephermerides of Phialo*. (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579).

<sup>95</sup> George Whetstone, *English Myrror*. (London: Richard Jones, 1584).

<sup>96</sup> John Polemon, *Second Part of the Booke of Battailes*. (London: Gabriell Cawood, 1587).

<sup>97</sup> John Florio, *Montaigne’s Essays: John Florio’s translation*. (London: Nonesuch Press, 1931): 50.

death, might fall into despair.”<sup>98</sup> Additionally, John Polemon, upon explaining the current royal line in Morocco, refers to Al Mansur’s lineage as the “family of mighty Kings that reign now at Morocco.”<sup>99</sup> In a similar fashion, it is possible to view the work of Niccolo Machiavelli as a form of admiration for the Muslim faith. Machiavelli argues in his *Discourses*, that Christianity has weakened the conditions required to promote military and political virtue. He states how Christianity “venerates humbleness, contemplation, softness, indolence, suffering as the road to redemption, and disdain of worldly honour.”<sup>100</sup> All of these character traits and fundamental beliefs, ultimately being counterproductive for military excellence. Contrary to this, Machiavelli idolises the Roman state where there was a civic attitude of “greatness of spirit, bravery, boldness, physical action, vigour, passion, and the quest for worldly glory.”<sup>101</sup> It is plausible to establish similarities between ancient Roman, and Muslim worlds, as Machiavelli claims how it was “fortune and the military”<sup>102</sup> that were the driving forces behind the success of the Roman Empire, and it is this sense of exoticism and martial excellence that are the defining characteristics of the Muslim world in Early Modern English minds. The Muslim faith can in many ways be seen to embody certain elements of what the Christian faith lacks. Islam represented a meritocracy, where military might and physical strength were rewarded rather than disciplined. By this understanding, Muslim militarism was held above the pacifistic nature that the Christian faith doctrinally advocates.

In the immediate wake of the events which occurred at Alcazar, English Pamphleteers cascaded praise onto the victorious Moroccan rulers. The exact reason for this is complex, yet it certainly transcends the mere commercial interests of English merchants. I would suggest that ultimately there was no immediately transparent interest in which party ascended to the Moroccan throne. Indeed, Elizabeth’s political perspicacity was such that she was in diplomatic dialogue with no individual party, holding “negotiations with each of the Alcazar Moors- Maulai Mohammed, Abd el Malek, and Ahmad al Mansur.”<sup>103</sup> In addition to this, English involvement was practically negligible and they fought on what can be deemed the losing side in the forces of the slain Mulai Mohammed el-Meslokh. Due to this, I would suggest that in order to ascertain the reasons as to why the English pamphleteers treated the Moroccan Muslims with such amicability, it is therefore necessary to look further afield into the wider global political sphere.

1578, the year in which The Battle of Alcazar occurred marks an enormously pivotal year on the European- Islamic stage. In the same year, the political paper ‘*A consideration for Turkie*’, was

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>99</sup> Polemon, *Second Part of the Booke of Battailles*, 67.

<sup>100</sup> Belliotti, Raymond Angelo, *Niccolo Machiavelli: The laughing lion and the strutting fox*. (Plymouth: Lexington books): 121-2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>102</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The works of the famous Nicolas Machiavel, citizen and secretary of Florence*. (London: R. Clavel, 1695): 273.

<sup>103</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 24.

issued to the Queen by the Secretary of State, Francis Walsingham. The year also marks William Harbourne's issuing of the patents to the Turkey Company, and also his arrival in Constantinople to represent the Queen as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. In addition to this, 1578 was significantly witness to the opening of peace negotiations with the Spanish and Ottoman empires that would allow each to withdraw from the Mediterranean and focus their forces elsewhere."<sup>104</sup> The possibility of peace between these Empires held the potentiality for disastrous consequences for both Elizabeth, and Al Mansur. It was the general assumption of Elizabeth, that Philip of Spain would concentrate his attentions in England's direction. In the same year, 1578, a "protracted list of advices were offered [...] which in the main presented ominous assertions that Spain and France have joined together and that Ireland will first be invaded."<sup>105</sup> To counteract this Elizabeth was advised that "The Queen should find the King of Spain diversion for his forces nearer home, by a treaty with the king of barbary."<sup>106</sup>

The global political climate in the year of the Battle of Alcazar was steeped in instability. The outcome of the battle, in addition to the ongoing diplomacy between the Spanish and the Ottoman's, had the possibility to have a directly negative impact on the English public. The Queen and her political advisers held a vested interest in the consequence of these globally momentous events. With the undoubtedly positive portrayal of the Moroccan moors in the pamphlets which emerged as a result of this, there is an argument that the Elizabethan pamphleteers were astutely aware of the significant role in which the Moroccan Muslims could play. The pamphleteer's respect for Al Mansur and his allies highlights a possible understanding by the authors of how Morocco's allegiance against Spain is of vital importance to England. The portrayal of Al Mansur is unquestionably favourable, yet there is an argument that there is an element of self-interest and preservation running throughout the pamphleteer's writings. It is possible to believe that the respect shown is merely an underhand approach for anti-Spanish propaganda. Similar to the French Protestants and the Prince of Orange who have "thought it lawful to use pagans to beat down the Romish church and the inquisition", the pamphleteers of the era, and indeed Elizabeth herself can be seen to maintain strong ties with the Moroccans, not for tolerance of the Islamic faith, but for her own person gain. As Nabil Mater states, Elizabeth's "world view was not one which incorporated Islam."<sup>107</sup>

England's positive diplomatic and commercial relationship with the Islamic world stretched beyond the Barbary States and into the Ottoman Turkish Empire as well. Throughout the course of Elizabeth's reign, England and the Ottoman Empire held strong political ties which developed into

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<sup>104</sup>Dimmock, *New Turkes*, 113.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Matar, *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, 146.

genuine military action which contributed heavily on England's victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588. In addition to the martial benefits gained by the agreement, Queen Elizabeth also successfully brokered strong mercantile links with the Ottomans as well. Under the reign of Elizabeth, patents were granted for the establishment of the Levant Company which greatly benefited English trade. It is therefore deducible that in Elizabethan England, the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire were viewed beyond the realms of infidel and enemy. Samuel Chew notes how, whilst in Elizabethan England "there was a popular fear and detestation of the Turke, One must not exaggerate the influence of such popular sentiments."<sup>108</sup> Neither the Turkish Sultan, nor Queen Elizabeth would permit religious or racial prejudices to stand in the way when an opportunity arose to develop a new market in the land of the "infidel".<sup>109</sup> In addition to this, Elizabeth was always eager to express elements of similarity between herself and the Ottoman Sultan in their correspondence. Elizabeth described herself "to the image hating Moslem as one who shared his detestation of the worshippers of idols, that is, the Roman Catholics."<sup>110</sup> Elements of similarity and cooperation between England and the Ottoman Turks are mirrored in much of the pamphlets which were published throughout the reign of Elizabeth. Pamphleteers operated without prejudice, showing an astute awareness to global events and trans-religious diplomacy.

In a 1597 pamphlet entitled *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* written by the prolific poet and pamphleteer, Giles Fletcher, approaches the Ottoman world in a manner consistent with other literary tracts of the era, the pamphlet is similarly void of religious prejudice. His approach is one of objectivity and, in many ways, admiration. The pamphlet concerns both the history of the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic faith, and also the current affairs of the Turkish Empire. Fletcher's tone throughout is not one of hatred or anger, instead it is one of respect for the Ottoman's and their "goodly and glorious empire making themselves lord and masters over a great part of the world."<sup>111</sup> Fletcher's respect for the military powers of the Turks certainly surpasses any feelings of islamophobia. In addition to this, it is not just the powerful might of the Ottoman world which Fletcher commends, he also suggests how it was simply the "Turke's virtue and good government that have made their armies always fearful and fortunate, and consequently have caused their current greatness."<sup>112</sup> The pamphleteers focus shows how Ottoman's diplomacy and politics was valued just as highly as their martial strength.

Judging from other pamphlets from the Elizabethan era, this was the most frequently employed approach for describing the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, a principal feeling of respect which was able to overwhelm any misgivings of fear. Fletcher states how "the terror of their name does

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<sup>108</sup> Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*, 151.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>111</sup> Giles Fletcher, *The Policy of the Turkish Empire*. (London: John Windet Publishers, 1597): 3.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 4.

even now make the Kings and Princes of the West to tremble and quake through fear of their victorious forces.”<sup>113</sup> It is arguable that during the Elizabethan era, a pamphleteer’s mention of Ottoman military might was used primarily to excite readers rather than to incite religious hatred. I believe this to be evident because of the absence of derogatory terminology when recounting feats of martial strength. Fletcher draws upon the previously conceived ideas of exoticism associated with Islam to simply entertain the Elizabethan public.

The author, Martin Fume’s 1600 pamphlet, published just three years after Fletcher’s, entitled *The Historie of the troubles of Hungarie* offers a similar account of the Ottoman Empire. Fume focuses with a fixated preoccupation on Ottoman military capabilities, he describes the intricacies of their campaign, and the advancements of the Ottoman Turkish army into Hungarian territory. The pamphlet is alike Fletcher’s work in the sense that is free of the derogatory Islamophobia. When describing the acts of the Turkish army, it is with unbridled fascination. Fume states how the “Turke sent many horsemen to spoil and rob the country. They “put all to fire and sword who they met between the Danube and Lake Balator.”<sup>114</sup> Fume also draws upon how the Sultan Soliman “found a town forsaken of all garrison and caused it to be fired, not anything being exempted from the violence.”<sup>115</sup> The manner in which Fume recounts the violence however, is not exclusively negative towards the Turks, nor is it derogatory due to their Muslim faith. Instead, *The Historie of the troubles of Hungarie*, in addition to multiple other tracts of Elizabethan pamphlet literature, is almost voyeuristically fascinated with Turkish military might.

