Representations of Islam and Muslims

in

Early Modern English Drama from Marlowe to Massinger

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ABSTRACT

The representation of Islam and Muslims in early modern English drama draws heavily on the Christian polemical tradition established in the Middle Ages. That polemic was the product of hostility and hatred and consequently sought to construct Islam as the negation of Christianity; the Prophet Muhammad as an impostor, an evil sensualist, an Antichrist; Muslims as violent and barbaric. The whole Islamic world was seen as the fearful enemy which had to be checked and ultimately destroyed.

It was in this spirit of religious hostility that imaginative Christian European narratives, from the Middle Ages on, deliberately sacrificed accuracy for the sake of constructing a negative image of Islam and Muslims that was relevant to the polemical purposes of their representations. Two outstanding themes emerge from these representations: namely that the Islamic East was the realm of lascivious sensuality and inherent violence. Early modern English dramatists, from Marlowe to Massinger, readily employed these themes. Nevertheless, some authors, like Marlowe, were imaginative enough to transcend the limitations of a crudely hostile representation of Islam and Muslims by using them as means to question the foundations of Christian culture, or to articulate their individual positions, or both. Other authors, like Peele, Kyd, and Massinger, used representations of Muslims as analogues for the divisive conflicts within the body of Christendom and as instruments of propaganda in the continuing war between rival Christian sects. Fulke Greville, on the other hand, deployed the Islamic setting and Muslim characters as instruments to raise his concerns about the moral and philosophical issues

pertaining to the question of the relationship between tyrannical order and democratic anarchy in the fallen state of spiritual depravity.

In general, however, representations of Islam and Muslims in early modern English drama tended to reinforce the Christians' perceptions of their own cultural and moral superiority. They also served to confirm for the Christians their long-established preconceptions. The long history of conflict between the two religions helped to keep these perceptions and preconceptions firmly embedded in the theatrical productions of Renaissance England.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: ISLAM in ENGLISH LITERATURE

I. When Tamburlaine triumphantly demanded

> where's the Turkish Alcaron,
> And all the heaps of superstitious books
> Found in the temples of that Mahomet
> Whom I thought a god? They shall be burnt.
>
> (II *Tamburlaine*, 5.1.172-75)[1]

he was making reference to certain views of Islam, its Prophet, and its Holy Book, The Koran, that had been traditionally held in the Christian West since medieval times. For Marlowe's contemporaries, the Prophet Muhammad was an idol and Islam a pagan and dangerous religion that must be feared, resisted, and ultimately destroyed.[2] To the relief and delight of the audience, Tamburlaine was also marking the ultimate act of humiliation against Islam, having swiftly and unceremoniously subdued almost all the Muslim territories in Asia and Africa.

Furthermore, because of the menacing presence of the Muslim Ottomans, who had conquered a number of Christian lands in Central Europe, including Hungary and Serbia, sixteenth-century England was in a state of increasing anxiety about the threat of Islam. The threat was more real than historians have often imagined, and by the first half of the seventeenth century no Englishman could ignore the threatening Turkish naval incursions on the south coast of England.[3] That anxiety was reflected in the manner in which Islam and Muslims were represented in Renaissance literature, especially drama.

The relation between Islam and English literature may be described as a relation between two different cultures and two different religious systems conditioned by various historical and geographical factors.[4] From its birth the Christians reacted to Islam with deep hostility as did Judaism to Christianity. Given the many violent encounters between Islam and Christianity - the conquest of the lands of the Christian East in Syria and Egypt, the conquest of Spain and Sicily, the Crusades, the re-conquest of Sicily and Spain, and the rise and expansion into Christian Europe of the Ottoman Empire - that hostility could only have deepened and strengthened with the passing centuries. Marshall W. Baldwin remarked that Islam was the only religion, 'subsequent in time to Christianity', which had 'taken from it large territories and inflicted upon it major military defeats.'[5] This fact continued to nurture and augment the feeling of hostility toward Islam long after the Islamic threat was finally contained, when in 1683 the Ottomans were driven back from the walls of Vienna, and, as Paul Coles observes in *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* (1968), 'were obliged to sue for peace and to accept the hard terms of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.'[6]

Given this continuing Christian consciousness of the power of Islam, it is not surprising that there is no lack of references to Islam, The Koran, and the Prophet Muhammad in English literature. Most of these references, being the product of hatred, fear, ignorance and prejudice, are negative. Islam was viewed as a false religion founded on deceit which employed either force or sexual license to lure people to its ranks, and it was considered to have no merits in its own right. The Koran, the Holy Book of Islam, was regarded

either as the dictation of the devil,[7] or a collection of lies manufactured by the Prophet Muhammad with the help of renegade Christians and devious Jews.[8] The Prophet was repeatedly referred to as an anti-Christ, an accomplished liar, an idol, and an impostor. These attitudes were the legacy of the Christian polemicists of the Middle Ages. Most of these attitudes survived through to the nineteenth century, and some continue to survive even today.[9]

When Islam overwhelmed the lands of Christendom in the East, and a great multitude of Christians converted to the new religion, it was very natural, as Norman Daniel observes in *Islam, Europe, and Empire* (1966), for the Christian communities to develop 'a polemic that would help confirm their members in their faith'.[10] So it was in a spirit of defensiveness that Christianity first reacted to Islam. Medieval Christians created a polemic in which 'the beliefs of the opponent had to be made to seem not only wrong, but so repugnant as to make conversion unthinkable.'[11] In fact, this polemic was directed at the Christians who were particularly vulnerable to conversion rather than at their Islamic enemies, and the polemicists developed a double sided approach to this problem: if Christianity was to be defended against Islam, then Islam must be attacked as false and immoral through attacking the character of its Prophet and its teachings.[12] And if the character of the Prophet could be proved to be incompatible with the accepted definition of prophethood, then Islam and its teachings could be easily disproved and dismissed, and Christianity be reinstated as the one true religion.

The Christian polemical tradition was Oriental in its origin, and St. John of Damascus, who was born less than forty years after the death of the Prophet, is

credited as the founder of this tradition.[13] J. Sahas Daniel informs us that in AD 743 St. John of Damascus wrote a treatise, known in English as the *Fount of Knowledge*, in which he attacks Islam as a heresy,[14] describes it as the 'deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelites, the fore-runner of the Antichrist,'[15] and charges the Prophet Muhammad with being a false prophet.[16] He asserts that the Prophet concocted The Koran from bits of the Old and New Testaments, with the help of a renegade monk, and gave credibility to his concoction by claiming that it 'was brought down to him from heaven.'[17] John of Damascus was the first Christian polemicist to recount the story of Zeinab, wife of Zaid, Muhammad's adopted son, whom the Prophet married after Zaid had divorced her. He attacked the Prophet for what he perceived to be a scandalous marriage and a proof of his lasciviousness. John of Damascus also attacked the Prophet for what he regarded as his shameless readiness to manipulate The Koran by filling it with revelations designed to cater to his own sexual fantasies as well as those of his followers.[18]

The tradition established by John of Damascus of delivering *ad hominem* attacks on the Prophet became a standard for all succeeding Christian polemicists. It is best illustrated by a discourse written in AD 830 by a Christian Arab, entitled *Risalah*, or *The Apology of Al Kindy* as it is known in the West. The author, Abd al Masih ibn Ishaq al Kindy, took on the responsibility of argumentatively repudiating the tenets of Islam and disproving the authority of its Prophet. With a strange blend of fact and fiction he provided medieval Christian polemicists with almost all the material they used in their attempts to discredit Islam through disproving the prophethood of

Muhammad. Al Kindy claimed that Muhammad's orphanage and humble life did not foretell his prophethood;[19] that he showed none of the signs that marked out real Prophets, such as their ability to 'unfold the unseen;'[20] that his sexual activities and impurity were a disproof of his prophethood;[21] that he performed no miracles;[22] that Islam was spread by violence and the use of the sword;[23] that the Prophet's message was Satanic;[24] and that The Koran was manufactured with the help of the schismatic Sergius, the renegade Nestorian monk.[25] Al Kindy was also the first polemicist to recount the legend, which has no foundation in Islam, that the Prophet predicted he would rise three days after his death, whereupon his followers put him in a coffin in Medina. Al Kindy claims that when Muhammad failed to rise after four days some of his closest advisors were forced by the progressive decay of his body to steal the coffin. To save Muhammad the indignity of being proven a liar they took the coffin to Mecca where it remained suspended from the roof of the temple. In the meantime, they falsely claimed that the angels took him there.[26] The legend was to become in the West a primary proof of the Prophet's inability to work miracles as Christ did.

In their eagerness to discredit the Prophet, the medieval Christian polemicists readily adopted the material provided by Al Kindy in order to set up for themselves a universal standard 'against which all prophethood might be tested and Muhammad's be dismissed.'[27] The entire medieval polemic could be summed up in the following three principles: prophets must manifest probity of life, the ability to work true miracles, and their sayings must encapsulate universal truths. Obviously, the intention of this polemic was to

demonstrate that Muhammad's failure to meet any of these criteria was proof enough of the falsity of his claim. When facts of the Prophet's life worked against the purposes of polemic they were easily discarded and others were interpreted and embellished in order to illustrate the theme. In *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (1962), R. W. Southern argues that very few details about the life of the Prophet were available to Western writers apart from a few fictitious details about 'his marriage to a rich widow, his fits, his Christian background, and his plan of general sexual license as an instrument for the destruction of Christendom. But on this meagre framework, to which no chronology could be attached, a great edifice was erected.'[28]

Often as not, when facts that supported their polemical purpose were lacking, the Christian Western writers tended to fabricate their own because they 'thought that whatever tended to harm the enemies of truth was likely itself to be true.'[29] Once these facts had been manufactured and embellished they tended to assume a life of their own.[30] A deliberate selecting and editing of source material and a reliance on hearsay was the rule with regard to Islam. Continental Christian writers, Guibert of Nogent among them, unashamedly admitted that they relied heavily on the *plebeia opinio* for their sources on Islam and Muslims. Guibert even declared: 'It is safe to speak evil of one whose malignity exceeds whatever ill can be spoken.'[31] Within this context, the practice of misrepresenting and misinterpreting the facts of the Prophet's life and the teachings of Islam can be easily understood: faced with a choice between informative accuracy on the one hand and polemical utility on the other, Christian writers opted for the latter.

The standard picture of the Prophet Muhammad and Islam formed by medieval Christian writers, as manifested in the 'Song of Roland' and the account given by Vincent de Beauvais (d. 1264) in his book *Speculum Historiale*,[32] conforms to the practice of misinformation already mentioned. Primarily they presented the Prophet as of low birth, a master deceiver who tricked Khadejah, a rich widow, into marrying him by concealing his epilepsy from her until after the wedding. To appease her he claimed to have been receiving Divine revelations during his seizures: revelations which led to the writing of The Koran. The Christian polemicists insisted that, in fact, the Prophet had craftily manufactured The Koran with the help of Jews and renegade Christians, Sergius among them; a fact which was said to have been demonstrated by the Judaic and Christian elements in the text. Moreover, Muhammad employed conjuring tricks, sleight of hand and force to gain a large following. He simulated revelation to justify his own amorous behaviour and that of his followers. The famous example repeatedly cited is the story of Zeinab bint Jahsh already mentioned. The Christians were shocked and scandalised by what they deemed the 'all but incestuous adultery with the wife of an adopted son.'[33] As far as Islam is concerned, this whole episode and the law promulgated by it were designed to deny 'consanguinity in an adoptive relationship.'[34] For Christians, however, it was an undisputed proof of the Prophet's promiscuity and the laxity of Islamic doctrine.

Other criticisms levelled against the Prophet were based solely on legend. The legend of the dove which the Prophet allegedly trained to eat from his ear in order to convince his followers that he was receiving divine revelation is an

example. This legend has no basis in the Islamic tradition. In the Bible (Matthew III. 16; Luke III. 22), however, there are a few references to the Holy Ghost as a dove which could explain the origin of this legend. The less current legend of the bull which the Prophet allegedly trained to carry The Koran on its horns could be taken either as a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of 'The Cow,' the second Surah (Chapter) of The Koran.

The death of the Prophet received much attention from medieval Christians. He was said to have died in an epileptic fit and to have been devoured by dogs. He was also rumoured to have died of poison administered by a cunning Jewess.[35] But Matthew Paris (1195?-1259) contends that while suffering from the effects of poison, Muhammad got drunk, fell into a pigsty and was devoured by swine.[36] This triple cause of death was held to be fitting for the founder of the Trinitarian heresy. The legend advanced by Al Kindy's *Apology* of the Prophet's failure to fulfil his promise that he would rise three days after his death was retold repeatedly, and consequently gave currency to the legend of the suspended coffin which Marlowe used in *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part II. This last legend clearly owes its origin to the Christian tradition of the resurrection and ascension of Christ more than to Islamic faith. Having been confronted by Islam Christians could only deal with it in terms and concepts they understood and with which they were familiar with little or no regard to its independent if not different nature. In fact, most Muslims found and still find these legends absurd and cannot understand why they were promulgated in the first place. Furthermore, they are still puzzled by the West's inability or

unwillingness to exorcise them despite advances in the field of knowledge and information.

As late as the twentieth century, we find D. B. Macdonald (1863-1943), in his book *Aspects of Islam* (1911), repeating almost all the legends relating to the Prophet's life: his orphanage, his trickery, and his 'trances and fits during which he heard strange things.'[37] Macdonald could barely conceal his enthusiasm when he declared that

> Unless all signs deceive, there lies before Muslim peoples a terrible religious collapse. [...] It is then for the Christian schools and preachers to save these peoples, not only for Christianity but for any religion at all; to vindicate to them the claims upon their lives of religion in the broadest sense.[38]

This zealous missionary, with his proclamation of the great task of saving the Muslims in the name of true religion, echoes the medieval concept of Islam as a Christian heresy, the legend of the Prophet as a renegade Cardinal, and Muslims as apostate Christians not far from salvation. Such a view was firmly held by William of Tripoli, a Dominican at Acre in the thirteenth century, who encouraged Muslims to think that 'Islam and Christianity had much in common and that they themselves were in a fair way to becoming Christians.'[39]

Peter the Venerable, elected the Abbot of Cluny in 1122, in his turn considered Islam to be a great Christian heresy.[40] To him the Muslims were the enemies of Christ only in the sense that they rejected His salvation.[41] However, he opined that they could easily be converted, since they believed that Christ was born of a virgin and actually venerated both Christ and His

mother Mary. In order to achieve their conversion their heresy had to be refuted, which could only be done if accurate information about Islam was made available. To this end Peter the Venerable commissioned the translation of The Koran into Latin, thereby initiating the scholarly study of Islam in Europe.[42] In contrast to the prevailing attitudes of his time Peter the Venerable held the firm conviction that Muslims were not to be approached by 'arms, but by words; not by force, but by reason; not in hatred, but in love.'[43] Unfortunately, this humane conviction is a tribute to Peter's enlightened mind, and it does not necessarily reflect a general change in attitudes toward Islam and Muslims among his contemporaries.