The death of Elizabeth and the ascension of James’ I to the English throne heralded a new age of domestic and foreign political discourse. The aspirations and world view of the pacifistic James were unlike those of Elizabeth. His political theory gave way to a diplomatic standpoint which the English were unaccustomed to. The positive foreign relations which Elizabeth had consolidated throughout the course of her reign, with both the Moroccan states and the Ottoman Empire, had prompted pamphleteers to portray Muslim characters in a manner of respect consistent with Christian military and commercial partners. Elizabethan England was, as is often accredited, the Golden Age of Early Modern England. During her reign, the country had enjoyed military success with the Armada, and was now secure with its growing religious and national identity. There was no real threat from the Muslim world, nor from within. Muslim characters were not represented as mere infidels, they were military allies and commercial trading partners. Their role as such an ally was fundamental in the furthering of the more beneficial aspects of Elizabethan England.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Martin Fume, *The Historie of the trouble of the people of Hungarie*. (London: Felix Kyngston publisher, 1600): 23.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

The early years of the seventeenth century, and indeed much of the reign of James I, were shaped by both fear and diplomatic uncertainty. It would be short sighted however to attribute England's shifting diplomatic relations solely to the negligence of James. The effects of the religious wars on the continent resonated within English borders also. Samuel Rawson Gardiner notes how "it is seldom that events which have taken place on the continent have affected the course of English history so deeply as the struggle between the two religious parties in Germany which lit up the flames of the thirty years' war."<sup>116</sup> To reinforce this, Olaf Asbach and Peter Schroder similarly state how England, "which had remained, at first glance, on the margins of the war"<sup>117</sup> were deeply affected also. James navigated the opening years of the Thirty Years' War with characteristic caution, as "diplomats hesitated, weighing the gravity of each new crises, politician predicted, and merchants complained of unsteady markets and wavering exchanges."<sup>118</sup> The year 1618 is widely attributed to be the start of war and in that year the Spanish ambassador to James I "demanded the life of Sir Walter Raleigh while the people, crowding about the palace shouted imprecations at a King too weak to save him."<sup>119</sup> The pressure placed on James increased with the passing of time. There was a call for James to take up arms and stand alongside protestant allies. A memorial presented to James I's Privy Council in 1621 exemplifies this. The Dutch ambassadors "beseech finally in all reverence that it pleases His Majesty in his grace to [...] take up arms and put themselves in a posture of good and effective resistance."<sup>120</sup> The climate within England, and indeed through Europe as a whole had become one of conflict throughout the reign of James I. Protestant houses within Europe seemingly moved to plead to Charles, the Prince of Wales. Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia wrote Charles in 1620 stating how "Spinola hath taken some towns in the Lowe Palatinate."<sup>121</sup> Charles was asked by Elisabeth to "move his majesty that now he would assist us" whilst criticising the Kings' "slackness."<sup>122</sup> James remained resolutely unmoved by the call to arms.

The conflict of the Thirty Years' War consequently created an inwardly focused society, the opportunities for trans-religious diplomacy and commerce which existed throughout Elizabeth's reign, were not available for James to pursue, even if his intention was such. Whilst Elizabeth openly received ambassadors from multiple Islamic nations, James was both unable and unwilling to continue in a similar manner. The throne which James inherited sat on a world stage entirely different to the one on which Elizabeth sat, and as such, James was ultimately "reluctant to receive

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<sup>116</sup> Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *Letters and Other Documents Illustrating the Relationship Between England and Germany at the Commencement of the Thirty Years War*. (Westminster: The Camden Society, 1865):1.

<sup>117</sup> Olaf Asbach and Peter Schroder, *the Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years' War*. (Vermont: Ashgate, 2014): 5.

<sup>118</sup> C. V. Wedgwood, *the Thirty Years' War*. (London: Jonathan Cape Publishers, 1938): 11.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Wilson, *the Thirty Years' War- A sourcebook*. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 80.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.



an emissary from the sultan on the grounds that to welcome an infidel would be unbecoming to a Christian prince.”<sup>123</sup> The nature of his islamophobia, rendered the treatment of Muslims by Jacobean Pamphleteers as the antithesis to what had emerged from the presses under Elizabeth’s rule. Instead of the reverence and admiration, feelings of distrust and anger began to surface. The Muslim was no longer a political or militaristic ally, nor a partner in commerce, instead the Muslim was an infidel who provoked both fear and uncertainty.

A 1615 pamphlet entitled *Mohammedis Imposturae* by William Bedwell explores and contributes to the ever expanding attitudes of Islamophobia present within Jacobean England. Unlike the Elizabethan pamphleteers who operated on the shared interests of Muslims and Christians, by documenting the allegiances and factual details, Bedwell instead aims to highlight the religious differences. The pamphlet takes the form of a dialogue between two Muslims upon return from a pilgrimage to Mecca. It is described by Bedwell as a pamphlet which tells of a “discovery of the manifold forgeries, falsehoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed.”<sup>124</sup> Bedwell’s opinion is unwavering, he states how those who follow the Muslim faith are above all “destined to go into the fire.”<sup>125</sup> He gives intricate detail of the Muslim faith, solely to scrutinise it, by highlighting the impieties of Islam. The nature of the dialogue is made all the more shocking to the sensibilities of a Jacobean reader, due to the fact the blasphemies stem “from the breath of the heathen”<sup>126</sup> which follow that “foolish religion.”<sup>127</sup> The Jacobean reader is ultimately made to feel threatened, whilst the pamphlet in some ways aims to educate and inform, the overarching feeling is one of conflict. There is an unassailable feeling that any form of dialogue between Christian and Muslim nations is an exclusively abhorrent affair. Bedwell prefaces the main body of the pamphlet by stating how “many of the objection, demands, answers, arguments, and speeches are too good to be thought to come from the breath of an Heathen, Turke or Saracen.”<sup>128</sup> The English public is therefore warned that any and all conversation with Muslims is detrimental, their words are “scarce good enough to be fathered upon a well-grounded Christian.”<sup>129</sup> Whereas Elizabeth pamphleteers commend the diplomacy held between Christian and Muslim world, William Bedwell alternately attempts to ingrain negative associations with the possibility of political or mercantile dialogue.

The stark contrast between Elizabeth and James’ political relations is most notably highlighted by comparatively examining the accounts of the battle of Alcazar printed in 1600 under Elizabeth’s reign, and those printed in 1609 under James’. John Florio’s 1600 translation of Montaigne’s essay “*Against Idleness or Doing Nothing*”, raises the Moroccan ruler to semi divine heights with his

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<sup>123</sup>Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*, 152.

<sup>124</sup>Bedwell, *Mohammedis Imposturae*, 1.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

praise. Montaigne states how he conducted himself “stoutly and vigorously made use of his undaunted courage.”<sup>130</sup> Montaigne asks “what man ever lived so long and so neere death; whoever died so upright and undaunted? The extremest degree, and most natural, courageously to manage death [...] not only without amazement, but without care, the course of life continuing free.”<sup>131</sup> In contrast to this, a pamphlet written in 1609 under the rule of King James by R.A. Cottingham is staggeringly different. What was once shown with mingled respect and nobility during the reign of Elizabeth, has turned into hatred and intolerance. Cottingham issued a pamphlet with an entirely different standpoint than previous pamphleteers of the Elizabethan era. Cottingham establishes strong ties with the Christian Portuguese army, stating on the opening page how it was the hope that the Portuguese “Christians would do great slaughter on”<sup>132</sup> the Muslims. Cottingham goes onto ridicule the current reigning house of Morocco, stating that “Muley Hamet being King, his two young brethren ran away into Spain and there turned Christian.”<sup>133</sup> Within the opening pages of the pamphlet, Cottingham has already established and fulfilled the expectations of a Jacobean audience with regards to the Muslim world. Either death or Apostasy.

As the seventeenth century progressed, these attitudes of fear developed into greater prejudices of hatred. The instrumental event in this transitional process was the death of James I in 1625. His death marked an equally catalytic point in terms of England’s global political position as the death of Elizabeth did. If the reign of Elizabeth was one deemed ‘the Golden age, through strong diplomacy and military success, then the reign of James can be thought of as a period of pacifism and piety. He relinquished all the positive diplomatic relations with the Islamic world, which had been previously brokered by Elizabeth. He was a man whose Christian insularity dictated and limited his position on the global stage. His death in 1625 brought his son, Charles I to the English throne, and within the first year of his reign, the pacifistic mentality adopted by James had visibly dissipated. Charles Carlton notes how during the final years of James’ reign, the King “had lost control of his kingdom.”<sup>134</sup> Mentally and physically he had been declining for years, and James was under increasing pressure to go to war with Spain. Upon his death, Charles was more than willing fulfil the wish of the people, and the wishes of parliament also.

The peace brokered with Spain in the early years of James’ reign was “founded on a bed of sand,”<sup>135</sup> the negotiations of reconciliation were nothing if not unsustainable. Charles’ move for a military operation against England’s most historic enemy was an optimistic venture. War held the potentiality to not only renew England’s position on the global stage, but also to revitalise a sense

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<sup>130</sup> Florio, *Montaigne’s Essays: John Florio’s translation*, 53-4.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>132</sup> R. A. Cottingham, *A True Historical Discourse of Muley Hamet’s rising to the three Kingdoms of Morocco Fez and Sus*. (London: Thomas Purfoot publisher, 1609): 3.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>134</sup> Charles Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*. (London: Routledge, 1983): 54.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

of patriotism amongst the public that had gradually diminished under James' rule. "By adopting an anti-Spanish policy, and provoking Madrid's ambassadors into over reacting, Charles won great popularity."<sup>136</sup> Charles, like the English public longed for return of the Golden Age of Elizabeth's rule. Within just a year of Charles' ascending to the throne, literature was published by the historian and herald, William Camden. He wrote of the "True and royal history of the famous Empress Elizabeth."<sup>137</sup> Camden drew upon the English exaltation of Elizabeth, she was their Gloriana and there was a longing to return to such days. Camden asserts "here reede the days when Britain's' ground with blessings all compact around."<sup>138</sup> Charles attempted to return the Kingdom to its perceived former glory, "Charles rose early, appointed hours for prayer, meals, business and exercise, attended sermons regularly and drew up court etiquette that he claimed were based on those of Queen Elizabeth I."<sup>139</sup> But ultimately his success as newly coronated King rested upon an enterprise started by Elizabeth, he attempted to capture the Spanish city of Cadiz.

Charles' fate was sealed, the mission proved to be disastrous, being both costly of men and gold. The expedition to Cadiz has been deemed "one of the most inglorious chapters in the history of British arms."<sup>140</sup> It was noted that of those in charge, their "zeal does not rise to the needs of such a great expedition".<sup>141</sup> Charles had hoped that the successful attack on Cadiz and the capture of the Spanish treasure fleet would silence parliamentary opposition, consolidate his rule and start his reign with triumph. Instead his coronation was a "muted affair."<sup>142</sup> Charles and his close friend and co-conspirator, the Duke of Buckingham had aimed to enlist the support of Morocco, to reignite the alliance which had once been so fruitful, and also to again draw comparisons between his rule and Elizabeth's. "The Anglo- Moroccan alliance had been meaningful in the days of Queen Elizabeth and Mulay Al Mansur,"<sup>143</sup> and yet after the death of Al Mansur in 1603, Morocco had fallen into a state of anarchy. Now the reigning Sharif "wielded so little power in his own country that an alliance was as worthless as the ruined sugar industry."<sup>144</sup> Yet regardless of this, Charles and his government were in some ways able to broker certain allegiances with various War Lords which operated along the Barbary Coast. The political dialogue was comparatively negligible, they operated on the primary aim of releasing British captives from Barbary imprisonment. Anglo Moroccan relations during the Caroline period were minimal, there was no commercial or military ties for pamphleteers to draw from. As a result, there were seemingly no pamphlets published

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>137</sup> William Camden, *Annales: True and royal history of the famous Empress Elizabeth*. (London: Benjamin Fisher publisher, 1625) 1.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>139</sup> Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 76.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>143</sup> Kenneth Andrews, *Ships, Money, and Politics: Seafaring and Naval Enterprise in the reign of Charles I*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 166.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 166.

during the Caroline monarchy which praised and revered this Anglo- Islamic cooperation in the same manner as during Elizabeth's reign. The War Lords with whom Charles I held various correspondence with, were in no way revered to the level of Al Mansur. The political climate within England was as such that all foreign relations with the Islamic world were seemingly overshadowed.