Even with the availability of more accurate information and the spread of more rational views by the middle of the twelfth century, the picture painted of Islam and Muslims remained as negative as ever. The knowledge available was invariably used to confirm prejudices about Islam and Muslims which bore no relation to the reality. Instead, the Christian West 'decided for itself what Islam was, and formed a view materially different from anything Muslims would recognize.'[44] Islam was convicted of every kind of error, to distinguish it from the universal truth possessed by Europe, an attitude which more or less served to affirm Europe's image of itself. To Europe Islam was not an independent entity in its own right but an entity which represented whatever Christianity was not; an entity that was, and to a certain extent still is, Christianity's negative 'other'. It was the enemy of Christendom which denied the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, and the Crucifixion, and sought through violence and impurity to destroy the Christian faith. As the chief adversaries of

Christendom, Islam and Muslims were subjected to the most extravagant excesses of the Western imagination. The result was a popular and distorted set of images which 'outlived the rise and fall of many better systems.'[45]

These negative and distorted images were readily cultivated in works of fiction throughout the Middle Ages from the 'Song of Roland' to the 'Songs of Geste'. In imaginative works like these, the freedom to embellish the picture of Islam and Muslims was even less restricted than in the polemical ones. The Muslims in these works were uniformly idolatrous, violent, and barbaric. The Prophet was an impostor and an idol. French epic poetry, for example, traditionally represents Muslims in the following ways: they are, observes C. Meredith Jones,

> [...] evil people, they spend their lives in hating and mocking at Christ and in destroying his churches. They are the children of the author of all evil, the Devil; like their ancestor, they hate God and are constantly placing themselves under the protection of Satan. [...] They are frequently presented as physical monstrosities; many of them are giants, whole tribes have horns on their heads, others are black as devils. They rush into battle making weird noises comparable to the barking of dogs. They are intensely emotional and excitable people, readily giving way to tears of joy and anger, always going from one emotional extreme to another. Socially, they are the embodiment of all foul practices, simply because they lack the one thing necessary in Christian eyes for perfection - belief in Christianity. Thus they use slaves, they eat their prisoners, they buy and sell their womenfolk; and they

> practice polygamy, which latter, of course, they did in reality. The poets invent for them a host of insulting epithets and periphrases - which are little more than conventional epic phrases - to emphasize the unbelief which is the secret of all their wickedness.[46]

Jones confirms that the medieval Christian writer's conception of Islam and Muslims was not based on factual knowledge but relied on 'ecclesiastical authorities, in whose interest it was to disfigure the beliefs and the customs of the infidels.'[47] By this means, the Muslim becomes the 'crude reversal' of the Christian. He is always the 'other,' the negative. Under such circumstances neither the writer nor hearers and readers were much concerned with the accuracy of representing Muslims. Furthermore, the Western Christians were not prepared to accept any evidence to contradict their hate-inspired image of Islam.[48] Jones concludes by saying that 'being an infidel, the Saracen in our poems is always presented as a treacherous enemy, ready at all times to perjure himself and to betray a trust.'[49]

Nearly all the traditional characteristics given by Christians to Islam and Muslims are reflected in the 'Chanson de Roland,' or 'Song of Roland'. Marsile the king of Saragossa, for example, is one 'who does not love God,' and ultimately 'serves Mohammed and prays to Apollo' (1.ll.7-8).[50] King Marsile is a pagan who worships a number of idols of which Muhammad is only the most important. As well as Apollo, they include Tarmagant, and sometimes even The Koran:

> Marsile has a book brought forward,
>
> It contained the scriptures of Mohammed and Tarmagant.
>
> (47.ll.610-11)

When the pagans prepare for battle they raise the Prophet's coffin to assist them:

> They hoist Mohammed up to the highest tower,
>
> Every single pagan prays to him and adores him. (68.ll.853-54)

In the heat of battle, Marsile's men implore 'Mohammed,' their god, for help, but he deserts them in their hour of need as the devil always deserts his followers. In typical medieval fashion, where Muslims invariably turn against their gods, the defeated Marsile flees to Saragossa with his men where

> They run to an idol of Apollo in a crypt,
>
> They rail at it, they abuse it in vile fashion:
>
> 'Oh, evil god, why do you cover us with such shame?
>
> Why have you allowed this king of ours to be brought to ruin?
>
> You pay out poor wages to anyone who serves you well!'
>
> Then they tear away the idol's scepter and its crown.
>
> They tie it by the hands to a column,
>
> They topple it to the ground at their feet,
>
> They beat it and smash it to pieces with big sticks.
>
> They snatch Travagant's carbuncle,
>
> Throw the idol of Mohammed into a ditch,
>
> And pigs and dogs bite and trample it. (187.ll.2580-91)

The last two lines obviously refer to the legend of the Prophet's death already mentioned: it resembles, in fact, a demonic parody of the re-enactment of Christ's death. As expected, 'Mohammed' fails his followers and king Marsile dies after he hears of the defeat of the Arabian Emir:

> Hearing this, Marsile turns toward the wall,
>
> Tears come to his eyes, he lowers his whole head.
>
> He dies of despair, for sin encumbers him,

He gives his soul to the most hideous devils. (264.ll.3644-47)

The 'Song of Roland' contains most of the traditional topics attached to Islam by medieval Christians from idolatry and infidelity to being ready at all times to perjure and betray their allies and each other. It is not difficult to understand the inimical representation of Muslims in the 'Song of Roland' when we bear in mind that it is a celebration of a Christian's heroism against Muslims in Spain.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is another example of how medieval European literature elaborated on the topics of the Christian polemicists with enthusiasm and vigour. In it we find a close reciprocity between literature and the Church in its representation of Islam and Muslims. The punishment Dante reserves for the Prophet in 'Canto 28' of the *Inferno* reflects the Church's view on him as a schismatic seeking to destroy the true Church - a view which had its origin in the legend of the renegade Cardinal. Consequently, his punishment is to be constantly split in two from his chin to 'where the haunches bend.'[51] The savage nature of the Prophet's punishment which, as Dante sees it, fits his crime, is intensified by the vile description of his 'entrails' and their contents dangling between his legs, and the horrific account of his tearing himself apart, while seemingly exulting in his torment:

> Between his legs the entrails hung; meanwhile
> The midriff, and the paunch were seen confest -
> Receptacle of what is foul and vile.
> While, all intent, on him my sight I bend,
> He eyed me, opening with his hand his breast,
> And said, 'Behold how I my bosom rend!
> Behold how Mahomet is rent in twain!

Before me, cloven upward from the chin

E'en to the brow, walks Ali, racked with pain:

And all the others, whom thou seest forlorn,

On earth sowed seeds of scandal, and the sin

Of schism incurred, and therefore thus are torn.

(*The Inferno*, Canto 28, ll.25-36)

Dante obviously 'identifies Mohammed with the intestines that turn food into faeces, as the false prophet turned the truth into error.'[52] J. S. P. Tatlock observes that the Prophet's punishment in the Ninth Circle of Hell 'is not only the most hideous mutilation of all in this valley; it is hardly equalled anywhere else in the *Inferno* for repulsiveness, certainly not for ignoble bodily exposure and grotesqueness of description.'[53] The savagery of the Prophet's punishment suggests how seriously Dante took the threat posed by Islam and Muslims to the Christian Church. Tatlock argues that the Church lost its unity and stability through the Prophet Muhammad and that in the *Purgatorio* (Canto 32.ll.130-135) Dante makes it clear that 'the breaking away of the floor of the church's chariot by a dragon seems to symbolize the loss'.[54] Ali's punishment is less horrific than the Prophet's (he is split from the chin to the brows) simply because he, like many others, is an unhappy victim of the master deceiver.

Indeed, strikingly enough, Dante places three Muslims in Limbo in the First Circle of Hell (*The Inferno*, Canto 9) among the virtuous pagans and men of genius. Two of them, Avicenna and Averroes, are men of science and philosophy of the Aristotelian school; the third, Saladin, is the famous antagonist of the Crusaders who was celebrated for his chivalric qualities. The inclusion of the first two is not an example of religious tolerance but a reluctant

acknowledgement of the fact that Islamic culture had preserved some of the most important works of the classical tradition - a point that seemed to be largely ignored in the Renaissance. The inclusion of Saladin is a recognition of the qualities of the noble pagan who though not baptised, deserves respect and honour. He is one of a number of honourable Muslims who emerge from time to time in Western literature and provide an interesting variation on the theme of intransigent hostility that dominates Christian representations of Muslim leaders.

Tatlock argues that there are two ways of viewing Islam and its Prophet in the writings and literature of the medieval West. The more widespread is the one which

> exaggerates the theological differences from Christianity, with its notions of idolatry, the unblest trinity Mahound, Apollin, Tervagant, and the like; and is the popular view, found in romances, ill-informed chronicles and elsewhere. There is much of it even in the Crusade chronicles.[55]

To this view belong the 'Song of Roland,' the English romances and mystery plays, and generally speaking, all popular literature. Then there is the more learned view which is

> based on better knowledge; it tends to be biographical and historical, and to show more of the true relation of Mohammed and his religion to Christianity, but usually with little as to his theology. At times it is intelligent and comparatively unprejudiced; in most writers it is garbled and bitterly hostile, sometimes the offspring of crusading zeal.[56]

To the latter tradition belong Dante, William of Tripoli, and Peter the Venerable.

In England the knowledge of Islam came from continental Europe mainly through the channels of the Catholic Church by way of Latin texts, most notably the Latin translation of The Koran authorised by Peter the Venerable and 'completed in 1143 by the English scholar Robert of Keaton.'[57] Another example of those texts was the *Chronica Majora* by Matthew Paris (1195-1259), a monk of St. Albans, in which he introduced many ideas which were current at the time about Islam and Muslims.[58] Other channels of information included word of mouth derived from pilgrimages and Crusades, as well as from travellers and scholars who travelled to the world of Islam in search of the knowledge possessed by Arab and Muslim scholars and brought back accounts of their travels and sources from their researches. The most prominent of those scholars was the mathematician Daniel Merlac, who, as was the fashion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, 'went to study in Toledo in 1185, bringing back with him into England several books of "Arabian philosophy," and therefore, presumably, more information about Islam.'[59] By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries travel literature, such as Mandeville's highly derivative *Travels* (c.1357), helped circulate important material about Islam and Muslims. However, as one might expect, the image projected was dramatically distorted.

Although the channels through which the knowledge of Islam reached England were varied, it was the channel of literature through which it found its most important and popular expression.[60] In the early English romances and cyclical plays the Muslims were generally represented as pagans and the

Prophet as their evil god, much in the mould of the 'Song of Roland'. In 'Piers Plowman,' for instance, the Prophet is in hell in the company of Lucifer:

> Set Mahond at the mangonel and mulle-stones throweth
>
> And with crokes and with kalketrappes acloye we hem uchone!
>
> (Passus XXI, ll.292-93)[61]

The poem repeats the legends of the renegade Cardinal and the dove. Clearly disenchanted with the Church, Muhammad devises his own religion to destroy it. In his grand design he

> Daunted a dowve, and day and nyght hire fedde.
>
> The corn that she croppede, he caste it in his ere;
>
> And if he among the peple preched, or in places come,
>
> Thanne wolde the clovere come to the clerkes ere
>
> Menynge as after mete. (Passus XV, ll.399-403)[62]

Thus through cunning and deceit Muhammad dupes people into believing that the dove was the Holy Ghost bringing him Divine inspiration. In this diabolical manner he is able to lure people away from the kingdom of salvation into the kingdom of damnation (Passus XV, ll.405-410). The poem nevertheless expresses the charitable view that the pagan Muslims, as well as the Jews, will one day see the light, convert and be saved:

> Sarsens and Sarre, and so forth alle the Jewes -
>
> Turn into the trewe feith and intil oon bileve.
>
> (Passus XIII, ll.209-210)

It should be noted here that, in the Middle Ages, the word Saracens which denotes the Arabs of the desert was used interchangeably with Paynims (pagans) and almost all non-Christians, including, of course, the Muslims.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), on the other hand, demonstrated more regard for accuracy in his treatment of the subject of inter-marriage in 'The Man of Law's Tale'. When the Sultan of Syria asks for the hand of beautiful Constance, the Christian Emperor's daughter, he is duly told that

> no cristen prince wolde fayn
> Wedden his child vnder oure lawes swete
> That vs was taught by Mahoun oure prophete. (ll.222-24)[63]

Here Muhammad is not a god but a prophet. However, the Sultan is represented as a man willing to renounce his religion for the sake of a Christian lady, an idea that was to became a motif in Western literary tradition. Among other things, it substantiates one of the charges levelled against Muslims, which was that they allowed themselves to be driven by their carnal pleasures. Chaucer, one might add, is apparently aware that The Koran was the Holy Book of Islam, not an idol, as many of his contemporaries believed. Such an awareness is demonstrated in the response of the Sultan's mother to her son's proposed marriage:

> 'Lordes,' quod she, 'Ye knowen euerychon
> How that my sone in point is for to lete
> The holy lawes of oure Alkaron,
> Yeuen by goddes message Makomete.
> But oon avow to grete god I hete:
> The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte
> Than Makometes lawe out of my herte'. (ll.330-36)

The zealous opposition of the Sultan's devout mother to the proposed marriage to a Christian may be better understood against the background of the plan devised in the thirteenth century by the Frenchman Pierre Dubois of arranging

marriages between Christian women and Muslim men as a means of converting the heathen. That plan, of which Chaucer could have had knowledge, was part of a learned and comprehensive Christian strategy to deal with the question of Islam as Dubois saw it. It included planned education, linguistic domination and commercial exploitation.[64] The Sultan's mother in Chaucer's tale was obviously aware that, as a matter of principles, inter-marriage was potentially dangerous insofar as it sows the seeds of religious and cultural contamination. The theme of inter-marriage is the focal point of discussion in many Elizabethan plays including Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* and Massinger's *The Renegado*, two of the plays to be discussed later on.