The financial situation within England during the reign of Charles I was catastrophic. Charles himself was in such dire need of finances that "he sold or pawned many of the crown jewels and melted down 50,000 ounces of plate, as well as leasing the sugar customs at a large premium."<sup>145</sup> The disastrous fiscal circumstances within the country only fuelled the growing schism between Crown and Parliament. The failed military exhibitions which Charles and Buckingham persistently and recklessly undertook left a "public response bordering between humiliation and mockery".<sup>146</sup> Civil unrest was growing and Charles indulged himself with sycophants, "the only person to warn him of the dangers of his actions was his mother, who wrote of the great chasm between her son and the English people".<sup>147</sup> Charles however continued to operate with unquestionable power, and the chasm did come to fruition, and because of this there was a growing population of English who had absconded to Muslim territories. Nabil Matar states how "the Ottoman dominions provided ample opportunity for Christian Europeans of low social or financial rank to gain power and wealth; and multitudes willingly renounced their faith in pursuit of such goals."<sup>148</sup> The concept of an Englishman converting to Islam is what prompted the writing of a 1658 pamphlet entitled *A Visitation of Love and Gentle Greeting of the Turk* by John Perrot work to both defer English apostasy, and also aims to convert the Turkish to Christianity. The pamphlet is a "warning to all men that are in corrupted ways of sin and iniquity to repent and turn to the living God."<sup>149</sup> Perrot calls to the Turks "to receive the Lord God"<sup>150</sup> and adopt the ways of Christianity. It would appear however that Perrot's intention are not necessarily one of piety, he closes his pamphlet by openly declaring "I am in dread and fear,"<sup>151</sup> the undoubted consensus of English opinion of the Islamic world

The feeling soon became synonymous with hatred, the severity of such hatred noticeably intensifies throughout the Caroline monarchy, causing pamphleteers to plead for war and crusade against all infidels. It can be deduced that the English feelings of political disdain are in some ways cast onto a common Muslim enemy. The exact mentality behind this consciousness is unattainable, yet it is

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<sup>145</sup> Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 86.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>148</sup> Nabil Matar, "The renegade in English Seventeenth Century Imagination." *Studies in English Literature 1500- 1900*. Vol 33, no 3: 2005, 489.

<sup>149</sup> John Perrot, *A Visitation of Love and Gentle Greeting of the Turk*. (London: Thomas Simons, 1658):1.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*,3.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

possible to believe that the authorities strived to consolidate both national and religious identity. In addition to this, the Machiavellian attitudes towards Christian military inadequacy becomes relevant. These sentiments of hatred are epitomised in the pamphlet published in 1645 which is a public answer to a Letter sent from the *Great Turk sent unto to the Prince of Transylvania*. The pamphlet has one principal goal, to rally those in Christian Europe on a crusade against the Islamic world. Jason Peacey notes how the motivation for the pamphleteers is often attainable, “authors felt the need to explain their motivation, and they tended to do so at the very outset; sometimes on the title page, but more commonly in prefatory addresses and dedications.”<sup>152</sup> There was no illusion as to the motivation behind this pamphlet, the author makes his intentions known on the title page, he states how the pamphlet is “containing many impious, and unheard of blasphemies against our saviour Christ; and fearful threatenings against all Christendom.”<sup>153</sup> The pamphlet contains both the letter from the Turkish Sultan and then an open response to this also, we must assume that the Sultan’s letter is entirely fabricated in order to provoke the English public. The Sultan opens his letter by referring to himself as the “great persecutor of the Christians and keeper of thy crucified God.”<sup>154</sup> The entirety of the Sultan’s letter contains much of the same manner of provocation, he states that “I will get victory on thee and pursue thee from East to West, and I will make my majesty known as far as the end of the world.”<sup>155</sup> The pamphleteer however build up with dramatic intention the most insulting declarations of the Sultan, finally the Sultan Ibrahim claims that he will “plant mine own religion and destroy forever thy crucified God whose wrath I fear not.”<sup>156</sup> Following this, the pamphlet concludes with the pamphleteers own response to this letter. The reader is urged to be provoked, “to avenge the outrage and injury done to God, and his son Jesus Christ.”<sup>157</sup> The pamphleteers draws upon the image of David and Goliath to again stir action, stating that “you may say that there are great and vast countries to gain before he can come so far. But shall we not take pity on our brethren?”<sup>158</sup> By doing this the reader is urged to gather a sense of Christian solidarity again the distant and omnipotent enemy that is the ottoman Sultan.

Much of the pamphlets which emerged from the presses throughout the Caroline monarchy and into the Civil War period followed a similar trend, urging English Christians to unite against the Muslim enemy. A 1664 a pamphlet entitled *Rome for the Great Turke, or else The Great Turke for little Rome*, is again solely occupied with threats and speeches of abhorrence aimed at the Islamic world. The pamphleteer known only as “E.F.” states how it is his wish that European Christian

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<sup>152</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 64-5.

<sup>153</sup> Anon, *The Great Turkes Letter sent unto the Prince of Transylvania*. (London: T. Forcet Publisher, 1645): 1.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

forces would “wound and spoil this great Leviathan and hook his nostrils so to make him tame, and back again retreat with grief and shame.”<sup>159</sup> In a similar vein to the pamphlets regarding the Ottoman world printed under the reign of Elizabeth, there is an unmistakable focus on military strength. The tone however is markedly different, with regards to the Elizabethan pamphleteers, there was no inciting of hatred, and the Ottoman military strength was presented as fact, with feats worthy of admiration, whereas Jacobean and Caroline era pamphlets appear to be fundamentally driven by fear. *Rome for the Great Turke, or else The Great Turke for little Rome* opens with the Sultan “vows by Mahomet, now they have the power. They will all Christians in the world devour.”<sup>160</sup> Whether the intention of this is to rally forces for an assault on the Ottoman Empire, or to promote Christian solidarity through unified fear, it is unclear. What is clear however, is that attitudes towards the Islamic world are undoubtedly degenerating with the passing of time.

It is notable that in 1665, the time in which *Rome for the Great Turke, or else The Great Turke for Little Rome* was written, The Ottoman empire was in almost staggering decline. Stephen Lee states that the battle of Vienna in 1683 officially marked the end of Ottoman expansionist attempts into Europe and by the end of the seventeenth century, the “empire was a mere shadow of that which had intimidated east and West alike in 1566.”<sup>161</sup> By this account, the strength of Ottoman Empire can be viewed to be in no way related to their treatment and representation by English pamphleteers. Instead the establishment of Islamic prejudice manifested internally, under the political climate of the Jacobean and Caroline monarchy.

It is the feelings of English instability which can be seen to dominate and drive attitudes towards the Muslim world in the pamphlets spanning the reign of James and Charles I. Whilst the relations between Queen Elizabeth and Islamic rulers aided in the contribution of pamphleteers portraying Muslims with respect, Anglo Islamic diplomacy was an almost non-existent entity under the Jacobean and Caroline monarchy. It would appear that sentiments of Islamic prejudice were utilised by pamphleteers to express domestic feelings of anxiety, in addition to the frustration and fear brought about by the widespread conflict of the Thirty Years’ War. The Muslim world thus became a literary trope to convey a failing Monarchical structure, economic instability, as well as military inadequacy. In the same manner which the Muslim world was vilified during the reigns of James and Charles, the rule of Queen Elizabeth was antithetically glorified. Elizabeth became the shining paragon of virtue, and Islam the ever present enemy barely beyond the horizon.

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<sup>159</sup> E.F, *Rome for the Great Turke, or else The Great Turke for little Rome*. (London: T.F. for F. Coles, 1664): 5.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>161</sup> Stephen Lee, *Aspects of European History: 1494-1789*. (London: Routledge): 77.

## **Chapter. 4: Representations of Muslims on the Early Modern Stage- “Turning Turke”.**

The evolution of the culture of print which occurred throughout the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I of England saw numerous varieties of pamphlets become available to the Early Modern English public. As with much of the pamphlets subject matter being in some part related to the Islamic world, the dramatic work which appeared on the play house stages followed a similar trend. In between the years of 1579 and 1624, Jonathan Burton notes how “over sixty dramatic works featuring Islamic themes, characters, or settings were produced in England.”<sup>162</sup> Due to the increased trade and travel which the sixteenth and seventeenth century was witness to, the Muslim had become a popular character on the Renaissance stage. The exoticism that accompanied the subject of the Orient and its inhabitants, strongly appealed to Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists and audiences alike. “The logic behind using Africa as a setting by Elizabethan dramatists is that such an act, expectedly, would have bred more spectacles to the theatre. The “Elizabethan folk must have found stories about the harem of North African rulers and description of the courts of the West African Negro kings or slave trade fascinating.”<sup>163</sup> In addition to the dramatically stimulating nature of the Islamic world, key global events additionally contributed to the subject matter which frequently appeared on the Early Modern stage.

I take inspiration from Jonathan Burton who notes in his study *Traffic and Turning*, how “English representation of Islam were complex and nuanced, moved by a variable nexus of economic, political, and cultural forces.”<sup>164</sup> The result of which was an entire spectrum of possible representations, many of which directly correlating to wider diplomatic circumstances. The drama which emerged throughout the reigns of the monarchs under study, saw an irrefutable degeneration of the representation of Muslim characters which appeared on the stage. It is possible to draw a parallel between the dramatic portrayals, and the worsening political relationship between England and this Islamic world, and also from the accelerated hostility within Europe as well. I will be principally focusing of George Peele’s *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594), Thomas Dekker’s *Lust’s Dominion* (1600), and William Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1604). I have chosen these particular works of drama, because they each offer a somewhat unique and individual political perspective on England’s engagement with the Islamic world.

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<sup>162</sup> Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning*. (Newark: Delaware University Press, 2005): 11.

<sup>163</sup> Eldred Jones, *Othello’s Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance drama*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965): 87.

<sup>164</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 11.

## **The Battle of Alcazar**

The battle of Al-Kasr Al-Kabīr, or what was known throughout Early Modern England, as the Battle of Alcazar, was fought between two rival claimants for the Moroccan throne. The outcome of the battle resulted in the solidifying of the Saadi dynasty, and the beginning of the exalted reign of Ahmad Al Mansur. In the case of Alcazar, European interests transcended a mere fascination for the exotic. The outcome of the battle crucially left the throne of Portugal agonisingly vacant. Don Sebastian of Portugal and his army, in addition to a wayward Englishman, Thomas Stukeley fought alongside the usurper Muly Hamet, and were ultimately crushed by the victorious forces of Al Mansur and Abd el Malek. The events in North Africa were reported as significant “news from almost the moment it happened.”<sup>165</sup> The Elizabethan public sphere saw a wide variety of tracts and pamphlets concerning Alcazar on the marketplace, but as well as this, the battle also prompted the writing of the eponymous play by George Peele, written ten years after the original battle, in 1589.

*The Battle of Alcazar* is thought to be the “first representation of Moors on the Early Modern English stage.”<sup>166</sup> It is believed that the source of the play stems from John Polemon’s historical work, *The Second Part of the Booke of Battailes*.<sup>167</sup> Because of this, the play is indeed factually sufficient, as there appears to be little requirement to dramatically embellish the event at Alcazar. Eldred Jones notes how “almost all the ingredients for such a tragedy were present in the numerous popular accounts of the battle: villainy, misguided chivalry, virtue and a large loss of life.”<sup>168</sup> The historical events, accompanied by the exotic nature of the battle simply cried out for dramatic treatment. But in addition to this, the battle held far greater impacts outside of the exotic North African nation, the effects were felt in England also. Elizabeth heavily relied upon the military and commercial enterprises which the unchallenged rule of Abd el Malek, and later, Al Mansur guaranteed.

With the news of the Battle of Alcazar, the English public were overwhelmed with pamphlets and ballads of Thomas Stukeley and Al Mansur. Meanwhile “the Queen and her counsellors were preoccupied with the imminent danger of Phillip of Spain’s accession to the now vacant throne of Portugal.”<sup>169</sup> The threat of the Catholic King of Spain was ever present throughout much of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. She had incurred the wrath of the Catholic nation and her need for military and commercial diplomacy with the Muslim nation was great. The date of the play is crucially important, it falls in the immediate wake of England’s victory over the Spanish Armada,

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<sup>165</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 21.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>167</sup> Dimmock. *New Turkes*, 112-3.

<sup>168</sup> Jones, *Othello’s Countrymen*, 43.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-2.



in a period of invigorated nationalism and pride. Amidst global conflict, England's position and national identity was more secure than in previous years. Queen Elizabeth's diplomacy with the Moroccans was fundamental in the maintaining of this period of relative peace. Nabil Matar states how, that in the wake of the Armada, "it is no wonder, then, that the English and other Britons felt safer among the Moors than the Spaniards."<sup>170</sup> George Peele shows an awareness to this vital allegiance, and pays homage to the Moroccan Sultan in *The Battle of Alcazar*. Peele's Moroccan characters are complex and multifaceted, he does not follow a singular racially prejudiced character trope, a feature which is often prominent in much of the drama on the Early Modern stage. The standardised approach for portraying Muslims in Elizabethan England was through the "Raging Turke" character type, the Turke was "represented as the incarnation of ambition, cruelty, sensuality, and treachery."<sup>171</sup> Peele's characters however are not exclusively consistent with this often utilised dramatics trope.

From the opening of the play, Peele's chorus alludes to the various character types of Muslims within the play. The audience is under no misapprehension as to which Moroccan character will command love and respect, and which will provoke fear and hatred. The chorus announces to the audience,

Honour the spur that pricks the princely mind,  
 To follow rule and climb the stately chair,  
 With great desire inflames the Portugal,  
 An honourable and courageous king,  
 To undertake dreadful war,  
 And aid with Christian arms the barbarous Moore,  
 The Negro Muly Hamet that withholds  
 The kingdom from his uncle Abdelmelec,  
 Whom Abdallas wronged,  
 And in his throne installs this cruel son,  
 That now usurps upon this prince,  
 This brave Barbarian Lord Muly Molocco.  
 (Act I, 1.prol, 1-12)<sup>172</sup>

With this, Peele presents an almost binary opposition in his characters, venerating the Sultan Abd el Malek and in turn vilifying the usurper and rival claimant to the throne, Muly Mahomet. The characters are presented antithetically, the nobility and honour of Abd el Malek's character is a force to challenge the cowardice and barbarity of Muly Mahomet. In addition to being characteristically dissimilar, Peele presents the characters as being visually different as well. The skin colour of the antagonistic Muly Mahomet is continuously stressed throughout the play, the audience is told how he is "Blacke in his looke, and in his deeds" (1.1.prol.16). By doing this, Peele

<sup>170</sup> Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*, 77.

<sup>171</sup> Linda McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006):63.

<sup>172</sup> Charles Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays: The Battle of Alcazar by George Peele*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005): Text references are to Act, scene, and line number in this edition.

initially defines the Moors through an “easily readable, colour coded, moral divide. On the one side is the “black” and “barbarous negro,”<sup>173</sup> while on the other side is Abd el Malek, his physical appearance is in no way referenced. The audience is left to draw opinion based on the merit of his deeds instead of his looks.

Disdain and hatred of Muly Mahomet primarily stems from his Islamic nature and his blasphemous speech. With regards to the character of Abd el Malek on the other hand, Peele formulates admiration through a Christian and European familiarity. He is both courageous and pious, the first words of his character in the play works to solidify and establish his religious nature.

All hail, Argiers! Zareo and ye Moores,  
Salute the frontiers of your native home  
Cease, rattling drums, and Abdelmelec here  
Throw up thy trembling hands to heaven' throne  
Pay to thy God due thanks, and thanks to him  
That strengthens thee with mighty gracious arms,  
Against the proud usurper of thy right, (1.1.1-7)

The significance of this dialogue, and indeed other instances of Abd el Malek's devoutness cannot be overstated. I believe it is crucially important that Peele uses the word “God”, rather than “Allah” as a means to Christianise him through Western religious beliefs, and thus make his character one which a Christian, Elizabethan audience can accept and relate to more readily. Throughout the drama, there are frequent instances where a positive political relationship between Abd el Malek and Christian nations are alluded to. The historical source material available to Peele gives reference to a significant chapter in the events of the battle. John Polemon notes how Abd el Malek was reluctant to meet the Portuguese King Sebastian in battle, not through fear of Portuguese forces, but because he knew how such a military encounter would certainly result in the death of the King Sebastian. According to Polemon in his *Second Parte of the booke of Battailes*, Abd el Malek “knew what was done in the camp of the Christians, and how weak the Portugal forces were, and how coldly all things were and therefore did see that the wretched king being in the prime of his years, was neere to death and destruction. He fought with all means he could not to fight a battle.”<sup>174</sup> Within the play, Peele is also willing to note and explore these sentiments of good will towards opposing Christian forces. Abd el Malek states how “But I for have myself been a soldier been, I have in pity to the Portugal, Sent secret messengers to counsel him” (3.2.9-11). The peaceful counsel and intentions offered by the Moroccan Sultan did however fall on deaf ears, as King Sebastian was determined to fight. The decision was costly, despite the romanticised drama of the battle, the historical factuality is one of horror and fierce butchery. Throughout the course of the battle, an estimates twenty six thousand soldiers died, as well as Abd el Malek (through illness),

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<sup>173</sup>Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 30.

<sup>174</sup> Polemon, *Second Part of the Booke of Battailes*. 79.

King Sebastian, and Mulay Mahomet prompted Samuel Chew to label the drama as “the battle of three kings.”<sup>175</sup>

The widespread destruction and large loss of life that the battle ensued has been considered a dramatic warning by some critics. Nabil Matar believes that through the destruction of Portuguese and their allied Moroccan forces, Peele was presenting a message to his Queen about the inevitable dangers of diplomacy between Christian and Muslim rulers.<sup>176</sup> The Machiavellian character of Mulay Mahomet is the driving force behind King Sebastian’s demise. I however believe this interpretation to be unfounded for several reasons; the first being that the character of Mulay Mahomet is not of Peele’s own design. The term “Black Sultan” utilised by John Polemon is not a specific description of Mulay Mahomet’s skin tone, it also references the man’s dark character. In addition to this, Mulay Mahomet is not presented as the only character who is void of moral guidance. King Sebastian additionally presents an abhorrent and bloody nature. He is both foolhardy and aggressive, ignoring the counsel of Abd el Malek and his senior advisors, he states

No, let him know we scorn his courtesy,  
And will resist his forces whatso’er.  
Cast fear aside, myself will lead the way,  
And make a passage with my conquering sword  
Knee deep in blood of these accursed Moors (4.2. 13-18)

There is thus little difference in between Mulay Mahomet and King Sebastian. Peele does not present an underlying admiration for the Christian King, he is certainly not “glorified” as Emily Bartels states. Instead Peele establishes a tragic end for the Christian King which is entirely of Sebastian’s own design. His death stems from poor decision, war mongering, and failing to take advice from those who offer it willingly.

There are no underlying Peelian, or indeed English attitudes that offer a reading of the play which is either pro Christian or Anti Muslim. Instead Peele approaches the battle with resolute objectivity, this neutrality perhaps stems from the fact that Peele’s primary source is a historical and factually determined manuscript, but the neutrality also stems from the political climate within England at the time of Peele’s writing. The period under examination can be deemed the Golden Age for the Anglo-Moroccan alliance, established by Abd el Malek and Queen Elizabeth, and later developed with Al Mansur’s rise to the Moroccan throne. Under this alliance, each nation thrived commercially and became more secure from a military stand point. In addition to the mutually beneficial diplomatic exercises between the two nations, there was also a genuine sentiment of good will. John Polemon notes of Abd el Malek, how “although he professed the religion of Mahamet, yet he so loved Christians, and of them the Spaniardes, that I cannot expresse with

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<sup>175</sup> Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*, 525.

<sup>176</sup> Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*. (Florida: Florida University press, 2005): 15.

wordes the love and good-will which he shewed towards many captives and prisoners.”<sup>177</sup> This discourse of peace and unity appears to be reciprocated by Christians towards the Moroccan Sultan, E.W. Bovill states how European veneration for Abd el Malek was so great that “he was invoked in preaching.”<sup>178</sup> The English Church, according to Bovill, recognised Abd el-Malek’s compassionate nature, in an act of acknowledgement, composed a panegyric which read, “May our Lord God keep him in peace and may he increase his powers and dominions for years to come, may He grant him perpetual victories, may He raise him to the highest position, for the honour of God who lives and reigns world without end.”<sup>179</sup> This tribute was delivered in 1577, notably before the events at Alcazar, with his death and the rise of Ahmad Al Mansur to the Moroccan Sultanate, Anglo Moroccan relations progressed further still.

*The Battle of Alcazar* is unquestionably politically motivated. Peele provides factual settings, events, and characters which are consistent with historical sources, all the while, dramatizing this through an English world view. Peele does not hold a pre-established admiration for the Christian characters of the play, on the contrary in fact. The Portuguese King Sebastian is vilified, holding similar character flaws to the primary antagonist within the drama, Mulay Mahomet. The usurper to the Moroccan throne is both shown to be a coward and inherently evil; his skin colour is constantly referenced, not, I would argue, due to racial prejudice, but because it marks him as being entirely visually different from other Muslim characters such as Al Mansur and Ab el Malek. Both of whom provoke sentiments of respect and sympathy, they are the rightful rulers of the Saadi dynasty and conduct themselves with almost Christian piety and honour. Peele glorifies these Moroccan Muslims as their actions held direct consequences for the Elizabethan English, commerce and political stability were the defining nature of the golden age of the alliance between England and Morocco. *The Battle of Alcazar* can thus be seen to be a dramatic homage, honouring and praising this politically established, cross cultural relationship.