A very much less informed approach is taken by John Lydgate (1370-1451) in his treatment of the Prophet in *The Fall of Princes*, Book IX (1440), where he gives an extensive account of his life and teachings. What is remarkable about Lydgate is the fact that he succeeds in incorporating in this account almost all the legends about the Prophet current at the time: his falsehood, magic skills, deceit, low birth, epilepsy, and sensuality. He begins the account by describing the Prophet as follows:

> A false prophete and a magicien,
> As bookis olde weel reherse can.
> Born in Arabia but of low kynreede,
> Al his lyue an idolastre in deede. (IX, ll.53-56)[65]

Lydgate repeats the claim that the Prophet had Judaic and Christian schooling and background (IX, ll.60-63), that he wooed Khadejah, his first wife, 'through his sotil fals[e] daliaunce' (IX, l.69), and that he falsely claimed to be a 'Messie'. As Lydgate tells it, Muhammad explained away his epileptic fits by

claiming he was in receipt of Divine revelation (IX, ll.86-91). He also repeats the legend of the Prophet Muhammad and the tame dove (IX, ll.92-98), and the legend of Sergius as the co-author of The Koran (IX, ll.113-14). He accuses the Prophet of being an idolater who 'made Sarsyns to worshep the Friday' (IX, l.134), which may have arisen from the setting, by Muslims, of Friday as a special day of worship. Lydgate accuses the Prophet of hypocrisy for allegedly demanding his followers to do one thing, only to do the opposite himself on account of special privileges granted him by God (IX, ll.139-40). This perceived moral duplicity of Islam would be emphasised by Donusa, the Turkish Princess in Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624), in her rebuke of the double standards of Muslim men.

The manner of the Prophet's death receives special attention from Lydgate. He favours the undignified legend relating to the Prophet as being intoxicated when he suffered an epileptic fit, fell into a pigsty and was eaten by its occupants:

> Lik a glotoun deied in dronk[e]nesse,
> Bi excesse of mykil drynkyng wyn,
> Fill in a podel, deuoured by swyn. (IX, ll.152-54)

To many Christians this alleged double jeopardy befalling the Prophet is enough to explain why Muslims neither eat pork nor drink wine.

Similarly, the English Cyclical Plays treat Islam and its Prophet in the most distorted manner and in the darkest of colours. Muhammad is not only a false prophet but an idol worshipped by Muslims and a host of other pagans including Herod, the Pharaoh, and Caesar Augustus too. Such a perception of Islam is central to the theme of 'Mary Magdalen' from the *Digby Plays* (1515-

1525). In this play Herod, the king of Jerusalem, swears by his god 'Mahond' and threatens anyone who speaks:

> No noyse, I warne yow, for greveyng of me!
> Yff you do, I xal hovrle of yower hedys, be Mahondys bonys,
> As I am trew kyng to Mahond so fre! (ll.141-43)[66]

The king and Queen of Marsseilles, on the other hand, offer sacrifices to their gods especially 'Mahond' (ll.1139-40), whom the king prays to save his soul:

> Mahownd, [thou] art of mytys most,
> In my syth a gloryus gost -
> [Thou] comfortyst me both in contre and cost,
> Wyth [thy] wesdom and [thy] wytt,
> For truly, lord, in [thee] is my trost.
> Good lord, lett natt my sowle be lost!
> All my cownsell well [thou] wotst,
> Here in [thy] presens as I sett. (ll.1210-17)

The encounter between the king and Mary Magdalen follows the conventions established by the romances - whenever Muslims (Saracens) and Christians clashed, the Muslims were either slaughtered or converted. When, in Jesus' name, Mary asks the king to allow her to dwell in his kingdom he angrily abuses her and Jesus:

> Jhesu? Jhesu? Qwat deylle is hym [that]?
> I defye [thee] and [thine] apenyon!
> Thow false lordeyn, I xal fell [thee] flatt! (ll.1462-64)

and asks who he was and what powers he possessed. Mary counters by explaining how the 'lord' created the heavens and the earth (ll.1481-1525). In response, the king asserts that his god has performed those tasks too (ll.1526-29), then challenges her to go to their temple where he will pray to his god to

convert her. When his god fails to speak (ll.1538-45) Mary prays to the true god instead, the temple is destroyed by fire and the priest sinks into the earth (ll.1555-61). Consequently, the king rejects Muhammad and promises to build Churches, guide his people to Christianity and give himself wholly to Jesus:

> I woll ponysch [s]wych personnys wyth perplyxcyon!
>
> Mahond and hys lawys I defye!
>
> A, hys pryde owt of my love xal have polucyon,
>
> And holle onto Jhesu I me betake! (ll.1985-88)

This conception of the Christian female empowered to convert the Muslim male harks back to the traditional view held by the Christian polemicists with regard to the sensuality and lasciviousness of Muslims and to the plan formulated by Pierre Dubois. Another tradition established by the medieval romances and adopted in the Cyclical Plays is the chiding of the god 'Mahomet' whenever he deserts them, which happens frequently. These conceptions survived well into the Renaissance and beyond.

Even though the negative image of Islam and Muslims was almost universal in the Middle Ages, there were, however, a few instances where this negativity was less pronounced. Some writers, like William of Tripoli, a Dominican at Acre in the 1270s, found much in common between Islam and Christianity, enough in his view for Christians to encourage Muslims to convert.[67]

This same sentiment is expressed by the author of *Mandeville's Travels* (c.1357) who apart from repeating the legends of Sergius and the drunk Muhammad presents an influential and not inaccurate picture of Islam. He also argues that since Muslims honour and revere Jesus and his mother Mary then it should not prove difficult to convert them, 'be cause [th]at [th]ei gon so ny

oure feyth [th]ei ben lyghtly conuerted to cristene lawe whan men preche hem and schewen hem distynctly the lawe of Ihesu crist'.[68] Furthermore, the author praises the virtues of Muslims and their obedience to their law, if only to condemn and reproach his fellow Christians who seem to have neglected the law of Christ - an important matter in Renaissance depictions of Islam. The Muslims are 'gode [and] feythfull, for [th]ei kepen entirely the commandement of the holy book Alkaron [th]at god sente hem be his messager Machomet.'[69] As such the Muslims are granted a 'rightful place in God's creation and in His plan for history,' they are credited with 'a capacity for salvation,' and it is conceded to them that 'in the Koran they already possessed a portion of the truth.'[70]

However, the praise for the Muslims by these writers was motivated by Christian self-interest - converting them or using them as a form of criticism of unacceptable Christian practices. By making the Muslim appear more devout the author's condemnation of his fellow Christians becomes more emphatic and he has a better chance to prod them into shape. In general, however, the attitudes toward Islam and Muslim continued to be shaped by entrenched religious hostility more than by tolerance. Even in the Renaissance, an age that otherwise was shaped by an unprecedented expansion of knowledge and the ascendancy of a humanistic world view, Islam remained a pariah, a rival religion that was feared more than tolerated.

II. During the Renaissance Christian attitudes toward Islam remained as hostile as they were in the Middle Ages. Islam stood accused of being an

indulgent and a false religion, primarily conceived by Muhammad as a conspiracy against Christianity, and spread through violence and deception. The Muslims, though themselves victims of deception, were regarded as sensual infidels and barbarous pagans. That picture was faithfully cultivated in the writings and literature of the sixteenth century.

That century was marked by the rise to political and commercial power of the Turkish Empire, a circumstance which gave European writers the chance to cast the Turks in 'the role of barbarians, the counterpart of the old foes of Greece and Rome'.[71] Thus Turks were represented as 'cruel, of savage habits, and the enemies of culture,'[72] and anti-Islamic prejudice and hostility once again became the fashion.[73] Furthermore, those writers actively adopted the medieval conception of Muslims as the representatives of the anti-Christ and the damned children of Lucifer.[74] Even during the sixteenth century, therefore, the Islamic problem for Christian Europe continued to be perceived as fundamentally a religious problem.[75]

The Turkish threat to Europe was by no means imagined. By 1529 the formidable armies of Soliman the Magnificent laid siege to Vienna, having already conquered Belgrade in 1521, Rhodes in 1522, and Budapest in 1526. In response to this menace the call for a Christendom unified against the Turks reverberated throughout Europe. For example, in *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* (1527-28), set in Hungary where Anthony and his nephew Vincent discuss the threat of an imminent Turkish invasion, Thomas More (1487-1535) urges his fellow Christians, through Anthony, to unite 'in preparacion of a comen power in defence of cristendome against our comen

ennymy the Turke.'[76] The danger according to More was not just military; more frightening was the danger of multitudes of Christians converting to Islam. 'No small part of our own folke that dwell even here about us,' declared Vincent, 'are [...] fallen to [that] false sect of machomete.'[77] Anthony added that this conversion was mainly achieved through force, deceit, and cruelty.[78] He then confidently predicted that the 'vngraciouse sect of Machomete,' would 'haue a foule fall,' and that Christianity would 'spryng and sprede, floure and increase agayne.'[79]

Even Erasmus (1469-1536) who otherwise maintained that offensive war was unjust and ethically dubious, reluctantly allowed for and justified a defensive war to repel the Turks.[80] Yet, despite recognising the threat posed by the Turks Erasmus denounced the call by Pope Leo X for a crusade against them as a ploy devised for political ends. In a letter to Colet in 1518, Erasmus wrote:

> The pretext is now put forward of a war against the Turks, when the real object is the expulsion of the Spaniards out of Naples, since the Pope's nephew Lorenzo lays claim to Campania on account of his marriage with the daughter of the king of Navarre.[81]

Erasmus held the view that in following the example of Christ the Christians could easily overcome and destroy the Turks by 'doing good, by long-suffering, by the teaching of holiness,' and by the piety of their lives rather than by war.[82] He urged his fellow Christians to show the Turks that they were not greedy for their Empire, their gold, or their possessions but were genuinely seeking 'their salvation and the glory of Christ.'[83] As the Turks

advanced into Europe Erasmus, like Luther, came to the conclusion that the threat must be resisted by force because these were evil men who had to be forcibly restrained.[84] Failing to defend Christendom meant the death of Christian culture or its 'engulfment in pagan tyranny.'[85]

Having cast its shadow over sixteenth-century Europe the Turkish Empire dominated not only the thoughts of Continental Europe but those of England as well. Consequently there was an insatiable demand for information about the origin, rise and expansion of that Muslim Empire. This demand was met through books and accounts made available by diplomats as well as travellers, merchants, and chroniclers who were either attracted by or travelled through the vast Empire as traders and seekers after knowledge.[86] The interest of sixteenth-century Europe and England in the Islamic East, therefore, was more dictated by the conditions of the time than by curiosity and a desire for novelty.[87]

Nevertheless, the flood of new information did little to mitigate the intensity of the hostility toward Islam. One reason for this was that the contemporary encroachment on Christian territory raised memories of past hostilities where history merged into legend and romance. Because no distinction was made between Turks, Moors, and Saracens the legends of the Islamic conquest of Spain and the Crusades reinforced the sense of the present Turkish danger.[88]

It therefore comes as no surprise when, for example, George Whetstone (1551-1587), in his book *The English Myrror* (1586), presents the Turks as a 'scourge sent and suffered by God, for the sins and iniquities of the Christians.'[89] Even less flattering is the picture he paints in his book of the

Prophet whom, in the very manner of the Middle Ages, he describes as false, devil-inspired, base-born, deceptive, violent, lascivious and a magician. He faithfully repeats all the legends concerning the conspiracy with Sergius to write The Koran and the suspended coffin.[90] The Koran he attacks as a 'wicked law' which 'tollerated al carnal vices [without] controlement.'[91]

The sentiments of Whetstone were more than matched by those of Henry Smith (1550-1591), whose sermon, 'Gods Arrow Against Atheists', first appeared in 1593, attacked Islam as a false and 'patched religion, mixed partly with Judaisme, partly with Gentilisme, partly with Papisme, partly with Christianisme.'[92] After repeating the now familiar stories about the Prophet's birth, fits, life, and marriages Smith recounts the legend of the tame dove and accuses the Prophet of being a warmonger thirsty for blood and power.[93] As proof of his falsehood, Smith draws attention to the legends about the Prophet's drunken death devoured by pigs, his failure to rise and the suspended coffin.[94] He concludes that the success of Islam owes more to divisions among Christians than to the merits of Islam as a credible religion. 'God,' argues Smith, 'was highly displeased with this wickednesse, and suffered Nations to rise as rod or scourge to whip his people.'[95]

Similarly, in 1607 Joseph Hall (1574-1656) attacked Islam and its Prophet in an Epistle to his friend Samuel Burton, the Archdeacon of Gloucester. He claimed that, as a religion, Islam was issued by the devil standing upon nothing but violence, 'rude ignorance and palpable imposture.'[96] He denounced Islam as permissive and licentious and ridiculed the concept of the Islamic Paradise as 'swinish'.[97] He found The Koran 'but a fardle of foolish impossibilities [...]

full of license, full of impiety: in which revenge is encouraged, [and] multitude of wives allowed.'[98] Although Hall condemned the Turk, and by implication all Muslims, as the worst of pagans, he nevertheless found some merits in him which should have shamed all Christians, namely his steadfastness in standing up for 'his Machomet, that cozening Arabian.'[99] Hall concluded the Epistle by suggesting that Christians could easily overcome their present predicament by offering their sincere services to God in the devout manner the Turks offer theirs.[100]

In *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603), Richard Knolles (1550-1610) expressed a similar point of view when he recounted with admiration the incident in which a Turk offered himself to be abused and beaten by a Jew in order to win him to Islam.[101] Knolles found other merits to admire in the Turks. They demonstrated tremendous tolerance to the extent that many Christians converted to Islam simply because the Turks respected and maintained the political and religious laws of the lands they conquered.[102] What Knolles found to be the most admirable aspect of the Turks' life were their unity[103] and their military discipline.[104] On the other hand, Knolles had little respect or admiration for Islam, the religion of the Turks, or for Muhammad its Prophet. In the book's 'induction to the Christian Readers,' Knolles speaks of how Islam works to subvert and destabilise Christianity prompted by Satan, the Prince of Darkness, and aided by his agents, chief among them 'the false Prophet Mahomet, borne in an unhappy hour to the great destruction of mankind.' Nevertheless, Knolles' book succeeds in providing enough accurate information about the military organisation and campaigns of

the Turks, their system of government, their system of justice, their customs, their religious zeal and practices, and the burgeoning trade relations between England and Turkey and the Barbary States, to make his text one of the most influential accounts of Islam and Muslims in the early modern period.[105]

Other than history books, the accounts of travellers in the Turkish Empire were supposed to provide accurate information about the Turks and their way of life. One such account was given by Fynes Moryson (1566-1630) who, between November 1595 and July 1597, embarked on a journey through the Turkish domains. He was not driven by religious zeal but by a 'great desire to see forraine countries' to enrich his understanding through direct experience and observation.[106] His observations on Turkish culture (first printed in 1617) cover many unusual details including, for example, a reference to the law forbidding non-Muslims to wear the colour green, and the story of a lucky Christian who escaped punishment for wearing it because it was concluded that he was ignorant of that law -[107] a detail Massinger used in the first act of *The Renegado*. He also observed that the Turks were to be commended for their religious tolerance in giving liberty to all non-Muslims to practise their religions.[108] He disapprovingly described the slave market in Constantinople where Christian captives of both sexes were bought and sold, but found the city itself both beautiful and comfortable, with its abundance of flowers and fruits and its pleasant climate.[109] Moreover, he commended the Turks for their dietary austerity and simplicity, despite food being abundant, to which he attributed their ability to 'keepe great Armies in the field.'[110] In general, in spite of a few remarks about their barbarity and wickedness, a fairly favourable

picture of the Turks emerges from Moryson's account of his travels in the Turkish Empire.