## **Lust’s Dominion; or, The Lascivious Queen.**

Despite the formidable name of Christopher Marlowe featuring on the title page of the quarto, first published in 1657, *Lust’s Dominion, or the Lascivious Queen*, believed to be written in 1600 is widely attributed to Thomas Dekker, in collaboration with a number of other Early Modern dramatists. “The plot is an amalgam of lusts and murders in which Eleazar the Moor, to whom the

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<sup>177</sup> Polemon, *Second Part of the Booke of Battailles*, 79

<sup>178</sup> E.W. Bovill, *The Battle of Alcazar: An Account of the Defeat of Don Sebastian at elkasr el-Kebir*. (London: The Batchworth Press, 1952): 39.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

Spanish Queen prostitutes herself, is the central character.<sup>180</sup> Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* is alike Peele's work, in the sense that both dramatic texts are simply products of the European political climate at the time in which they were written. There are elements of Anglo-Spanish relations, in addition to sentiments of the growing racial prejudices prevalent within the later years of Elizabethan England, which abundantly influence the narrative of the play. In 1600, the year in which Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* was written and first performed, was a period of political volatility, being within the dying stages of Elizabethan England. Throughout the closing years of the seventeenth century, the positive relationship held between the English and Islamic worlds had begun to deteriorate. The once progressive nature of Elizabethan diplomacy had become complicated, and the once respected image of Moors within English society and literature had descended to the depths of intolerance. In addition to the anti-Islamic prejudices, and racially motivated tensions, prevailing within the closing stages of Elizabethan England, the wider European political climate is also noteworthy. Within Spain, the precarious position of the Moor was growing more hostile. Emily Bartels states how "at the turn of the century, the situation of Moors in Spain was reaching a point of crisis that would climax in 1609, when Phillip III ordered their expulsion."<sup>181</sup> The Spanish prejudices towards Muslims can be seen as a direct consequence of the Spanish Inquisition, where the policing of the purity of Catholicism became commonplace throughout the country. The Spanish imperialists were intent on promoting Iberian national supremacy, and as such, the Moorish presence within the country was considered unnatural, and a problem simply to be eradicated and cleansed.

With the backdrop of the inquisition, under the rule of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the Spanish Catholics drove the Moors from Andalusia. The Islamic Moors who had been forcibly expelled from their Spanish homeland 'came to terms with the local bays and other leaders along the North African coast.'<sup>182</sup> Subsequently the harbour cities of Morocco, Algiers and Tunis became the capitals of piracy along the Barbary Coast. It is through these catalytic events, that England's political allegiances and favour began to diminish. Barbary corsairs - pirates from the Barbary Coast of North Africa ranged all around Britain's shores. Prayers were said in Churches and donations were collected to redeem those loved ones from the hands of the heathen Moors. The piracy endured by the English people, in addition to an influx of Muslim refugees from Spain, greatly contributed to the shift in diplomatic status with the Islamic world. A 1596 letter written to the Lord Mayor by Queen Elizabeth exemplifies this. The Queen writes how "there are of late divers blackmoors brought into this realm, of which kind of people there are already here too many."<sup>183</sup> The anti-Muslim sentiments exacerbated to such extents that in 1601 Elizabeth was

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<sup>180</sup>Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*, 520.

<sup>181</sup>Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 118.

<sup>182</sup> Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose*, 340.

<sup>183</sup> John Hale, *The Civilisations of Europe in the Renaissance*. (London: Harper Collins, 2005): 100.

compelled to license the sea Captain, “Caspar van Senden to transport all Negroes and blackamoors out of England.”<sup>184</sup> Emily Bartels notes how “it is not clear whether these initiatives were successful, or even enacted, but Elizabeth’s letters give official voice to a kind of discrimination which had rarely been authorised before.”<sup>185</sup> The orders offer concrete evidence that supports the idea of a shift in political and racial ideologies, stemming from a variety of factors, including racism, islamophobia, and domestic concerns of piracy. It is through these newly adopted principles, that move to distance England from this Islamic world, and they are certainly adopted and dramatically drawn upon by Thomas Dekker throughout *Lust’s Dominion*.

Eleazar, the title character of the play is the prince of Fez, yet he is also a captive at the Spanish court. Honoured for his military capabilities, he operates under the pretence of love and friendship in a grand ploy to take revenge for his father’s death, and kill the Royal family to take the Spanish crown for himself. His attempts however, are ultimately unsuccessful despite his machinations and schemes, his plot is discovered and he goes to his death unrepentant. Throughout the play, Dekker utilises multiple dramatic features which are consistent with many Early Modern representation of Muslim characters. With the opening scene, Dekker establishes a fundamental feature of the plot which runs throughout the play. Eleazar and the Spanish Queen are engaging in conversation which heavily alludes to an adulterous sexual relationship. This relationship establishes the Spanish court as the aforementioned “lust’s dominion”. With this, Dekker makes his intentions clear, the power of the Muslim Eleazar is in many ways raised above that of Christian Europeans. Jonathan Burton notes that by “placing cross cultural, heterosexual desire at the heart of plays featuring Muslim men, the authors of Turkish plays use women’s bodies as proxies for the threatened and overpowered bodies of Christian men.”<sup>186</sup> This relationship thus “makes a cuckold of our King” (1.1. 85)<sup>187</sup> and establishes early, the nature of our Machiavellian protagonist. Dekker’s choice of the wording, “our king” would move an English audience to the possibility of Islamic infiltration within their country’s institutions, by doing this, Dekker successfully incites both fear and hatred.

The Moorish characters within *Lusts Dominion* are unlike those examined in *The Battle of Alcazar*. George Peele provides a variety of representations which reflect the complex nature of English relations with the Muslim world, yet as these relations became more hostile, the nature of representations became less varied. The overriding sentiment within the drama of the period became one to mirror the hostilities towards Muslims in Europe at the time of Dekker’s writing. Because of this, Eleazar, the focus character in *Lust’s Dominion* exhibits the heinous and villainous

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<sup>184</sup> Victoria Mason Vaughan, *Othello: A Contextual History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 58.

<sup>185</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 100.

<sup>186</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 125.

<sup>187</sup> Fredson Bowers, *The dramatic works of Thomas Dekker*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961): Text references are to Act, scene, and line number in this edition.

character tropes of anger, jealousy, and impassioned retribution consistent with the “The Raging Turke”, as previously defined by Linda McJanet. Dekker’s inspiration for the character of Eleazar undoubtedly draws from Aaron in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, Felix Schelling calls Eleazar “a shameless caricature of Aaron.”<sup>188</sup> In a similar vein to Shakespeare’s character, Eleazar too is dominated by his own self-interest. The mixture of love, lust, and blood are what define and drive the character of Eleazar. With Eleazar’s character, Early Modern elements of race and geographical distinctions seem to prevail. Classical concepts of humoralism, “reductively constructed as climate theory by modern scholars, proves to be the dominant mode of ethnic distinctions in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.”<sup>189</sup> These character distinctions move to associate blackness with ingrained, racially defined personality traits. Moorish characters such as Eleazar and Shakespeare’s Othello adhere to this “Raging Turke” character type, not merely because it is a dramatic trope, but also because it was perceived that North Africans, because of the heat, had an imbalance of humors which drove them to their actions. “Othello’s [and Eleazar’s] lack of [or imbalance of] humours is what distinguishes them from people of cooler climes.”<sup>190</sup>

Eleazar is undoubtedly presented as evil, he is unrepentant to his dying breath. Yet it is not only his actions that determine his villainous reputation, the manner in which others both speak to and of him also contribute to this. The way which the Spaniards view Eleazar is consistent with hostile European sentiments. Within the opening scene of the play, the Spanish King Philip introduces Eleazar to his son Prince Philip as “Both wise and warlike, yet beware him, Ambition wings his spirit, keep him down”. (1.2., 66-67) The Spanish Prince Philip, is the instrumental character to challenge Eleazar’s plans, the Prince describes him as a ‘base slave,’ (2. 11 55) a ‘damned Moor,’ (4. 4.10) a ‘black divel’ (4. 1. 24), ‘thou true stamp’d son of hel’, Thy pedigree is written in thy face’ (4. 4. 39-40). Eleazar is under no illusion as to how the Spanish respond to him, and he resents them for it. Eldred Jones notes how “Eleazar makes a great deal of the slights to which he is subject to in Spanish society.”<sup>191</sup> He replies to Alvero’s inquiry for the Queen Mother: “The Queen with me, with, a Moore, a Devil, a slave of Barbary, a dog; for so your silken courtiers christen me” (1.2.151- 2). In addition to this, there are instances where Eleazar openly complains of his racially prejudiced torment. Eleazar complains to the Queen Mother that, I cannot ride the Castilian streets [without] every slave” (1.1.83-5) making abusive remarks towards him. He voices protests to racism, in a play where sentiments of racism are rife. The torment which Eleazar suffers, offers a potential motive for his Machiavellian characteristics and is the driving force for his

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<sup>188</sup>Jones, *Othello’s Countrymen*, 60.

<sup>189</sup> Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 1.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>191</sup> Jones, *Othello’s Countrymen*, 60.

regicidal plot. He invokes sympathy to a limited extent, particularly due to the fact that his residence in Spain is entirely involuntary. He bewails: “my father, who with his Empire, lost his life, and left me captive to a Spanish tyrant” (1.2. 157- 8). Eleazar is vilified by all who encounter him, he is a captive at the Spanish court and his property was seized by the Cardinal Mendoza; all of these contributing factors owe themselves to the argument that Eleazar is simply a product of his hostile environment. I would suggest that sympathies are established, not to glorify the Moor, but instead to draw upon preconceived anti Spanish sentiments which were prominent throughout Elizabethan society.

England deteriorating diplomatic arrangements with the Muslim world were not the Elizabethan’s only hostile political relationship. The victory over the Spanish Armada had seemingly heightened conflict, rather than settled it. The prospect of war remained an ever present possibility. A 1596 pamphlet written by the protestant minister, Thomas Nun highlights the public uncertainty and fearful belief that a renewed conflict with the Spanish was inevitable, he asks the question “is it true that the Spanyards will come again this spring?”<sup>192</sup>Nun also makes attempt to praise and “blesse God for the late Spaniard’s overthrow,”<sup>193</sup> drawing attention to the reality that animosity was universally felt in Elizabethan England towards both Muslims and Spaniards alike. With this in mind, it would be inconsistent with contextual politics for Dekker to adopt a favourably Spanish mentality with *Lust’s Dominion*. Dekker instead exploits the English sentiments of insularity and mutually adverse attitudes which were to those beyond their protestant borders, and as such the Spanish characters are vilified in a similar manner to the Muslims.

Religious differences and military conflict fuelled the political derision between England and Spain. Whilst it is clear how the Spanish characters throughout the play treat Eleazar with overwhelming discrimination, and yet the manner in which Eleazar refers to the Spanish, is steeped with prejudice also. Eleazar crucially views the Spanish as inferior, as they in turn view him to be. Eleazar describes the Spanish courtiers who stand “at the court gates like a heap of dung, reeking and shouting contagious breath out” (3. 4. 25-27). Eleazar similarly undermines the royal family, the Spanish King Philip is deemed both a “tyrant” and a “tame jade” (1. I. 161-2), whereas Prince Philip becomes attributed with the title “the bastard of Spain” (4. 1. 38). Dekker’s insults are not however restricted to the Spanish royal family, Eleazar’s view of the various members of the clergy is equally derogatory. Eleazar curses against the Cardinal, exclaiming “that damned Mendoza”, and refers to Friar Cole as “that black villain Friar Cole” (3. 3. 16) and also as a “lousy Friar” (3. 3. 22). With this Dekker is simplistically drawing upon previously established anti Spanish and anti-Catholic agendas which would have undoubtedly satisfied the prejudices of an Elizabethan English audience. The audience must ultimately feel no allegiances for either Moorish or Spanish

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<sup>192</sup> Thomas Nun, *A Comfort against the Spaniard*.(London: John Windet, 1596): 3.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



characters, Dekker establishes a confused sense of equality, as within the play members of both races are presented as equally despicable. The view which Eleazar holds of the Spanish, is not necessarily unfounded, they certainly exhibit evil character traits to rival those of Eleazar.