A less favourable, though not less accurate, picture of Turks than Moryson's is the one painted by George Sandys (1578-1644) in *A Relation of a Journey Begun An. Dom. 1610.* More than Moryson, Sandys seems to have been in two minds about Islam and Muslims. On the one hand, he repeatedly makes the most hostile remarks about Islam as a 'damnable doctrine [...] containing a hodge-podge of sundry religions';[111] on the other, he professes admiration for the Turks who, though cruel and barbarous, show great devotion to The Koran which they revere, kiss, embrace and 'never touch [...] with unwashed hands.'[112]

Sandys' hostility to Islam could have had its origin in a combination of religious and cultural convictions which may help to explain the continued animosity toward Islam beyond the Middle Ages. In the dedication of his book Sandys states that the lands he visited used to be places where 'arts and Sciences have been invented and perfected, [...] and [...] the Son of God descended to become man.' He goes on to lament that these once glorious and beautiful lands have become places of misery and oppression ever since 'the wild beasts of mankind,' whose only aim is to attain the 'height of greatness and sensuality,' have pillaged them, rooted out all civility, and reduced them to 'distress and servitude.' Islam, therefore, has destroyed the classical heritage of Europe and destabilised Christianity. Nevertheless, Sandys could not deny that the Turks were capable of showing remarkable religious tolerance. In his account of his visit to the Island of Smyrna, in the Aegean sea, he confesses

that 'the whole Island is now governed by Turks, and defiled with their superstitions: yet have the Christians their Churches, and un-reproved exercise of Religion.'[113] In addition, having admired the charitable nature of the Turks, their outstanding reverence for their parents and respect for the elderly in general, and their cleanliness, Sandys remarks that all these aspects of their lives are commanded by their religion.[114] And he shows the greatest admiration for the respect in which the Turks hold God's name, which is such that 'if they find a paper in the street, they will thrust it in some crevice of the adjoining wall' fearing that the name of God might be on it and thus be defiled by being trodden underfoot.[115] These expressions of admiration hardly square with Sandys' professed hostility to Islam as an enemy of Western culture and of religion in general.

The accounts Sandys gives of the basic tenets and major practices of Islam are remarkably accurate. He recognised the monotheism of Islam, its abhorrence of Idolatry, the rejection of the Trinity, the denial of the Divinity of Christ, the veneration for Christ and Mary, and the veneration for all other Prophets. He correctly identified the five pillars of Islam - prayer, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the unity of God and the belief in the Prophet Muhammad, the fast of Ramadan, and the practice of almsgiving 'without vain-glory, and of good well-gotten.'[116] Yet Sandys' admiration for and accurate description of the Turks and their way of life stands in sharp contrast with his naked hostility toward the Prophet, which seems to be the product of the traditions and legends of the middle Ages rather than the result of observation and direct experience. He unquestioningly repeats the body of

Christian criticisms and legends about the Prophet's supposed low birth, his leadership of the Arab mutiny against the Emperor Heraclius, his conspiratorial designs with Sergius and a Jew, his epileptic fits, his sexual profligacy, his failure to produce miracles, his exploitation of sensuality as a means of spreading religion, and his fraudulent use of a tamed dove;[117] and he shows not the slightest inclination to check the validity of this information at first hand. Although he scornfully rejects the legend of the suspended coffin[118] he nevertheless repeats by rote the legend about the Prophet's failure to rise from the dead after three days. This time however the Prophet seems to anticipate his failure by assuring his followers that if he should fail to rise after three days they should expect him to return after a thousand years.[119] Presumably he reckoned this to be enough time either for him to work out all the technical difficulties of resurrection or else for the whole matter to be dropped or forgotten. However, despite the errors he commits in repeating the calumnies of the Middle Ages, Sandys' account of his journey into Turkey was a source for some accurate information about Turkish culture.

Another supply of information about the Turks came through the channel of the commercial and diplomatic relations between England and Turkey which were established by Queen Elizabeth and Murad III in 1583, when William Harborne became the first English ambassador in Constantinople.[120] In addition to seeking an ally against Spain and the Catholics, Elizabeth was also motivated by the desire to circumvent the French, to whom in 1536 the Turks granted the right to be the protectors of all Christian nations at the Porte, the Ottoman court in Constantinople.[121] By establishing diplomatic relations with

Murad III, Elizabeth succeeded not only in advancing English national interests in the Porte but in 'securing economic advantages for her subjects and the establishing of the independence of her flag in the Levant trade.'[122] As well as seeking to open new commercial routes into the East free from Turkish interference and without having to pay the heavy duties they levied,[123] England and the other European countries, notably Spain, Portugal and Italy were engaged in a fierce competition with each other for political and commercial dominance. It was in this spirit of competition and national interest that Harborne drew the attention of Murad III to the danger posed by Spain to the Ottoman Empire, especially after Spain had forcibly annexed the kingdom of Portugal, bringing into its domain the Portuguese colonies in India. Harborne suggested that the only way to prevent future Spanish expansion was for England and Turkey to form an alliance against their mutual enemy, Spain.[124]

The strategy of England, then, was not so much dictated by pro-Turkish sentiment as it was by national interests and anti-Spanish feeling. By following this course of political expediency Elizabeth hoped to utilise her relations with Murad III to counter-balance the Spanish influence in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, in attempting to set 'the two "limbs of the devil" against one another,'[125] England hoped that the mutual destruction of the two powers would prove advantageous to English trade in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Nevertheless, despite the growing diplomatic and commercial relations between Turkey and England, the rivalry between England and Spain, and 'the secularisation of European politics and the religious schism,'[126] the Turks

continued to be measured by conventional standards in official as well as other circles.[127] When, for example, Catholic Malta was besieged by the Turks in 1565, prayers were offered throughout England for the deliverance of the Island and its Christians from the Muslim enemy.[128] The Turks continued, in fact, to be regarded as the common enemy, the threatening and menacing other that had to be understood, defined and finally contained.[129] Nowhere is that conventional standard of measurement more clearly defined and more persistently employed than in the manner in which literature in general, and drama in particular, represented Islam and Muslims.

In these representations certain attributes are almost universally ascribed to Muslim dramatic characters. These include idolatry, lechery and treachery, cruelty, tyranny and violence (including fratricide, infanticide, and patricide), as well as deceit and witchcraft. The Prophet is usually represented as false, unchaste and an anti-Christ; the Koran as an anti-Christian conspiracy full of lies and fictions. Almost all the major playwrights of the early modern period made full use of these characteristics in their representations of Islam and Muslims.

Between 1579 and 1624, from the works of Kyd, Marlowe and Peele, through those of Greville and Shakespeare to the works of Massinger, no less than forty-seven plays were produced on the English stage, thirteen of which are no longer extant, in which either the setting, characters, or theme dealt with Islam and Muslims.[130] Most of these plays are either tragedies or tragicomedies and therefore serious in nature.[131] This suggests both the widespread interest in and the profound seriousness with which England

regarded Islam and Muslims, especially the Turks and the Moors.[132] That interest was underscored by the availability of at least 1,600 items of source material (poems, ballads, histories, etc.) printed between 1500 and 1640 in all European languages including English.[133] This indicates that there was neither a lack of interest nor a lack of source material about Islam and Muslims in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England, nor was there any lack of reference to them in dramas not primarily concerned with the topic of Islam.

When, for example, Marlowe depicted Ithamore, the Turkish slave in *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90), as the wicked and scheming enemy of the Christians, he was introducing a type of character with which the audience was very familiar. Questioned by Barabas about how he spent his time, Ithamore replies:

> In setting Christian villages on fire
> Chaining of eunuchs, binding galley slaves. [...]
> Once at Jerusalem, where the pilgrims kneel'd,
> I strewed powder on the marble stones,
> And therewithal their knees would rankle, so
> That I have laugh'd a-good to see the cripples
> Go climbing home to Christendom on stilts. (2. 3. 205-13)[134]

Ithamore has obviously made a living out of causing mischief and misery to innocent Christians, although in this case the pilgrims are presumably Catholic. He clearly takes a sadistic pleasure in doing them harm, and therefore justifies the contempt in which the Turk is held in Europe. That contempt is indicated by a reference in the play to the worthless Turk, that is, the 'Turk of tenpence'

(4. 4. 44). Even more contemptuous is Othello's famous reference to the Turk as 'the circumcised dog' who must be destroyed (5. 2. 351).[135]

Another widely used expression, 'to turn Turk,' illustrates the public's preoccupation with the persistent problem of renegadism. The expression came to mean not only conversion to Islam but becoming a traitor to one's country or religion.[136] There are even a few instances where to 'turn Turk' is even associated with becoming a prostitute. In Massinger's *The Renegado*, for instance, when Paulina, in order to preserve her chastity and faith and to save her fellow Christians, cunningly decides to 'turn Turke,' Gazet immediately remarks: 'most of your tribe doe so / When they beginne in whore' (5. 3. 152-3).[137]

In Shakespeare, there are ample references to the Turks and Muslims in general, usually within the context of religious conflict, particularly the Crusades. In *Richard II* (1595) for example, Gaunt refers to Jerusalem and the Crusades in his praise of the English who are as

> Renowned for their deeds as far from home
> For Christian service and true chivalry
> As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
> Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son. (2. 1. 53-6)[138]

Similarly, Carlisle, in his reference to the crusading Mowbray, says:

> Many a time hath banished Norfolk fought
> For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian fields
> Streaming the ensign of the Christian Cross
> Against black pagans, Turks and Saracens. (4. 1. 92-5)

This motif of the Crusades continues in *The First Part of King Henry IV* (1596-97) when the king calls for a new Crusade, designed

To chase the pagans in those holy fields

Over whose acres walked those blessed feet

Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd

For our advantage on the bitter cross. (1. 1. 24-7)[139]

In *The Second Part of King Henry IV* (1597-98) the call for the Crusade is shown to be part of the king's plan to secure his throne, when he urges his son to take his nobles on a campaign against the heathen in order to keep them busy (4. 2. 340-43).[140] The motif of the Crusades culminates in *King Henry V* (1599) when the king predicts that his son will become a Crusader 'that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard' (4. 2. 190-91).[141] In each of these references there is of course an element of irony; Henry IV's Crusade is never launched, and the audience would have been well aware that Henry VI was to prove very far from a Crusader. It would seem that Shakespeare was well aware of the usefulness of anti-Islamic sentiment to beleaguered monarchs, who had used such sentiments for centuries as a means of distracting attention from their domestic troubles.

The Turks were not the only Muslims to attract the attention of playwrights in early modern England. In many plays the Muslim Moor shared with his Turkish brother all the most negative qualities. However, emphasis tended to be laid on the colour of the Moor, and perhaps as a result he was usually represented as less valiant than the Turk, and more lascivious, more brutal and more treacherous. Aaron, the Moor in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1592-94), a descendant of Muly Mahomet in Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588-89), probably represents the first fully fledged Machiavellian Moorish villain on the English stage, an unscrupulous trickster who is primarily driven by lust

and wickedness and a brutal need for revenge. His wickedness is underscored by his devious reference to 'coal-black' as a better colour than white, since whiteness is a

> [...] treacherous hue, that betrays with blushing
>
> The close enacts and counsels of thy heart. (4. 2. 119-120)[142]

Aaron's wickedness reaches its height when in response to Lucius' question: 'Art thou not sorry for these heinous deeds?' he replies, 'Ay, that I had not done a thousand more' (5. 1. 123-24). In addition to his wickedness, Aaron's status as an outsider in Rome represents another danger to the stability and homogeneity of that society through racial contamination, in this case symbolised by his lustful relationship with Queen Tamora.

This theme of the Moor's sexual lust and its repercussions for society is one that was developed in Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* (1599-1600), in which the lustful Eleazar is represented as posing the threat of imminent contamination to Catholic Spain. Being married to Maria, Eleazar exploits both his inside knowledge of the Spanish court and his lustful relationship with Eugenia, the Queen mother, in order to bring about chaos and destruction. His motive is to exact revenge on the king of Spain who deprived him of his father's kingdom and enslaved him. That is what Eleazar makes clear to Alvero:

> Because my Lord I'me married to your daughter,
>
> You (like your daughter) will grow Jealious:
>
> The Queen with me, with me, a Moore, a Devill,
>
> A slave of Barbary, a dog; for so
>
> Your silken Courties christen me, but father
>
> Although my flesh be tawny, in my veines,

Runs blood as red, and royal as the best

And proud'st of Spain, there do'es old man:

My father, who with his Empire, lost his life,

And left me Captive to a Spanish Tyrant, Oh!

Go tell him! Spanish Tyrant! Tell him, do!

He that can loose a kingdom and not rave,

He's a tame jade, I am not. (1. 1. 149-61)[143]

Another Moor who protests that he should not be judged by the colour of his skin is the prince of Morocco in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97) when presenting himself to Portia (2. 1. 1-3). Portia has already expressed her racial prejudice when she dismissed him as a suitable husband before he even appeared on the stage:

If he have the condition of a saint and the complexion

of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than

wive me. (1. 2. 126-28)[144]

With the possible exception of the character of Abdelmelec in Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, almost all of the stage Moors, in addition to their inimical Muslim qualities, have the issue of their colour highlighted in the manner of their representation. Even Othello, who is otherwise presented as valiant and magnanimous, cannot wholly escape the colour trap. His adversaries Roderigo, who calls him 'the thick-lips' (1. 1. 63), and Iago, who describes him as 'an old black ram' (1. 1. 85), underline the issue of his colour as if it were integral to the composition of his character.

However, to reduce the early modern English drama dealing with Muslim themes to nothing more than polemical propaganda is to do it a great injustice. Most of the plays, including the ones chosen for this study, concern themselves

with far more complex social, intellectual, philosophical, commercial, and political problems relevant to the time. The representations of Islam and Muslims in these plays have, in fact, provided the dramatists with an invaluable opportunity to express their ideas with regard to a variety of complex and often sensitive issues, by placing their analysis of these issues within the context of an alien culture. This is arguably the case with Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham*, and Massinger's *The Renegado*. In other plays Islam was used as an instrument to castigate a rival religious sect and to drum up support for official national policies, as is the case with Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*. Other plays illustrated the fascination with the subject of intermarriage through the theme of the amorous 'love of an Ottoman Sultan for a captive Christian lady,'[145] as in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* and Massinger's *The Renegado*. In these two plays the ability of women to disempower men of the opposite faith plays a significant role in the continuing struggle for dominance between Islam and Christianity. And there are times when some of these plays managed accurately to reflect prevalent political realities in England and the effect these realities had on attitudes either toward Islam or rival Catholics. This is best illustrated by Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* and Massinger's *The Renegado*. The former represents the Catholic King of Spain in the most unfavourable manner on account of the intense animosity between the two countries as well as Queen Elizabeth's policy of approaching the Turks as possible allies. She even tried to present the Protestants and the Turks as fellow iconoclasts, having much in common, as opposed to the Catholic 'idol-worshipers'.[146] Marlowe's

representation of Sigismond, the Catholic king of Hungary, in *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part II, caters to that policy. In Massinger's *The Renegado*, the favourable representation of the Catholics reflects changing attitudes in England towards them with the death of Elizabeth and the succession of James I. James was more interested in the restoration of the Christian league against the Turks than in fostering a friendly relationship with them, and pursued this policy to the extent that the peace negotiations with Spain were resumed in 1622.[147]

All in all, these selected plays provide a fascinating insight into cultural developments in early modern England and the English perception not only of the menacing and competing other but of themselves as well. Within this framework Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* provides the ideal starting point as possibly the first major drama to take Islam and Muslims for its subject.

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[25] Ibid., pp.23-30.

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[32] Byron Porter Smith, *Islam in English Literature*, p.4.

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[36] Ibid., p.127.

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CHAPTER TWO

ISLAM, WAR and CONQUEST in MARLOWE'S *TAMBURLAINE*

I. Marlowe's Tamburlaine has generally been regarded by critics as the incarnation of blind ambition and the lust for power. He is a man so possessed by an infinite faith in himself and his destiny that he treats every other form of faith with disdain, challenging long established political, religious and cultural institutions, committing horrific atrocities on the bodies of his opponents, and laying cities to waste across the length and breadth of Asia in the interest of disseminating his monomaniacal religion. Nevertheless, Tamburlaine's cruelty, tyranny and barbarity often seem to have commanded more admiration than loathing among his commentators, perhaps in part because Marlowe persistently presents him as the destroyer of Islam, the archenemy of Christendom.

Given the long history of hostilities between Islam and Christianity throughout the Middle Ages, together with the constant threat posed both by the Muslim Ottomans in central Europe and by the Barbary states in the Mediterranean during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is hardly surprising that the world Tamburlaine subjugates is shown to consist entirely of Muslim lands ruled by violence, and peopled by despots, barbarians and infidels. In an age of expansion this demonization of the world of Islam serves not only to confirm to a Christian audience their own moral superiority but to justify and promote the conquest of infidel nations in general and Tamburlaine's conquests in particular. Set in this context, Tamburlaine's

blasphemies could have been deemed less offensive to Christian ears, pitted as they were against an ancient and threatening enemy.

Critics have also noted that *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587-88) should not be regarded as a straightforward morality play in the medieval tradition. Rather, the play, even though it exhibits the customary anti-Islamic attitudes, is a complex dramatic structure which makes sophisticated comments on a variety of intellectual, political and religious issues of Marlowe's time. Marlowe uses Islam and Muslims not simply in opposition and as a foil to Christianity and Christians but as instruments that allow him the freedom to express his ideas from a position of relative safety by disguising them behind foreign and unfamiliar characters. Moreover, through his representations of these characters Marlowe forces the audience to re-examine their own beliefs and convictions by mischievously exploiting their prejudices against other religions and nationalities.

With his limitless ambition, his love for the spectacular, and his seemingly absolute command of his destiny, Tamburlaine is a remarkable dramatic creation.[1] Driven by the conviction that earthly glories are 'more substantial than priestly promise,' Tamburlaine seems not only to question 'ancient faiths' and 'time honoured superstitions' but to 'expose the imaginary strengths of these spiritual things as compared with the material results of human power,'[2] as emphatically demonstrated by the conquered monarchs frantically and fruitlessly appealing to their deaf and dumb deities.

Moreover, Tamburlaine, as Marlowe depicts him, is a super-human warrior whose words are as compelling as his deeds. His language is 'not just [...] a

means of communication, or the medium by which ideas are generated, but [...] an instrument of power.'[3] Furthermore, he has a profound belief in self-projecting and self-dramatization, and exhibits an extraordinary 'belief in the power of the word'[4] to master others by fascinating and binding them. Thus Tamburlaine's eloquent speech

> I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
>
> And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about,
>
> And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
>
> Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome (T1.1.2.173-76)[5]

easily overcomes Theridamas who, finding its argument irresistible, replies:

> What strong enchantments tice my yielding soul [...]
>
> Won with thy words, and conquered with thy looks,
>
> I yield myself, my men, and horse to thee:
>
> To be partaker of thy good or ill,
>
> As long as life maintains Theridamas (T1.1.2.223-30)

and observes to Cosroe, 'you see, my lord, what working words he hath' (T1.2.3.25). Even Tamburlaine's physical appearance is awesome. Earlier Menaphon, in response to Cosroe's question, painted a fearsome picture of the Scythian:

> His arms and fingers long and sinewy,
>
> Betokening valour and excess of strength:
>
> In every part proportioned like the man
>
> Should make the world subdued to Tamburlaine (T1.2.1.27-30).

This picture proves so compelling that Cosroe has to admit before even seeing Tamburlaine that he seems to be a 'wondrous man,' and adds:

> Nature doth strive with Fortune and his stars
>
> To make him famous in accomplished worth:

And well his merits shew him to be made

His Fortune's master and the king of men

That could persuade, at such a sudden pinch,

With reasons of his valour and his life,

A thousand sworn and overmatching foes (T1.2.1.33-9).

It is obvious that Tamburlaine's physical attributes, his language, the stars, and Fortune combine to present the picture of a man consumed with a burning desire to rule, not only over men but over the world; a man convinced that ambition is the fundamental 'law of our spiritual being'.[6] Marlowe brilliantly sets up Tamburlaine's aspirations for power and control in the famous lines:

Nature, that fram'd us of four elements

Warring within our breasts for regiment,

Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:

Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend

The wondrous architecture of the world,

And measure every wandering planet's course,

Still climbing after knowledge infinite,

And always moving as the restless spheres,

Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest,

Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,

The perfect bliss and sole felicity,

The sweet fruition of an earthly crown (T1.2.7.18-29).

Obviously, what motivates Tamburlaine is the glory and magnificence of sovereignty which will enable him 'to soar above the highest sort,' as Theridamas observes (T1.2.7.33). This obsession with an 'earthly crown' is even more evident in Act II, Scene v, in the discussion Tamburlaine has with

Techelles, Usumcasane and Theridamas. When he asks 'is it not passing brave to be a king?' they each in turn acknowledge the grandeur of kingship:

> Tech. O, my lord, 'tis sweet and full of pomp!
>
> Usum. To be a king, is half to be a god.
>
> Ther. A god is not so glorious as a king:
>
> I think the pleasures they enjoy in heaven,
>
> Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth (T1.2.5.55-59).

The words of Theridamas encapsulate Tamburlaine's conviction that earthly glory - the infinite possibilities of material possessions, in the here and now - is more real than the promises of the hereafter propagated by institutionalized religions. The perfect state of bliss, as far as he is concerned, exists not in some mythical garden of Eden or some promised Paradise but in 'the sweet fruition of an earthly crown'.

Having established his sovereignty over Persia and Africa as well, Tamburlaine then proceeds, ruthlessly and methodically, to realize his dream of conquering the world. In his response to Bajazeth's bombastic threats he outlines the blueprint of his vast empire encompassing the four corners of the world from 'the East unto the furthest West,' including 'the Indian continent,' even 'from Persepolis to Mexico,' 'the Straits of Jubalter,' 'the Bay of Portingale,' and 'all the ocean by the British shore' (T1.3.3.246-259). His plans of conquest, in other words, encompass the old world as well as the new, the seats of Christian culture in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe as well as two major sources of European wealth, India and Mexico. Consequently, in his relentless quest for hegemony over the world, Tamburlaine dares to challenge not only Emperors and kings, but all established institutions, be they

the state, the monarchy or religion. Furthermore, and in defiance to the established order, he invents his own rules for the social context in which he plans to accomplish his ambition. For him, a Scythian shepherd, it is no longer a requirement to be high-born to achieve an 'earthly crown'. Addressing his followers he asserts

> Your births shall be no blemish to your fame;
> For virtue is the fount whence honour springs,
> And they are worthy she investeth kings (T1.4.4.130-32).

This demonstrates his philosophy of ambition which opens up the possibilities for all aspirants, like himself, to achieve glory regardless of their class or origin. Despite his humble origins, Tamburlaine distinguishes himself in a number of ways from the other kings of the world. He is more kingly than those who are, supposedly, the product of unblemished royal stock. This is strikingly demonstrated at the beginning of Part I, where Tamburlaine is contrasted to the snobbish yet incompetent Mycetes, king of Persia. In violation of every Renaissance principle of decorum, Mycetes is indecisive, weak, and rhetorically inept. His lack of resolve and leadership are woefully exposed in the opening scene when, in the course of a counsel convened to deal with the threat of Tamburlaine's advance, he tells his brother: 'I know you have a better wit than I' (T1.1.1.5). Moreover, his style is consistently bland:

> Brother, I see your meaning well enough
> And through your planets I perceive you think
> I am not wise enough to be a king:
> But I refer me to my noblemen,
> That know my wit, and can be witnesses.
> I might command you to be slain for this.

Meander, might I not ? (T1.1.1.18-24)

In contrast, Tamburlaine has no need to apply to others for permission to command. Not only does he claim to control the Fates and turn the wheel of Fortune but for him the whole play is 'a great game of chess, with kings [...] for pieces' and the world for a chess-board.[7] He crowns Cosroe as king of Persia, for example, only to depose him and take the crown himself (T1.2.5). He also offers the crowns of Bajazeth's contributory kings to his followers, Techelles, Theridamas, and Usumcasane (T1.3.3) making them effectively pawns in his hands. The rewards he offers his friends are payments for good service; he tells Theridamas,

> These are my friends in whom I [...] rejoice ...
>
> Thyself and them shall never part from me,
>
> Before I crown you kings in Asia (T1.1.2.240-45).

and then adds

> If you will willingly remain with me,
>
> You shall have honours as your merits be:
>
> Or else you shall be forc'd with slavery (T1.1.2.253-55).

Clearly, the extent to which Tamburlaine deems his friends worthy of glory is measured by the extent to which they remain loyal to him. Those he deems disloyal are relegated to death or a life of servitude. Within this context, kings have no divine right to sovereignty. They only retain their power for as long as they remain loyal to Tamburlaine, the self-appointed scourge of God and terror of the world.

Like Tamburlaine, though not perhaps self-appointed, Islam and Muslims, be they Moors or Turks, were the fear and terror of Christendom in the

sixteenth century. After having succeeded, in 1492, in expelling the Muslims from Spain, the Christians of the West watched in dismay a new Islamic threat emanating from the Ottoman Empire. That Empire was rising and rapidly expanding into Hungary, Serbia and Poland, and simultaneously menacing the walls of Vienna. At the same time Christian merchants in the Mediterranean had to endure the constant threat of piratical expeditions from the Barbary states of North Africa. These threats were so serious that Hubert Languet wrote to Sir Philip Sidney in September 1578 expressing his fears that the alliance of the 'Turkish and Moorish pirates' would shortly be able to cruise the Atlantic ravaging 'the coasts of Spain and France, and perhaps even of Ireland and the western part of England'.[8] Unable to explain this swift Muslim expansion the thinkers of the Renaissance often concluded that Islam was the 'scourge of the wrath of God, justly offended by the sins of Christendom'.[9] The most devastating of these sins, as they saw them, were those of religious disunity and constant rivalry.

In the same manner, Peter Ashton in his *Short Treatise upon the Turkes Chronicles* (1546) states that God 'sufferethe the wicked and cursed seed of Hismael to be a scourge to whip us for our synnes'.[10] Driven by his fear and hatred of the Muslim Turks Ashton 'exalted the heroic qualities' of Tamburlaine, their archenemy.[11] He gloatingly recounts how Tamburlaine 'used Bayazet in stede of a blocke when he toke his horse, and fed hym under his table, lyke a curre'.[12] At the same time Ashton was highly impressed by the military organization and discipline of the Turks which played an important part in their success against a disorganized and disunited Christendom.[13] Sir

Philip Sidney seems to have admired these same qualities in the Muslim Turks. In a letter to his brother Robert written in 1579 he observes that 'though we have nothing to do with him [the Turk], yet his discipline in war matters is [...] worthy to be known and learned'.[14] Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the enthusiastic interest of the Elizabethans in the character and career of Tamburlaine. His victories over the Turks and his humiliation of their emperor Bajazeth provided, especially for the stage, subjects to study as well as to fear, and Marlowe could have expected his Elizabethan audience to be both anxious about his exotic protagonist and quite receptive to his military and rhetorical strategies. It is with an eye on the established conventions concerning the relationship between Christians and Muslims that Marlowe chooses to depict Tamburlaine as the scourge of God who torments the Turks and dismembers their Empire.

In the context of these conventions, Tamburlaine, whose quest for power quickly turns into a lust for blood and destruction, may well have commanded the audience's admiration rather than their loathing and revulsion.[15] He captivated his Elizabethan audience by humiliating Muslim rulers and by conquering and destroying Muslim lands against which Christian offensives had for the most part proved ineffectual. His cruelty to Bajazeth and Zabina, for example, could easily be interpreted as God's hand finally being raised against the infidels. This, along with the notion of being the scourge of God, would have allowed Marlowe to justify the incredible violence Tamburlaine unleashes in his campaigns. It would also have provided justification for the fact that his deeds go unpunished, in Part I at least, despite his arrogance and

blasphemy, and despite his merciless dismissal of the supplications of his victims.[16] For example, Zenocrate's appeal for divine assistance:

> The gods, defenders of the innocent,
>
> Will never prosper your intended drifts,
>
> That thus oppress poor friendless passengers (T1.1.2.68-70)

falls upon deaf ears, for she seemingly ends up being raped as Agydas suggests:

> 'Tis more than pity such a heavenly face
>
> Should by heart's sorrow wax so wan and pale,
>
> When your offensive rape by Tamburlaine [...]
>
> Hath seem'd to be digested long ago (T1.3.2.4-8).