The new King Fernando and the Cardinal Mendoza are entirely selfishly motivated. They manipulate other characters within the play, and are in themselves ruled by their ruthless lusts and sexual passion. The Spanish work to banish Eleazar for his relationship with the Queen, labelling him as a “Divell” (1.2.145), as well as indicting the Queen as “a Moor’s concubine” (1.2.139). In addition to this, Cardinal Medoza orders that Eleazar “be utterly deprived of all those royalties he hold’st in Spain” (1.2.149). The situation seems to be irrecoverable, yet the Queen (now the Queen Mother) is able to offer a resolution only by shamelessly appealing to the Cardinal’s blatant lust for her. The Queen mother is forced to appease Mendoza by stating how she will “reward” (2.1.82) his love and compassion. The King Fernando is also a character of moral deficiency who allows himself to be ruled by sexual desire. Fernando is willing to manipulate the situation with Eleazar in order to pursue his sexual obsession with Eleazar’s wife, Maria. The King’s sexual scheming is made clear when Eleazar is warned how “Fernando means to warm thy marriage bed”. (2.3.140). The King is seemingly reluctant to banish Eleazar from court, as he is motivated to keep Eleazar in close proximity, purely to ensure that Maria is close also. The King thus pledges therefore to “overrule the Moor’s late receiv’d disgrace with his own Kingly “grace.”<sup>194</sup> King Fernando is however void of his self-proclaimed “grace”. The King enters Maria’s bedchamber, and as Bartels claims, he is “armed for rape, we might notice, in case his persuasions fail, he insists that, if she does not succumb to his advances, he will send Eleazar to war to die.”<sup>195</sup> Fernando is ultimately unsuccessful, although this does not detract from the evil nature of his intentions.

The King’s actions are entirely motivated by both lust and hate; lust for Eleazar’s wife, and hate for Eleazar himself. His nature is therefore highly comparable to the Moor’s whom he professes to hate, they are both driven by the same forces. Eleazar and Fernando are certainly similar in their personality, aspirations, and ruthlessness. In addition to this, there is an instance within the text which alludes to their visual similarity also. Fernando attempts to reason with Maria into a sexual relationship by stating how:

Thy husband is no Spaniard, thou art one,  
So is *Fernando*, then for countries sake  
Let mee not spare thee, on thy husbands face  
Eternall night in gloomy shades doth dwel;  
But I’le look on thee like the gilded Sun. (3.2.21-5)

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<sup>194</sup>Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 121.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

He uses the obvious differences in the two character's race and nationality in an attempt to coerce Maria, yet she is able to counteract his argument. "Maria resists these attempts to exhibit and exploit racial differences by turning Fernando's overused imagery against him and rejecting his "Sun-set eyes."<sup>196</sup> With this, Dekker can be seen to allude to the understanding that the hot climate which drives Eleazar, is also the influence of Fernando's actions as well. It is thus possible to assume that Dekker's Elizabethan understanding of the theory of Humors does not necessarily differentiate too greatly between inhabitants of Morocco, and those of Spain, as they are purported to be of a similar climate and geographical region. By this understanding, Spaniards and Moroccans can be seen to be alike in English minds.

The Spanish and Moroccan characters, whilst alike in nature, are both vilified. They are presented as the incarnation of both lust and hatred. Unlike Peele, Dekker does not present a nation to support, instead all characters, both Muslim and Catholic, invoke the fear of the Early Modern English. Dekker's narrative setting may be alien, but the political concerns which he addresses are certainly familiar. King Fernando not only intends for Eleazar to be sent away to war as a means of punishment, but he also work to "call a parliament/ and banish by law all Moors from Spain" (3.2.45-6). This dramatic feature of racial cleansing hold relevance within Queen Elizabeth's attempt to banish all "blackamoors"<sup>197</sup> from England, and also within the backdrop to the Spanish inquisition. In a political climate intent on "the implementation of a policy of monolithic Catholic Christian unity, with, as a corollary, the elimination of all other faiths,"<sup>198</sup> and where the racial and religious purity of Spanish Catholics is legislatively scrutinised. There is therefore something rather gruelling, and indeed slapstick when *Lust's dominion* is read with the Spanish inquisition in mind. With a dramatic situation where the Queen Mother and the King of Spain are presented as obsessively sexually motivated, elements of comedy are certain to reach an Early Modern English audience. Dekker does however limit the comedic aspects of the play by reinstating the racial hatred which was prevalent throughout Spain with the back drop of the Inquisition. King Fernando threatens Eleazar with "Death for any Negroes hand, to touch the beauty of a Spanish dame" (3.2.48-9). Eleazar's relationship with the Queen Mother strikes a move which both undermines the purity of Spanish royalty, and reduces catholic values to ridicule. The ending of the play is also crucially significant, Eleazar is unsuccessful in his attempts to claim the throne of Spain for himself, as a Muslim would never be permitted to prosper on Christian soil, yet this outcome does not equate to a Spanish victory. He is instrumental in the tarnishing of the Queen Mother's purity, he kills the King, murders two friars and successfully labels the prince as a bastard. The Spanish court is in complete disarray, purely because of Eleazar. He cries "blood and fire, and that shall

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Hale, *The Civilisations of Europe in the Renaissance*, 100.

<sup>198</sup> Leonard Patrick Harvey, *Muslims in Spain 1500 -1614*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 15.

burn/ Till Castille like proud Troy to cinders burn” (3.2.216-7), Hell-bent on destroying the pillars on which Spain is built, that of Church and Crown. The conclusion of the play sees the two great enemies of England defeated. In a spectacle with no English involvement, the Elizabethan audience is able to watch with undoubted satisfaction, as Muslim and Papist alike are brought to their knees in ruin.

## **Othello, The Moor of Venice**

William Shakespeare’s *Othello*, written 1603 or 1604, offers as one would expect, a far more complex, accomplished, and indeed celebrated example of the dramatized political relationship between England and the Islamic world. Shakespeare’s principal sources for the drama of *Othello* are widely believed to be “a short story in Giovanni Battista Giraldi’s *Hecatomithi* (1565),”<sup>199</sup> and also from John Pory’s 1600 translation of John Leo’s *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, which according to Geoffrey Bullough, “Shakespeare definitely consulted”<sup>200</sup> upon his writing of *Othello*. In addition to this, it appears that Shakespeare’s sources were not exclusively literary. The ambassador of the King of Barbary, Abd el Ouahed ben Messaoud, arrived in England in August 1600, for a “half year’s abode in London.”<sup>201</sup> E.A.J Honigmann notes how Shakespeare and his company will have come into direct contact with the Muslim embassy, he states that “Shakespeare’s company, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, performed at court in the Christmas season of 1600-1, before the ambassador’s departure.”<sup>202</sup> Shakespeare’s close proximity to the political relations of England and the Islamic world, and also his possible encounter with the Barbary ambassador, can be seen to have greatly influenced the characterisation of *Othello*.

Shakespeare’s awareness of the Barbary Ambassadors can be seen to fuel the argument of *Othello*’s race. It is a question which has been widely disputed and received much critical attention. Critics such as Harold Bloom suggest how *Othello*’s “pigmentation is notoriously essential to the plot.”<sup>203</sup> This is primarily because of the ambiguous nature of the term “Moor” in Early Modern England. Emily Bartels notes how the term could be referring quite specifically to “the Berber-Arab people of the part of North Africa [or by full extreme, could refer] to almost any darker skinned peoples.”<sup>204</sup> It is therefore unclear as to whether *Othello* is a black sub-Saharan African or

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<sup>199</sup> E.A.J. Honigmann, *The Arden Shakespeare; Othello*. (London: Arden Shakespeare Bloomsbury, 1997): 2.

<sup>200</sup> Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare; Vol 7*. (London: Routledge, 1974): 208.

<sup>201</sup> Honigmann, *Othello*. 2

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>203</sup> Harold Bloom, *Othello*. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987): 2.

<sup>204</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 4.

a lighter skinned Arab, similar to the Barbary ambassador. Despite the uncertainties of this, I think it would be wrong however, to assume that Shakespeare created ambiguity out of ignorance, as this would be neglecting the variety of information which would have been available to him. During the period in which Shakespeare is thought to have written *Othello*, a contemporary of Shakespeare's, George Abbot, published *A Brief Description of the Whole Worlde* in 1599, where he made definitive distinctions between "blackish Negroes, and blackish Moors."<sup>205</sup> If we are to assume that the uncertainties surrounding Othello's race are intentional, then we must also assume that Othello's race can ultimately be seen to visually signify his otherness and Muslim heritage. His Islamic past is the true source of Othello's difference which sets him firmly aside from the visually contrasting white Venetian characters in the play.

Othello's position within Christian Europe is fundamental to any reading of the play. Emily Bartels notes "our understandings of what it means to be an outsider have become increasingly attuned to historical, political, and racial nuances"<sup>206</sup> The Early Modern English were of course, no stranger to strangers. There are instances of cross cultural discourse, including but not limited to the Moorish ambassadorial visit of Abd el Ouahed ben Messaoud, to Queen Elizabeth I in 1600. Jonathan Burton draws attention to how "Muslim dignitaries had regularly visited London for over twenty years when Othello took to the stage."<sup>207</sup> Burton notes that in the years between "1580 and 1618, there were five Turkish envoys and three Moroccan to the English capital, often with sizable entourages."<sup>208</sup> In a similar manner to the pamphlets and drama of the period, the representation and general reception of these Muslim dignitaries drastically fluctuated between hatred and admiration. Throughout this section, I will draw comparisons between the reception of the Muslim diplomats in London, and the reception of Othello in Venice. By doing this, I will work to ascertain whether Othello's treatment by the Venetians within the play is consistent with the reception of the Turkish and Moroccan delegates in England.

Othello's elevated position as both a Venetian General and as Governor of Cyprus is, as described by Honigmann, a rank which would undoubtedly work to "magnify his otherness."<sup>209</sup> Burton however argues to the contrary, stating how "little of this would be particularly unbelievable to a crowd of Londoners in the first decade of the seventeenth century."<sup>210</sup> This is primarily due to the exposure which those in Early Modern England would have had to Muslims of nobility. I would suggest that in addition to questions of religion and race, elements of class are also integral to a reading of *Othello*. The plausibility of his position, his initial assimilation in to

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<sup>205</sup> George Abbot, *A Briefe Description of the Whole Worlde: 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. (London: Henery E Huntingdon Library and Art Gallery, 1620).

<sup>206</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 156.

<sup>207</sup> Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 246.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>209</sup> Honigmann, *Othello*, 27.