In other words, Tamburlaine seems to make it his business to erase any trace of a narrative which might imply divine intervention in human affairs, except through him. Indeed, if Zenocrate's appeal to multiple 'gods' recalled the classical deities to the Elizabethan mind, Tamburlaine's rape of Zenocrate could be seen as a divine act reminiscent of the rapes committed by Jove in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, so that Tamburlaine could be said to have substituted himself for the fictional representatives of an outmoded pantheon. At the same time, the Prophet Muhammad is repeatedly represented as occupying the same impotent position as the ancient gods. When Zabina, in the heat of battle, exhorts Muhammad to grant Bajazeth the victory:

> Now, Mahomet, solicit God himself,
>
> And make him rain down murdering shot from heaven,
>
> To dash the Scythians' brains, and strike them dead,
>
> That dare to manage arms with him
>
> That offered jewels to thy sacred shrine

When first he warr'd against the Christians! (T1.3.3.195-200)

her prayers fall on deaf ears just as Zenocrate's did. Tamburlaine promptly defeats Bajazeth and takes him captive. Worse still, he has him caged like an animal, where eventually it is Bajazeth who 'dashes [his] brains' against the bars of his cell. In the meantime, not only do the gods fail to punish Tamburlaine but he succeeds in acquiring the title of lord of Africa as a result of Bajazeth's defeat. In this play, Muhammad's violent God is as ineffectual as pagan Jupiter, and as easily supplanted by the Scythian.

Tamburlaine's unpunished violence, and the audience's infatuation with it, should be viewed in the larger context of a cultural phenomenon particular to the Renaissance, namely the use of stage violence as an instrument of instruction.[17] Stage violence represented by bloody instruments of murder, dismembered bodies, and the cruel devices of torture arouse 'intense feelings of horror and disgust in the audience,'[18] feelings which might help repel them from evil-doing or might impress them with the inexorable workings of God's justice. The general belief in the Renaissance was that pictures or images leave stronger impressions than abstract moral or philosophical concepts. This is what Philip Sidney calls 'the speaking picture of poesy'.[19] Hence, it was accepted that 'remarkably hideous or grotesque images were especially memorable, and therefore were effective vehicles for the expression of moral ideals'.[20] Thus the violence of Tamburlaine against Bajazeth, his contributory kings, and even the virgins of Damascus might be said to create a remarkable picture not only of retribution and revenge against the so-called infidel Muslims but of man's violence against man. The destruction of Bajazeth could

be interpreted as a just retribution for his own destructive deeds. However, the slaughter of the innocent virgins of Damascus could not be justified on any moral grounds except on the grounds that Tamburlaine is not prepared to break a promise or rescind a judgement.

It should be observed here that, from a moral point of view, Marlowe deliberately refrains from passing judgement on his protagonist, leaving the audience to view Tamburlaine's 'picture in this magic glass, / And then applaud his fortunes as [they] please' (T1.Prologue,7-8). His technique, especially in the first part, is to present them with a picture of ambition and allow them to draw their own conclusions according to their own definitions of good and evil.[21] They are either repulsed by Tamburlaine's actions or attracted by them; can either admire his mastery of his own destiny or abominate his evil nature. Marlowe offers no moral touchstone by which to judge his protagonist, except for the always shifting touchstones provided by Tamburlaine himself.

On the other hand, the audience are left in no doubt at all that Tamburlaine represents less of a menace and a threat to Christendom than the Turks. For example, the moment Bajazeth appears on the stage he assures his contributory kings that the imminent war with Tamburlaine will not force the Turks to lift the siege of Constantinople.[22] 'We hear,' he says, that

> the Tartars and the eastern thieves,
> Under the conduct of one Tamburlaine,
> Presume a bickering with your emperor,
> And thinks to arouse us from our dreadful siege
> Of the famous Grecian Constantinople (T1.3.1.2-6).

Bajazeth's determination to keep up the siege stems from his conviction that his army is invincible, since it has

> As many circumcised Turks [...]
> And warlike bands of Christians renied,
> As hath the ocean or the terrene sea
> Small drops of water when the moon begins
> To join in one her semicircled horns (T1.3.1.8-12)

From this passing reference to renegade or 'renied' Christians it is very obvious that the Turkish threat to Christendom is double-edged. Not only is Islam making dangerous physical inroads into the Christian territories, but, more dangerously, it is attracting multitudes of Christians who willingly, or conveniently, renounce or 'renie' their religion and embrace that of the conquerors, thereby undermining from within the power of Christianity to resist this onslaught. Moreover, Bajazeth's threat to Tamburlaine

> Now shalt thou feel the force of [...] Turkish arms,
> Which lately made all Europe quake for fear (T1.3.3.134-35)

emphatically confirms that the Turkish, Islamic, menace is by no means limited in scope to a specific area of Christendom.

If Tamburlaine unwittingly succoured the Christians of Constantinople in their struggle against the Turks, his intention of freeing the Christian galley slaves in the Mediterranean is obviously planned. As he informs the Turkish Basso, he will first subdue the Turk, and then liberate

> Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves,
> Burdening their bodies with your heavy chains, [...]
> That naked row about the Terrene sea (T1.3.3.46-50).

This reminder of the cruel treatment of captive Christians at the hands of the Muslims, and the disruptive effect their roaming galleys have on the movement of trade in the Mediterranean (T1.3.3.248-51), provides Marlowe with yet another opportunity to justify Tamburlaine's violence to an English audience. By mentioning the slaves Marlowe makes an oblique reference to the growing English trade to and from the East and the danger to it posed by the so-called piracy of the Barbary states. No doubt to the delight of knowledgeable members of his audience, Tamburlaine strongly condemns 'the cruel pirates of Argier, / That damned train, the scum of Africa,' who 'make quick havoc of the Christian blood' (T1.3.3.56-58). He even promises to punish them so severely that they will curse the time he set foot in Africa (T1.3.3.59-60). Historically speaking, the Muslim threat to English ships and trade in the Mediterranean only subsided around 1622. In that year an agreement was signed in Constantinople between England on the one hand and representatives of Tunis and Algiers on the other, with Sir Thomas Rowe, the English ambassador, representing James I. The agreement stipulates that 'the hostility and enmity between them and the English should be annulled and blotted out of memory, and conuerted into a good peace and commerce'.[23] In Marlowe's time, by contrast, the hostilities between English and Muslim traders would have been fresh in the mind of anyone in England concerned with international commerce.

The strange preoccupation of Tamburlaine with piracy in the Mediterranean may be better understood when placed in the context of growing Elizabethan interest in the trade with the far East.[24] Like other European powers, the

English were intent on gaining control of the profitable trade of spices and drugs with India. To achieve that goal they had to circumvent the world of Islam as well as the Spanish and Portuguese spheres of influence. It was in the spirit of fierce trade competition that the Muscovy Company was established in 1553.[25] Tamburlaine's desire to have his galleys

> Sailing along the oriental sea,
> [Having] fetched about the Indian continent,
> Even from Persepolis to Mexico,
> And thence unto the Straits of Jubalter,
> Where they shall meet and join their force in one,
> Keeping in awe the Bay of Portingale,
> And all the ocean by the British shore (T1.3.3.253-59)

'simply retraces the Company's 1583 voyage to the Moluccas via South America,' in order to escape the Islamic Turkish menace.[26] Tamburlaine has earlier suggested that the Turkish menace is greater in perception than reality, when in response to Bajazeth's threats he mockingly informs the messenger that the 'Turks are full of brags / And menace more than they can well perform' (T1.3.3.3-4). At this point he seems to stand for the growing ambitions of the English mercantile class, with their conviction that their commercial ventures are capable of overcoming all odds. Bajazeth is equally convinced of the powerlessness of his Scythian enemy:

> By Mahomet my kinsman's sepulcher,
> And by the holy Alcaron I swear,
> He [Tamburlaine] shall be made a chaste and lustless eunuch,
> And in my sarell tend my concubines (T1.3.3.75-78).

But his boastful vision of Tamburlaine's inability to perform, couched as it is in the future tense, rings hollow, since it never materialises. Where Bajazeth had hoped to number Tamburlaine among his possessions, it is Tamburlaine who finally adds the Turkish King to his collection of trophies, like a particularly valuable acquisition gathered en route to commercial supremacy.

Contrary to his intention, Bajazeth's threat to castrate Tamburlaine reinforces the traditional perception of Islam as a religion of permissiveness and Muslims as luxurious and lustful. The reference to concubines confirms the prevalent stereotype of the Muslims as sensual pleasure-seekers who only manage to remain chaste either through castration or impotence. The casual allusion to Muhammad and The Koran in his speech serves to reaffirm, in the audience's minds, the long held association between Islam and concupiscence.

There is always a stark contrast between the bombastic rhetoric of Bajazeth, which is entirely dependent on the intervention of metaphysical forces, and the active rhetoric of Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine depends entirely on his own power to match his words with his deeds. Unlike Bajazeth, who invokes Muhammad, he anchors his boasts and promises in material things. He invokes his sword, for instance, in place of a deity, as his tool for demolishing and reconstructing the world as he desires:

> By this my sword that conquer'd Persia,
>
> Thy fall shall make me famous through the world (T1.3.3.83-4).

Furthermore, Bajazeth's claim

> Let thousands die: their slaughtered carcasses
>
> Shall serve for walls and bulwarks to the rest;
>
> And as the heads of Hydra, so my power,

Subdued, shall stand as mighty as before (T1.3.3.138-41)

refers more to the potential subjugation of his own troops than Tamburlaine's (the Hydra, after all, was defeated by Hercules despite its regenerative heads). It also sounds absurdly pretentious in comparison with his rather tame 'Ah, fair Zabina, we have lost the field' (T1.3.3.33) immediately after his defeat. Moreover, this claim illustrates the bloody and cruel nature of the Turks which, because of its impersonality (the carcasses have no identity) seems more repulsive than Tamburlaine's (who clambers his way to power on the corpses of named enemies).

So far as the audience is concerned, then, the more atrocities and cruelties Tamburlaine commits against the Turks the better. The more he is able to perform his threats against the infidel the less menacing will be the threat they pose to European interest and the more enthusiastic the audience will become. Bajazeth seems to be keenly aware of this situation. When he laments his defeat he seems to direct his disdain and anger more at the traditional enemies of Islam, the Christians, than at Tamburlaine his supposed conqueror, as if in direct defiance of his hostile spectators in the Elizabethan theatre:

> Now will the Christian miscreants be glad,
>
> Ringing with joy their superstitious bells,
>
> And making bonfires at my overthrow (T1.3.3.236-38).

Yet even in captivity, Bajazeth is so secure in his confidence in the power of Islam that he fails to recognize the difference between his own empty rhetoric and Tamburlaine's 'working words'. In an outburst of absurd indignation he lapses once again into insubstantial threats, promising to transform the

Christian revellers themselves into a bonfire which will mark an end to their celebrations:

> those foul idolaters
> Shall make me bonfires with their filthy bones;
> For, though the glory of this day be lost,
> Afric and Greece have garrisons enough
> To make me sovereign of the earth again (T1.3.3.239-43).

For a Christian audience this outburst underscores the depth of Bajazeth's animosity towards them and demonstrates the extent of his violent and tyrannical nature as a Muslim despot. The mention of Greece reopens the wound inflicted on European pride by the loss of the cradle of Western civilization to the Turks.

Nevertheless, the threat also constitutes a grudging admission of defeat, and a defeat all the more humiliating since it was inflicted on Bajazeth by a man he considers his inferior. As a matter of fact, all of Tamburlaine's Muslim adversaries regard him as such. To the Soldan of Egypt, for example, he is a

> Merciless villain, peasant, ignorant
> Of lawful arms or martial discipline (T1.4.1.65-6)

whose trades are 'pillage and murder'; a slave who 'usurps the glorious name of war' (T1.4.1.68). This characterization sets him up in direct competition with the renowned military prowess of the Turks, which was so admired by Sidney. When in Act V, scene ii, Zabina curses Tamburlaine, Bajazeth reluctantly admits to her:

> Ah, fair Zabina, we may curse his power,
> The heavens may frown, the earth for anger quake;
> But such a star hath influence in his sword

As rules the skies and countermands the gods

More than Cimmerian Styx or Destiny (T1.5.2.167-71).

Obviously Bajazeth's belated acceptance of Tamburlaine's claim for his sword as a substitute god highlights the Scythian's reputation as an omnipotent conqueror, whose speech precisely describes his actions and whose weapon enacts his very thoughts. Bajazeth has finally accepted Tamburlaine's assessment of himself by adopting his vocabulary: and educated Elizabethans would not have missed the anagram of 'words' and 'sword' which signals this acceptance.

Unlike Tamburlaine, Bajazeth and, for that matter, all the Muslim characters in the play regularly call upon their deities, especially Muhammad, for help. The moment Muhammad fails to respond, which is usually the case, they curse and chide or even abjure him. It should be noted here that Marlowe, in the representation of his stage Muslims as religious waverers, was once again cultivating the prevailing attitudes of the time. Those attitudes had their origins in the medieval polemical tradition discussed in my introduction, which regarded the Prophet Muhammad as an impostor and a trickster on a grand scale whose principal victims were the Muslims themselves. Like the devil, he was said to have tricked people into following him only to desert them in their hour of need. For this reason it was only to be expected, for an Elizabethan audience, that every time Bajazeth and Zabina invoke his aid, he regularly fails them. In the episode quoted above (T1.3.3.195-99), Zabina implores Muhammad to help Bajazeth in his war against Tamburlaine. She even suggests that jewels be offered as a bribe to entice him to act on their behalf;

(T1.3.3.199); but he fails to help. Bajazeth is defeated and as a consequence both he and Zabina turn against Muhammad:

> BAJAZETH Oh Mahomet ! O sleepy Mahomet !
>
> ZABINA O cursed Mahomet, that makest us thus
>
> The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous ! (T1.3.3.269-71)

The two Muslims here reveal a striking lack of conviction, something the Christians, presumably, would never have done. The episode also confirms the long-held notion among Christians of the Prophet Muhammad as a god worshipped by pagans. This notion becomes even clearer when Bajazeth, caged like a wild animal, turns to Muhammad for help once again. Even his language acquires a more paganistic tone than before, when he thunders in despair:

> Ye holy priests of heavenly Mahomet,
>
> That, sacrificing, slice and cut your flesh,
>
> Staining his altars with your purpled blood,
>
> Make heavens to frown and every fixed star
>
> To suck up poison from the moorish fens,
>
> And pour it in this glorious tyrant's throat ! (T1.4.2.2-7)

The inventively masochistic rites of Muhammad's priests suggest a self-destructive as well as a bloody religion, recalling the self-abuse of Dante's Muhammad in the *Inferno*. And once again his supplications go unanswered. Worse still, Tamburlaine transforms him into a stool by which to ascend his throne, and Bajazeth's invocation is reduced to a futile and meaningless ranting. At this point Bajazeth turns his attention from the Prophet who occupies the Christian's hell to the pagan kingdom of the damned itself:

> Fiends, look on me! and thou, dread god of hell,

With ebon sceptre strike this hateful earth,

And make it swallow both of us at once! (T1.4.2.27-9)

Bajazeth seems already to have accepted both his own and Tamburlaine's place in the Christian scheme of things. At the banquet in scene iv, he seems to complete his descent into the world of the damned when he reverts to apostrophizing the Furies:

Dive to the bottom of Avernas pool,

And in your hands bring hellish poison up,

And squeeze it in the cup of Tamburlaine !

Or, winged snakes of Lerna, cast your stings,

And leave your venoms in this tyrant's dish (T1.4.5.18-22).

When Bajazeth, starved and weak, refuses to eat from the point of Tamburlaine's sword, Tamburlaine threatens to force him to eat his own flesh (T1.4.4.43-5). Bajazeth, unlike Tamburlaine who is getting stronger, is getting weaker and weaker both in authority and body to the extent that he admits:

My empty stomach, full of idle heat,

Draws bloody humours from my feeble parts,

Preserving life by hasting cruel death.

My veins are pale, my sinews hard and dry,

My joints benumb'd; unless I eat, I die (T1.4.4.96-100).

At last it has dawned on him that, despite his self-delusion, absurd defiance, and reliance on outside authority, his whole being depends on a basic necessity: he must eat or else he will die. The monarch who planned to destroy Tamburlaine by piling body on body has finally lost the ability to command his own body in any productive action. In the process he seems to have become aware that it is Tamburlaine, the base shepherd, who controls his destiny, not

Muhammad. And Tamburlaine's exposure of Bajazeth's weakness is also a graphic demonstration of the weakness of Bajazeth's God.

A failure to elicit Muhammad's help and an infinite capacity for blinding self-delusion also mark the attitudes of all other Muslim characters in their dealings with Tamburlaine. Like Bajazeth, the Soldan of Egypt underestimates Tamburlaine's power and overestimates his own. To him Tamburlaine is merely a base and obscure bandit, 'famous for nothing but for theft and spoil' (T1.4.3.66), and his followers are an 'inglorious crew / Of Scythians and slavish Persians' (T1.4.3.67-8). Tamburlaine however, remains not so much daunted by the curses of his enemies as inspired by them. His statement to Zenocrate encapsulates this attitude:

> I glory in the curses of my foes,
> Having the power from the imperial heaven
> To turn them all upon their proper heads (T1.4.4.29-31).

This statement echoes Theridamas's claim that a king is more glorious than a god, and serves as a reminder that Tamburlaine's scourging and terrifying power over the infidel Muslims is not only limitless but divinely sanctioned, whether by 'the power from the imperial heaven' or by the Scythian himself, who has by this time taken on the power of the gods. That power is brutally evident in the destruction of Damascus, the slaughter of the Virgins, and the sadistic humiliation of Bajazeth and Zabina. Completely baffled by the silence of the gods, Zabina concludes that divine intervention on their behalf is unlikely. She is reduced to asking:

> Then is there left no Mahomet, no God,
> No fiend, no fortune, nor no hope of end

To our infamous, monstrous slaveries. [...]

Why should we live? (T1.5.2.176-85)

Having lost their authority, dignity and faith, the loss of hope is the final blow to Bajazeth and Zabina. In a last act of defiance and despair they commit suicide by dashing out their brains against the bars of their cage; a gesture of heroism in pagan terms which seals their damnation in the eyes of a Christian audience.

Marlowe may have intended to use his Muslim characters as a means of satirizing human vanity and pride.[27] Judith Weil argues that in depicting Muslims calling on their gods, Marlowe was 'criticizing human pride' while at the same time 'encouraging his audience to ponder the general need for signs and miracles';[28] a need which Elizabethan audiences would have associated with the Catholic faith as much as with the classical and Islamic religions. Marlowe seems to suggest that human beings are only capable of attaining what their own capabilities allow. They should never rely on supernatural aid to achieve their goals. In other words, the power to act originates from within, it is not the result of outside agencies. The failure of the gods of Muslims to respond to their pleas is proof enough, as far as an Elizabethan audience was concerned, of the improbability of their claim that their religion is divinely inspired. But from a Marlovian point of view it also has repercussions for all other callers on divine intervention.

By the close of the play these repercussions have become self-evident. The first part of Tamburlaine ends in a way which contravenes the expectations of audiences familiar with both classical and Christian dramatic conventions.

Greek or Roman tragedy or Medieval romances based on the concept of the 'wheel of fortune' demanded that a protagonist possessed of Tamburlaine's arrogance must experience a fall once he has reached the height of his ambition. Instead, the campaigns of Marlowe's Scythian shepherd remain as successful as ever in the final Act; indeed, they continue to get bloodier and more inexorable with every passing day. Zenocrate appeals to the gods (Muhammad included) as if she were aware that her husband is courting disaster according to theatrical conventions:

> Ah, mighty Jove and holy Mahomet,
> Pardon my love ! O, pardon his contempt
> Of earthly fortune and respect of pity;
> And let not conquest, ruthlessly pursued,
> Be equally against his life incensed (T1.5.2.301-5).

But we have no way of knowing whether her prayer is answered, or whether it is, like the prayers of Tamburlaine's enemies, simply irrelevant.

One thing is clear: that Tamburlaine's crimes are no worse than those of his adversaries. They too are active participants in this orgy of violence. What distinguishes him is his ability to fulfil his ambitions and aspirations and to match his words with his deeds. His great successes highlight the miserable failures of those who espouse alternative faiths: as a ruler his faith in himself seems more authentic than their trust in outside forces. He proves, in fact, that their ambitions are follies whereas his own are virtues. He also proves himself magnanimous in victory by making, for the time being at least, a 'truce with the world' (T1.5.2.467) and burying the king of Arabia, Bajazeth and Zabina with the honours their status demands. And by this means he demonstrates his

control over all conventions, commanding at will the reinstatement of those religious and political ceremonies which he has waived at will since the beginning of the play.

II. As a sequel to Part I, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part II provided the Elizabethan audience with a further opportunity to relish the continuing humiliation and degradation of Islam and Muslims. Once again the play violates dramatic convention by refusing to trace the downward trajectory of its protagonist. Once again Tamburlaine seems able to conquer at will and destroy every corner of the world of Islam, despite his many misfortunes. And once again this world is populated by barbarians and violent infidels who terrorize Christian Europe. Thus when Orcanes, king of Natolia, consults his advisors about the possibility of a peace agreement with Sigismond, king of Hungary, Byron observes

> King of Natolia, let us treat for peace;
>
> We are all glutted with the Christian's blood (T2.1.1.13-14).

This grotesquely casual remark demonstrates the bloody nature of the Muslims and highlights the extent of their barbarous conquest. What lies behind Byron's proposal for peace, of course, is the threat of the advancing Tamburlaine and the impracticability of fighting a war simultaneously on two fronts. As with Bajazeth's siege of Constantinople, Tamburlaine temporarily diverts the Muslims from their ongoing project of subjugating Christendom.

The continued success of this project is implied when, in his attempt to escape from Tamburlaine's prison, Bajazeth's son Callapine promises Almeda 'a thousand galleys, mann'd with Christian slaves' (T2.1.3.32), and adds that

The Grecian Virgins shall attend on thee,

Skillful in music and in amorous lays (T2.1.3.36-7).

Callapine's reference to the virgins and the 'amorous lays' reinforces the audience's preconceptions about the concupiscence of the Muslims and helps to polarize their feelings against them, since their victims are the most cultured of Christian nations, the Greeks - whose culture has been reduced by Muslim sensuality to a musical accompaniment for sexual acts. When the king of Jerusalem threatens Tamburlaine, in Act III, scene v, he thinks of the fate of Christian captives in the Barbary galleys as a proper punishment for the Scythian's temerity. He promises that he will have Tamburlaine

tied in chains,

Rowing with Christians in a brigandine

About the Grecian isles to rob and spoil,

And turn him to his ancient trade again (T2.3.5.92-5).

From these references it would seem that the Muslims have turned terrorising Christians into a way of life. Muslim barbarity and violence are again underscored when Callapine rallies his troops:

let us to the field,

The Persian's sepulcher, and sacrifice

Mountains of breathless men to Mahomet,

Who now, with Jove, opens the firmament

To see the slaughter of our enemies (T2.3.5.53-7).

This picture of a delighted Muhammad coveting the spectacle of the sacrificial murder of thousands of people, both friends and enemies, seems to sum up, from a Christian point of view, the intrinsically savage nature of Islam and Muslims.

Callapine's threats, however, fail to materialise because Tamburlaine decisively thwarts his offensive. He not only prevents the Muslims from committing the mass slaughter they anticipate but destroys their armies and takes their kings captive. As usual, Muhammad deserts his devout servant kings despite their invocations, and their bombastic damnation of Tamburlaine turns to farce when they are forced to participate in a spectacle devised by the Scythian, in which he reduces them to the level of horses pulling his chariot. In so doing, he seems to make nonsense of Muslim claims for a special relationship between Muhammad and Jove. Even worse, the king's wives and concubines are condemned to the task of providing pleasure for Tamburlaine's soldiers (T2.4.3.63-73). Furthermore, the destruction of the city of Babylon and the horrific manner in which Tamburlaine treats the defiant governor of that city (T2.5.1.80-109) are not only examples of the humiliation of Muslims but expressions of Tamburlaine's belief in the futility of the honour they claim to uphold. According to the principle of chivalric cause and effect, the honourable behaviour of the governor of Babylon ought to have resulted in honourable treatment on the part of his enemies. Instead, the governor finds himself hoisted onto the walls of the city as a target for Tamburlaine's soldiers to shoot at.

At each stage of the play's development, Tamburlaine's contravention of his enemies' expectations and his dismissal of their reasoning supplant the familiar narratives of religion with an unpredictable narrative of his own. The methodical destruction of Islam culminates in the climactic episode of Act V,

in which Tamburlaine orders the burning of The Koran. Immediately after pulverising Babylon, Tamburlaine demands in triumph:

> Where is the Turkish Alcaron,
> And all the heaps of superstitious books
> Found in the temple of that Mahomet
> Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt (T2.5.1.172-5).

His wrath is clearly directed towards a Muhammad whose lack of authority and failure to substantiate his claim to divinity have annihilated Tamburlaine's respect for him. The Scythian claims that his own deeds are proof enough of Muhammad's inability either to intervene on behalf of his followers or to establish his divine authority. He summarises his findings with another reference to the tool with which he has decimated his religious opponents, his sword:

> In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet:
> My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,
> Slew all his priests, his kinsmen and his friends,
> And yet I live untouched by Mahomet (T2.5.1.178-81).

And continues:

> Now, Mahomet, if thou have any power,
> Come down thyself and work a miracle.
> Thou art not worthy to be worshipped
> That suffers flames of fire to burn the writ
> Wherein the sum of thy religion rests (T2.5.1.186-90).

This challenge to Muhammad recalls the medieval tradition of regarding Muhammad as a deity worshipped by pagans. In addition, it confirms the medieval polemical claims that his failure to work any miracles is proof of the

the falseness of his pretensions to prophethood. Finally, at the height of his arrogance and in a mocking inversion of the tale of Muhammad and the mountain, Tamburlaine defies the Prophet to make his scriptures come to him, if he will not come to his scriptures:

> Why send'st thou not a furious whirlwind down,
>
> To blow thy Alcaron up to thy throne,
>
> Where men report thou sitt'st by God himself,
>
> Or vengeance on the head of Tamburlaine
>
> That shakes his sword against thy majesty
>
> And spurns the abstracts of thy foolish laws (T2.5.1.191-96).

When Muhammad fails to respond to this final challenge, Tamburlaine declares that the Prophet is trapped in the place to which the Christians have consigned him: Muhammad 'remains in hell' where he 'cannot hear the voice of Tamburlaine' (T2.5.1.197-98). He then implores the followers of the now discredited pagan god to abjure him:

> Seek out another godhead to adore;
>
> The God that sits in heaven, if any god,
>
> For he is God alone, and none but he (T2.5.1.199-201).

Tamburlaine need not implore the Muslims to abjure their god. In the time-honoured polemical and literary tradition of the Christian West they always seem ready to abandon their convictions, chide their gods, and renounce their religion. Just as they seem eminently vulnerable to the supposed deception of Muhammad, so they seem prepared to drop him like a hot brick as soon as his deceptions are exposed.

The representation of Muhammad as a deity chided by his followers for his unwillingness or inability to help is well established in early modern drama. In

Robert Greene's *Alphonsus King of Arragon* (1591), for example, Muhammad promises the king of Naples and his allies victory against Alphonsus but, as usual, deserts them. When Amurath, the king of Turkey, hears the news of their defeat he chides Muhammad for his failure to support his followers and accuses him of being an indifferent god with little or no regard for glory and honour:

> Is this the Crown which Mahomet did say
> He should with triumph weare vpon his head?
> Is this the honour which that cursed god
> Did prophesie should happen to them all? [...]
> Mahomet should know, and that for certaintie
> That Turkish Kings can brooke no iniurie. (4.3.1400-7)[29]

Amurath's contempt is obvious, and his threat that the failure of Muhammad will no more be tolerated than the treachery of an earthly monarch is indicative of his lack of conviction. Similarly, Bajazeth and Zabina both curse Muhammad and turn against him because they feel deceived and abandoned (T1.3.3.268-70). Callapine's supplication:

> Ah, sacred Mahomet, thou that hast seen
> Millions of Turks perish by Tamburlaine,
> Kingdoms made waste, brave cities sacked and burnt,
> And but one host is left to honour thee,
> Aid thy obedient servant Callapine (T2.5.2.24-8)

though not a direct castigation of Muhammad, betrays, through the sheer weight of the disasters that have afflicted his followers, a justifiable sense of doubt about Muhammad's commitment to his 'obedient servants'. His speech

acknowledges disappointments suffered in the past and anticipates the probability that Callapine's prayers, too, will not be answered.