<sup>210</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 246

Venetian culture, and also his acceptance as a leading character on the Early Modern stage is in part due to his social rank. Within the opening of the play, Shakespeare continuously presents Othello as a man of nobility. He reasserts how he is ancestrally descended from “men of royal siege”<sup>211</sup> (1.2.22.), and his social position within Venice ensures that he is “oft invited” (1.3.129) into the homes of the prosperous and powerful social elite. Shakespeare thus categorises Othello in the grouping of noble Moors. With this, comparisons can be drawn between him and the ambassadorial visitors which Londoners would have been familiar with, and to differ Othello from the Moors that were deemed “public nuisances”<sup>212</sup> by the Queen in her notorious request to banish all blackamoors from the realm.<sup>213</sup>

Throughout the opening act of the play, Othello is treated, in the most part, with the respect due his noble rank and military prowess. The Duke refers to him as “valiant Othello” (1.3.49), and a messenger acknowledges him as a “most worthy signor” (1.2.92). His presence within the upmost ranks of Venetian society is not however without its opposition. This hostility comes predominantly from the character of Brabantio who objects to the relationship between Othello and his daughter, Desdemona. Brabantio refers to him as “O thou foul thief” (1.2.62). Additionally, Roderigo, who is also in love with Desdemona and resents Othello’s position as her lover, describes him as “the thick lips” (1.1.66) and “the lascivious Moor” (1.1.126). Othello’s position within Venice in the opening stages of the play, is antithetically therefore both celebrated and unwanted. This varied response, is reflective of the periods’ perception on the Moorish and Ottoman delegates in London. Jonathan Burton crucially notes how the “Ottoman and Moroccan ambassadors to London, “while they were welcome in their official capacity and in regards to state functions, Muslim ambassadors were often reviled as infidels in their nonofficial, personal, and day to day affairs.”<sup>214</sup> The tolerance exhibited in the professional and official capacity is an element drawn upon and referenced by Othello himself. “Othello is confident that his service to the state, his position, and his lineage will “out tongue (1.2.19) the complaints of his powerful and unwilling father in law, Brabantio.”<sup>215</sup> On a personal level however, Othello’s presence, and more specifically, his relationship with Desdemona presents a situation of dramatic tension, and is fundamental in the unravelling of Othello’s position within Venetian Society. Shakespeare, like Dekker places exogamous relations as a central theme of the narrative.

In *Lust’s Dominion*, Thomas Dekker’s use of cross-cultural relationships seems to be one which is used mainly to demonstrate a conflict of power. The Moorish Eleazar undermines the sanctity of

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<sup>211</sup> Honigmann, *The Arden Shakespeare; Othello*. (London: Arden Shakespeare Bloomsbury, 1997): Text references are to Act, scene, and line number in this edition.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>213</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 100.

<sup>214</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 246-7.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

the Spanish King's Christian marriage by having participated in an adulterous relationship with the King's wife. By doing this, and as previously stated, Burton attributes this relationship, and indeed all exogamous relationships as an exploration into the "threatened and over-powered bodies of Christian men"<sup>216</sup> against the might and military excellence of the Islamic world. Elliot Tokson, suggests however that the Spanish Queen is acting solely under her "voracious sexual appetite seeking satisfaction where tradition already determined it could be found, in the embraces of a black man."<sup>217</sup> This idea of lust for the exotic has also been fundamental to historic readings of *Othello*, Honigmann draws upon seventeenth century criticism from Thomas Rymer who notes how the moral of the play can purely be read as "a caution to all Maidens of Quality how without their Parents' consent, they run away with Blackamoors."<sup>218</sup> This is of course an element which features in the text, Brabantio, Desdemona's father implores how "Fathers, from hence trust not your daughter's minds" (1.1.167). Brabantio deplors how his daughter eloped and married Othello without permission.

Brabantio's anger at the situation is notably directed solely at Othello rather than his daughter. Brabantio believes that the only conceivable way in which his daughter, a white woman would be able to love a Moor, would be through some manner of African witchcraft. He states how "thou hast enchanted her" (1.2.63), and that Othello has placed his daughter "in chains of magic" (1.2.65), and also that "thou hast practised on her with foul charms, Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals" (1.2.74-5). This passage of text is noteworthy, not only because it demonstrates prevailing racially prejudiced sentiments concerning race and its associations with paganism, but it also highlights the Venetian citizen's activation and suspension in their tolerance for outsiders within the city. Prior to his marriage to Desdemona, Othello recalls how "Her father loved me, oft invited me, still questioned me the story of my life" indeed, this is the exotic element of Othello's character which initially wooed Desdemona. We are told how with Othello's stories of his past, "Would Desdemona seriously incline", she would listen to Othello "with a greedy ear" (1.3.150). Whereas Desdemona's love for Othello is able to see beyond, or is indeed formed by his Islamic past and exotic nature, Brabantio's love however is conditional. He is able to accept Othello on official business, yet it is unacceptable to him for a Moor to be fully assimilated into his own family. The love which he once felt for Othello soon dissipates, "Brabantio quickly acquiesces to the street level slander"<sup>219</sup> which labels Othello as a "Barbary horse" (1.1.110), an "abuser of the world" (1.1.78), and as "an old black ram" (1.1.87). Jonathan Burton states how Brabantio's "shifting view of Othello reflects the [...] consequential ease with which these strangers [within

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>217</sup> Elliot Tokson, *The popular image of the Black Man in English Drama, 1550- 1688*. (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co, 1982):95.

<sup>218</sup> Honigmann, *Othello*.29.

<sup>219</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 250.

England] moved from admiration” to hatred. For Brabantio, parental concern for his daughter surpasses the positive military attributes which Othello offers the State.

The integration of Othello into Venetian culture as a whole, is reflective of this relationship between Brabantio and Othello. Within the play, Venice consistently operates under the pretence of multiculturalism, but ultimately the acceptance of Othello is never truly achieved. The Venice which Shakespeare presents is not the multicultural city which the name “Venice” traditionally denotes. David McPherson states how, in Early Modern English minds, Venice was “a centre of International trade and commerce which made possible the flowering of Italian Renaissance paintings, architecture, and culture.”<sup>220</sup> This contrast between previously conceived ideas about Venice and the dramatized city of Shakespeare’s creation, “activates a disturbing paradigm dependant on the city’s multicultural reputation.”<sup>221</sup> The Venice presented is a divided city, one that works through certain dynamics between a “persecutory Christian culture, and a potentially savage alien—a Turk, a Moor, or a Jew—who exists both without and within the city.”<sup>222</sup> By this understanding, we must assume that all persecution and discriminatory torment which Othello faces is directly related to both his Islamic past and dark skin.

By this notion, it is in line with this understanding, that Othello’s success within Venice would therefore be based upon his ability to disassociate himself from that element of his character. It appears that one of Othello’s tactics is, to make his precarious social position more stable, proving himself to be truly Christian and European, is to speak bombastically of his prior conflict against the “insolent foe” (1.3.139). Othello talks of his fights against the infidel “Turkes” and “Mohammetans” in North Africa and Venice. He also, criticises the Christian nature of Cassio and Roderigo, upon learning of the fight between Cassio and Roderigo, Othello exclaims “why, how now, ho! From whence ariseth this? Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that which Heaven hath forbid the Ottomites? For Christian shame put by this barbarous brawl” (2.3. 165- 8). Harold Bloom believes that with this passage, an Early Modern audience would have found “something rather galling about being lectured by a former Muslim on Christian behaviour.”<sup>223</sup> In addition to this, I would argue that by continuously trying to distance himself from his Islamic past, the effect is quite different to his original intentions; rather than quelling his Muslim heritage, he simply highlights it.

Eleazar and Othello are within a unique group of characters of Muslim heritage who are placed within a European environment and who convert, either forcefully or of their own will, to

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<sup>220</sup> David Mcpherson, *Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Myth of Venice*. (Newark: University of Delaware press, 1998): 28.

<sup>221</sup> Maurice Hunt, *Shakespeare’s Venetian Paradigm: Stereotyping and Sadism in The Merchant of Venice and Othello*. (California: Ebsco Publishing, 2003): 163.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Bloom, *Othello*, 125.

Christianity. It is far more commonplace in Early Modern dramatic works, such as Robert Darbourne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke* (1612) and Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624), to have, as a central theme, a Christian Individual who converts to Islam. This theme was popularised in drama for several reason, firstly because the concept of conversion was an issue which was heavily feared by those in Early Modern England. There was a prevalent belief of Protestants, "that the Devil, the Pope, and the Turk all desired to convert god Protestant souls to a state of damnation."<sup>224</sup> Daniel Vitkus states how the English had genuine reason to feel trepidation about the "imperial power of the Ottoman Turks, who were conquering and colonizing Christian territories in Europe and the Mediterranean."<sup>225</sup> In addition to this, there are historical accounts from the period which indicate that there were indeed sizable occurrences of English Christians who adopted the Muslim faith, or "Turned Turk", as was the popular saying. Nabil Matar notes how "in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English travellers to Ottoman territories were struck by the sight of Christians who had converted to Islam [...] this not only saddened the visitor, but frightened him too."<sup>226</sup> Despite the factuality of these conversions, the drama of the period is marked by a startling omission, as throughout the entire body of Early Modern literature, there is not "a single instance of successful conversion to Islam."<sup>227</sup> The antithesis to this also rings true, as Eleazar and Othello are of course unsuccessful with their conversion and cultural integration. Othello's inability to convert fully, I would suggest, is due to varying factors which are including, but not limited to Early Modern perceptions on race and Islam, and the geohumoural implications which are associated with this.

In the tragic final scene of *Othello*, I believe that Shakespeare crucially draws attention to the fact that Othello has been circumcised. In the moments prior to Othello's climactic suicide, he takes by the throat "the circumcised dog and smote him thus" (5.2. 353). The significance of this lies in the physical and irreversible signifier of his affiliation to the Muslim world which cannot be undone through any conversion to Christianity. Othello's race also, bears the mark of inescapable religious difference. In the minds of Early Modern English theatregoers, it can be understood that his skin tone and cultural background, not only set him visually apart from the Venetian characters on stage, but it drives every aspect of his character also. With Othello's character failings being well documented, it is noteworthy that the jealous aspects of his character which leads him to fall victim to Iago's manipulations, are not solely limited to Othello. Instead, "the green eyed monster" (2.2.170) which has become synonymous with Othello, was attributed to all Muslims on the Early Modern stage. As in Elizabethan England, the word "Moor" became frequently associated with

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<sup>224</sup> Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor*. (Washington DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1997):145.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Matar, *The renegade in English Seventeenth Century Imagination*, 489.

<sup>227</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 93.



jealousy. These prevailing associations between Islam and jealousy stem primarily from several of Shakespeare's primary sources for the play. The 1600 work of writer and colonial administrator, John Pory reinforces this stereotype. Pory writes in his translations of African Diplomat, Leo Africanus' *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, how the "Moors were the most jealous people in the world."<sup>228</sup> In addition to this, another of Shakespeare's sources can also be seen to influence the character of Othello. *Un Capitano Moro*, a story in the prose work *Hecatommithi*, first published in Venice in 1565 by Giovanni Battista Giraldi features the character which is the inspiration for Shakespeare's Desdemona. In *Un Capitano Moro*, the Desdemona character states how "Moors are so hot by nature that any little thing moves them to anger and revenge."<sup>229</sup> This Early Modern preoccupation with the concept of a "Moors' hot nature" can be attributed to the climatic or geohumoral understanding of race, as previously described by Mary Floyd Wilson.

The influence of this is evident when examining the manner in which Shakespeare's Desdemona speaks of Othello, she states how "the sun where he was born drew all such humours from him" (3.4.28-9), and also that he is not "in favour as in him humour alter'd" (3.4. 126). By this sixteenth and century understanding of race, it can be assumed that Othello's personality traits and actions are not his own. I believe that in the instance of Othello, his race and all derogatory associations with "blackness", is inseparable from his Islamic heritage. I agree with Jonathan Burton who notes how Othello's race bears more of a "political colour" than a specific national identity, and that "somatic markers often functioned as indications for religious difference in Early Modern England."<sup>230</sup> I believe how the climactic final scene of the play reinforces this idea. Immediately after murdering Desdemona, it is notable that Othello has undertaken a fundamental shift from Venetian General to a "malignant and turbaned Turk" (5.2. 351). Daniel Vitkus reinforces this by stating how "by killing Desdemona, Othello Turns Turke once more."<sup>231</sup> Shakespeare achieves this transition by manipulating Othello's dialogue in his final speech to highlight his Muslim heritage. Othello speaks of the

Base Indian, threw a pearl away  
 Richer than all his tribe; one of whose subdued eyes  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
 Drops tears as fast as Arabian trees  
 Their medicinable gum. Set you down this,  
 And ay besides that in Aleppo once,  
 Where a malignant and turbaned Turk  
 Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
 I took by th' throat the circumcised dog  
 And smote him thus. (5.2.345- 353)

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<sup>228</sup>Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, 132.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>230</sup>Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 251.

<sup>231</sup>Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk in Othello*, 176.

It is noteworthy that in this final speech, the uncertainty of Othello's precise origin is made all the more unclear with the Moor of Venice, referencing the base Indian, Arabian trees, Aleppo, and referring to himself as a Turk. It is unquestionable therefore that specificities of race are almost entirely irrelevant. In order to highlight this belief, Jonathan Burton draws upon Queen Elizabeth's "notorious warrant of 1596, calling for the deportation of eighty nine black people. Here Elizabeth places "those kinde of people" in contradiction to her own Christian subjects."<sup>232</sup> Shakespeare has thus created a binary state of insider and outsider, Honigmann notes how in this instance, Othello is "more than a stranger, he comes from a mysterious other world, a world that lies beyond our reach, hinted at rather than defined."<sup>233</sup>

The final scene of the play is significant in a number of ways; not only does it demonstrate Othello's transition from Venetian to Turk, but with Othello's suicide, Shakespeare establishes a sense of dramatic irony. Othello's death fulfils the role initially set out for him as a Venetian General. The dormant Muslim aspect of his character, the enemy within his own character has been destroyed. Thomas Cartelli believes that it is a return to the barbarism in what he has termed the "Othello complex". The complex functions as an "anthropologised racial construction in which the assimilated savage predictably relapses into primitivism under stress."<sup>234</sup> I would agree again with Jonathan Burton, who suggests that it is not through some inevitable relapse into a savagery which drives him to murder and suicide, it is instead through the "perverse version of the logic of Christian society"<sup>235</sup> and the ideologies associated with this which are instrumental in his demise.

The dramatic climax which this presents can be seen to conclude the shift of Othello's character and the deterioration of his societal position within Venice. The root of Othello's failings lie in the racially and religiously motivated prejudices, and geohumoural and climactic notions of race, held by those in Early Modern England. These ideas of race acted as the driving force for Othello's irrational jealousy and his poorly directed anger. In addition to this however, I would suggest how the gradual unravelling of Othello's position, bears a striking resemblance to the conditional reception of London's Ottoman and Moroccan ambassadorial and merchant visitors. Burton states that, "though the English were certainly prepared to accept the brief visits of Islamic ambassadors, they were equally prepared to see those ambassadors stripped of their dignity,"<sup>236</sup> as they were favoured only in their official capacity, and indeed this was conditional on their segregation from the English populace. Within the closing scene of the play, Othello himself raises the question upon Desdemona's death as to "where should Othello go" (5.2.269) now. Othello has now truly become

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>233</sup> Honigmann, *Othello*, 27.

<sup>234</sup> Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, postcolonial appropriations*. (London: Routledge, 1999): 123.

<sup>235</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 254.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 249.

the “stranger of here and everywhere” (1.1.134-5) and as he looks to his own position in society, he notes how without the advocacy of a white Christian wife, his continued existence within Venice is in no way possible or sustainable. Othello’s role as a distinguished military commander, was at first celebrated, yet as he ingratiated himself more intricately in Venetian society, through the marriage of an upper-class white woman, he rapidly lost favour. Othello’s inability to successfully assimilate into a Christian society highlights the unstable nature of cross cultural diplomacy. Othello’s race marked his differing religious heritage, and this drove his own character, his treatment by Venetians in the play, and also his reception on the Early Modern English stage.

## Conclusion

Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I sat on the English throne in a period of highly charged volatility. Early Modern Europe was steeped in religious conflict, political tension, and economic instability. Within England, in the closing years of the sixteenth century, notions of race were “neither stable nor transcendental, and notions of religious difference became increasingly fluid and inconsistent.”<sup>237</sup> This can be seen as a direct result of England’s developing commercial and diplomatic encounters with Muslim peoples, in addition to the socio-political pressures at home and abroad. England’s engagement with the Muslims of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire saw numerous pamphlets with an Islamic preoccupation descend onto the market place. Dramatic work focused on the Muslim world also. In between the years of 1579 and 1624, Jonathan Burton notes how “over sixty dramatic works featuring Islamic themes, characters, or settings were produced in England.”<sup>238</sup> Throughout these literary and dramatic works, the representations of the Islamic world or its Muslim inhabitants ranged drastically, from admiration to hatred.

Elizabeth I’s relationship with the Muslim world was one manufactured out of necessity. Elizabeth’s reign was plagued by the ongoing war with Spain, and this conflict was “heightened more than it was mollified by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.”<sup>239</sup> The war with Spain not only negatively impacted the country due to military insecurity, but created economic turmoil also. Ahmad Al Mansur of Morocco provided a much needed commercial enterprise, in addition to the possibility of cooperative military action against the Spanish. This beneficial political manoeuvring gave way to a period of pamphleteering and drama which hailed this Anglo Moroccan alliance, as well as deeply praising the reign of the Moroccan Sultan, Ahmad Al-Mansur. George Peele’s 1594 play, *The Battle of Alcazar* raises the Moroccan Sultan to semi divine heights, characterising him as pious, noble, and merciful. The pamphlets of the period, followed a similar standpoint to this, widely hailing the Moroccan ruler as a “moral champion who stoutly and vigorously made use of his undaunted courage.”<sup>240</sup> It is noteworthy that in neither *The Battle of Alcazar*, nor any of the relating pamphlets, made any crude anti-Islamic prejudices towards the Moroccan Sultan. Instead, they are viewed with the respect which acknowledges the invaluable relationship held between England and Morocco at this time.

The Anglo Moroccan alliance established by Elizabeth and Ahmad Al Mansur became considerably less significant after the death of the English and Moroccan rulers in 1603. Upon

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<sup>237</sup> Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, 12.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>239</sup> Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor, From Alcazar to Othello*, 102.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

James I's ascension to the English throne, the King moved to broker peace with Spain, and thus consequently neglect the previously established ties which Elizabeth had created with the Muslim world. James was unquestionably pacifistic, and driven by a Eurocentric world view which moved to establish peace, in a period of burgeoning hostility on the continent. James' attention was focused firmly within European territories, and consequently, relations between England and the Islamic world began to wither. The extent of this is highlighted in the literature of the period. Under the rule of King James, pamphleteers also drew upon the events of the battle of Alcazar. The tone and nature of these pamphlets are however markedly different. Whereas Elizabethan pamphleteers portray the Moroccans with admiration, Jacobean pamphleteers such as William Bedwell, work only to highlight the religious differences between Christian and Muslim; drawing on the growing fears which the Jacobean public held with regards to the threat of piracy and the lure of conversion. Ultimately pamphleteers can be seen to vilify all Moroccans and Ottomans without acknowledging the vital allegiances which were present during the reign of Elizabeth. The attitudes of Islamophobia which were established under the reign of James I, accelerated further in their hostilities upon Charles' ascension to the throne. Pamphleteers were unable to draw upon positive political discourse to influence their Islamic subject matter, simply because little or no cross cultural dialogue occurred at this time. Caroline pamphleteers instead operated on the other end of the spectrum. Certain pamphlets invoked fear and hatred, whereas other pamphlets, such as the *Letter sent from the Great Turk sent unto to the Prince of Transylvania*, openly called for crusade, willing the English to stand alongside their Christian European brethren, and to take up arms against the "infidel" Turk.

The reasons for such negative representations of the Muslim world under the rule of Charles I are complex and multifaceted. It is possible to believe that it was the sheer absence of Anglo Islamic diplomacy which forced the hand of prejudice. In addition to this, it is also necessary to examine the wider European political climate at this time. In the period of the thirty year's war, in which James and Charles reigned, there was a collective sense of war weariness within the increasingly insular society. It is also possible to believe, that throughout the reign of Charles I, the public were in a state of turmoil due to the evidently failing monarchy. A national sense of identity can thus be created amongst the public by forming a collective movement of hatred against one common Islamic enemy. It is noteworthy however that representations of the Muslim world and its peoples were not exclusively negative during the Jacobean and Caroline monarchy, in the same way that representations were not exclusively positive throughout the reign of Elizabeth.

Queen Elizabeth's notorious decree to banish all blackamoors and plea for "those kinde of people [to be] sent out of the lande"<sup>241</sup> offers official voice to an idea of racial cleansing which resonates

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 100.

throughout Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* written in 1600. The play concerns the unstable position of Muslims in Spain during the Inquisition. With this reading of the play, it is clear how Dekker shows an awareness to events on the Continent, and how this influences the subject matter and representations of Muslims on English stage. In addition to being aware of wider European politics, dramatists such as Shakespeare drew upon prevailing Early Modern notions of race and religion to formulate his character of Othello. It can also be believed that Othello's unstable and unravelling position within Venice, across the five acts of the play, is simply a mirroring of the position of the Muslims diplomats or merchants who visited London. Their reception within England, is alike Othello's in Venice; both are welcome, but the sustainability of their presence is conditional on the longevity of their visit, and also their relative segregation. This understanding hints towards the collective power of a public entity within Early Modern England, and how this collective thought can hold an influence on literary and dramatic work.

Conclusively, it can be understood that representations of Ottoman and Moroccan Muslims on the Early Modern stage, and in the pamphlets off the period also, are indeed heavily influenced by the political nature of each individual monarch. In order to gain a greater understanding however, each text must be read with a consideration of the cultural and historical environment at the time in which they were written. Ultimately we can see how representations of Muslims in literature and drama, were as dynamic, as susceptible to change, and as volatile as the Early Modern Period itself.

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