It is interesting to note, however, that at the point when Tamburlaine seems to have completed his demolition of Islam, he expresses a monotheistic concept of God (quoted above, T2.5.1.199-201), which is remarkably similar to the Islamic belief in the unity of God the omnipotent, the one and only. This concept of God was made even clearer earlier in the play, in Orcanes' invocation in Act II, scene ii. The God whom Orcanes urges to punish the treacherous Catholic king, Sigismond, is the one that 'sits on high and never sleeps / Nor in one place is circumscriptible' (T2.2.2.49-50). Tamburlaine, however, never seems to hold a firm concept of the deity from one moment to the next. At one point he asserts that:

> There is a God, full of revenge and wrath,
>
> From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,
>
> Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey (T2.5.1.182-84).

If the God mentioned by Orcanes is similar to the Islamic and the Christian one, this deity is a God of the Old Testament, a God full of wrath and vengeance rather than love and mercy. But this is only one of the divinities to which Tamburlaine appeals. Earlier, in Part I, he had suggested that he was the scourge of more than one god: 'let the majesty of heaven behold / Their scourge and terror tread on emperors' (T1.4.2.31-2). It is obvious that Tamburlaine, or for that matter Marlowe, is playing hide and seek with a diversity of concepts of the deity, or deities. He constantly switches from one position to another - from the pagan to the Christian to the heathen - in the most confusing manner. He readily admits to being the scourge of God, the

instrument of his wrath, only to shift position in the next breath and imply that when he or his followers are under threat,

> Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven
>
> To ward the blow, and shield [him] safe from harm (T1.1.2.179-80).

This shifting position in relation to being 'the scourge of god' allows Tamburlaine to justify the terrible violence he inflicts on Muslims as divinely sanctioned. But it is also ambiguous enough to suggest that his violence could be directed against the deity or deities themselves: that he could, in fact, be the scourge of the gods in the sense that he may turn on them and become their Nemesis. Tamburlaine makes this last point clearer when he threatens to march against the heavens at the end of the second Part (T2.5.3.48-50).

In another shift of position in Part I, Tamburlaine compares himself to Jove and stresses his desire to be like the gods:

> Jove sometimes masked in a shepherd's weed,
>
> And by those steps that he hath scal'd the heavens,
>
> May we become immortal like the gods (T1.1.2.198-200).

Here he transforms Jove's willingness to change himself into a mortal (recorded at length in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) into evidence that a mortal can be metamorphosed at will into a god. He seems, in fact, to be fashioning god in his own image, which in turn suggests that being a deity is merely an imaginative feat of the kind which the ancient poets were supposed to have accomplished when they invented the pagan pantheon.

In yet another shift of position, Tamburlaine repeatedly challenges the gods to combat. For example, when expressing his resolve to crown himself king of Persia, he defiantly declares that not even 'Mars himself, the angry god of

arms' shall force him to give up that crown (T1.2.7.59). More defiant still is the famous challenge to 'Mahomet' mentioned above (T2.5.1.191-96). Nevertheless, Tamburlaine's ultimate challenge is his declaration of war against the gods after he has fallen ill at the end of the play, when he urges his followers:

> Come, let us march against the powers of heaven,
>
> And set black streamers in the firmament,
>
> To signify the slaughter of the gods (T2.5.3.48-50).

This is the first time in his illustrious career when Tamburlaine fails to match his words with his deeds, and when his language takes on the bombastic quality that has long been associated with his Muslim enemies. In Part I, Tamburlaine's use of the colour black was associated with his inflexible commitment to slaughter his enemies. Here, on the other hand, his enemies are at best inaccessible, at worst non-existent. It would seem that at the moment of his death Tamburlaine begins at last, like other men, to imagine things he cannot perform.

III. Even though the trend of negatively representing Islam and Muslims persisted in early modern drama, there were times when that representation was less negative and, in a few cases, even favourable. These relatively positive representations, however, did not mark a change in the traditionally held attitudes towards Islam, but were dictated either by national political expediency or by sectarian rivalry between Catholics and Protestants. In the context of Reformation controversy, Islam was no longer regarded as the only Other by which orthodox Christianity could define itself. Instead, competing

religious sects and hostile European nations came to be regarded as the principal Other, with all the negative qualities this position brought with it.[30] Occasionally, of course, Islam was still perceived as presenting a more serious threat to English interests than, for example, the Spanish, the Irish, or the Italians, and the invocation of Islam and Muslims could have the 'effect of stilling internal European opposition and stressing the unity of Christendom'.[31] When, for example, Don John of Austria defeated the Turks in the battle of Lepanto in 1571, the popular reaction in England was one of rejoicing, even though he was the half-brother of Philip II of Spain.[32] His victory was a triumph over the common enemy of the faith. Again, during the Turkish siege of Malta in 1565 a prayer was ordered to be said in churches every Wednesday and Friday in the city of London for the delivery of that Island from the sworn enemies of the Christian religion.[33] The prayer invokes God to destroy the Turk who 'goeth about to set up, to extol, and to magnify that wicked monster and damned soul Mahumet above thy dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ'.[34] This instance of what might be seen as sectarian hypocrisy may be obliquely alluded to in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90), where the Christians are willing to go to any lengths to consolidate their own commercial interests at the expense of their Turkish and Jewish competitors. However, the new antagonisms of the early modern period, both sectarian and national, quickly established themselves in the Renaissance imagination alongside the traditional polarisation of Christian against infidel.

Among other things, the conflict between different religious sects and national entities played a major role in the failure of European Christians to

unite against the advancing Turks. One result of the Turkish victories in Eastern and Central Europe and the religious divisions between Catholics and Protestants was the weakening of the entire structure of European Catholicism. 'Profiting from this situation and treated by the Turks as fellow iconoclasts,' observes Paul Coles in *The Ottoman Impact on Europe,* 'Protestant missionaries made rapid headway in the conquered areas'.[35] Moreover, some Protestants even welcomed the prospect of Catholicism being destroyed altogether by the advancing tide. In a letter to Philip Sidney, written in March 1574, Hubert Languet expresses his concern that the inter-rivalries between Christian princes were opening the way for the Turks to occupy Italy.[36] He then openly admits that his concern is for the rest of Europe rather than for Italy itself. 'If,' he says, 'Italy alone were in danger, it would be less a subject for sorrow; since it is the forge in which the causes of all [...] ills are wrought'.[37] In his reply of April 1574, Sidney agrees with Languet's remarks concerning Italy and goes even further by suggesting that Italy's fall might constitute a double blessing, since it could lead to the destruction both of Islam and of Catholicism. 'I am convinced,' he says, 'that this baneful Italy would so contaminate the Turks; would so ensnare them with all its vile allurements, that they would soon fall down of themselves from their high places'.[38] It is rather interesting that, as Sidney sees it, the insidiously corrupting nature of Catholicism, working on European culture from within, is far more dangerous to the Protestant cause than the military threat of Islam.

As one might expect from remarks like Sidney's, Islam quickly became a powerful instrument of propaganda attacks and counter-attacks in the conflict

between Catholics and Protestants. Each Church accused the other of colluding with the infidel. Among Protestants, as seen above, there was the tendency to bind Rome and Islam together in a destructive satanic alliance. Luther himself declared that 'the soul of Anti-Christ was the Pope and his body was the Turk'.[39] The Roman Catholics, in turn, claimed that 'Satan worked for the Turks by stirring up the hatred of heretics against the true Church'.[40] This fashion of viewing Islam in comparison with Catholicism produced, in early modern English drama, instances where a Muslim character was represented more favourably than a Catholic one. Most notable are the representations of Abdelmelec, king of Fez, in contrast to Philip II, king of Spain, in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588-89), which will be discussed in Chapter Three, and Orcanes, king of Natolia, in contrast to Sigismond, king of Hungary, in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part II.

These relatively favourable representations may mark the emerging trend in favour of national, political and economic expediency, which was given its most notorious expression in the works of Machiavelli (1469-1527). In 1576, for example, England established diplomatic contact with Morocco's Abd el-Malek who, as king of that country, encouraged trade with Christian nations and especially with England.[41] In that same year England made an agreement with Abd el-Malek whereby they agreed to exchange Moroccan saltpetre for English munitions.[42] England went on to establish trade relations with the Turks through the Levant Company (1581) and developed these relations into diplomatic ones in 1583. England, however, had more in mind than trade or diplomatic contacts. Containing the Spanish threat was another priority, which

the English were prepared to put into effect at any cost, even with the help of the Muslims. In 1589, for example, Queen Elizabeth contacted Murad III, Emperor of Turkey, with a proposal for mutual naval co-operation against the Spaniards. In September of the same year the Emperor sent the Queen a letter in which he accepted her proposal.[43] From this developed a situation where, as far as England was concerned, the Islamic threat was far more distant and less immediate than the threat posed by Catholic Spain, especially after the Armada (1588). Hence the emphasis on the *duplicity* of the Catholics, in both *Tamburlaine* and *The Battle of Alcazar*, which was perceived as an exclusively Islamic trait in medieval literature.

It therefore comes as no surprise that in the second part of *Tamburlaine* Marlowe departs from the dogmatically anti-Islamic position of Part I, and introduces an interesting episode in which a Muslim, Orcanes, is cast in opposition to a Christian, Sigismond, and emerges favourably from the comparison. When the two kings conclude a truce suspending their long-running military conflict, each swears by his Prophet to keep the peace. Moreover, each makes a pledge to support the other against his enemies. Sigismond, the Catholic king of Hungary, swears:

> By him that made the world and saved my soul,
> The son of God and issue of a maid,
> Sweet Jesus Christ, I solemnly protest
> And vow to keep this peace inviolable. (T2.1.2.56-9)

Orcanes then reciprocates:

> By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,
> Whose holy Alcaron remains with us,

Whose glorious body, when he left the world,

Closed in a coffin mounted up the air,

And hung on stately Mecca's temple roof,

I swear to keep this peace inviolable! (T2.1.2.60-5)

This exchange of oaths clearly demonstrates that the legend of the suspended coffin, first advanced by Al Kindy, was still in vogue in Elizabethan England. However, within the context of the play, the legend acquires an air of authenticity which it had seldom possessed in the past, coming as it does from Orcanes, king of Natolia, who honours his oath where Sigismond breaks his word.

Sigismond's failure to respect his commitment to the 'son of God and issue of a maid, / Sweet Jesus Christ,' is an astonishingly bold touch on the part of Marlowe. Having heard that Orcanes has sent the bulk of his army to face Tamburlaine, Baldwin and Frederick, lords of Buda and Bohemia, convince the Hungarian monarch to renege on his solemn promise. Baldwin, for example, argues that a Christian is not bound by his word if it was given to an infidel (T2.2.1.35-6). In other words, Sigismond can break his promise to Orcanes and march on Natolia. On receiving the news, Orcanes indignantly expresses a justified outrage at the Hungarian's treachery and adjures the God of Christianity to avenge His name on the traitor. There is a genuine feeling of shock in his reaction which couches itself in terms common to the Christian and Islamic faiths:

Can there be such deceit in Christians,

Or treason in the fleshly heart of man,

Whose shape is figure of the highest God? (T2.2.2.36-8)

Despite their ideological differences, Orcanes never doubted the sincerity of the 'fleshly heart' of the Christians, but Sigismond proves to him that some, at least, who profess to believe in Christ, fail to duplicate his actions as they seem to duplicate his physical attributes. Orcanes goes on to apostrophise Christ himself, challenging him to co-operate with Muhammad in order to prove his divinity:

> If thou wilt prove thyself a perfect God,
> Worthy the worship of all faithful hearts,
> Be now reveng'd upon this traitor's soul,
> And make the power I have left behind
> Too little to defend our guiltless lives
> Sufficient to discomfit and confound
> The trustless force of those false Christians! (T2.2.2.56-62)

What is interesting here is the fact that the historical roles have been reversed. The Muslim accuses the Christians of being false, proves himself trustworthy, and shows more faith in Christ than they:

> To arms, my lords! on Christ still let us cry!
> If there be Christ, we shall have victory. (T2.2.2.63-4)

Consequently, Sigismond loses the battle and his life, and Orcanes concludes that either Christ or Muhammad has been his friend (T2.2.3.11). Unlike Tamburlaine, Orcanes did not challenge the deities, and unlike Sigismond he did not sin against them. His reward was sweet victory.

Then in a scene reminiscent of the episode in the *Inferno* where Dante describes Muhammad's torments in hell, Orcanes paints a harrowing picture of the destiny of the treacherous Sigismond as he sees it. 'Now' he says,

> Scalds his soul in the Tartarian streams,

And feeds upon the baneful tree of hell,

That Zoacum, that fruit of bitterness,

That in the midst of fire is ingraffed. (T2.2.3.18-21)

To make the punishment still more dreadful Orcanes adds that Sigismond's torments will be varied throughout eternity:

The devils there, in chains of quenchless flame

Shall lead his soul through Orcus' burning gulf,

From pain to pain, whose change shall never end. (T2.2.3.24-6)

Marlowe's description of hell and its bitter tree, Zoacum, corresponds very closely to the picture painted of hell in Chapters 37, 44, and 56 of the Koran. Ethel Seaton convincingly argues that Marlowe's source for that information was the *Chronicorum Turcicorum tomi duo*, a collection of various chronicles of Turkish affairs by the Latin writer Philippus Lonicerus, first published in Frankfurt in 1578.[44] Marlowe had clearly done his research, and offers the Islamic view of hell with an authority equal to that with which the Christian and classical views of the afterlife were conventionally offered. And in the context of the two *Tamburlaine* plays, where victory alone serves to authenticate the world view of the conqueror, this authoritative reinstatement of the claim of Islam is given additional force by the fact that it is uttered by a military victor.

However, in the shifting world of Marlowe's play no faith is allowed to remain unchallenged for long. Although Orcanes believes that both Christ and Muhammad share the credit for his victory over Sigismond, he reserves the greater praise for Christ for 'not doing Mahomet an injury' (T2.2.3.34) and for punishing Sigismond who disgraced Him. This episode proves among other

things that, unlike Muhammad, Christ never allows His name and faith to be defiled. And Gazellus remains uncertain of the role played by either Prophet. In response to a question from Orcanes he says,

> 'Tis but the fortune of the wars, my lord,
>
> Whose power is often prov'd a miracle. (T2.2.3.31-2)

He obviously believes that military successes are less the result of the workings of any outside agency than of human actions. He inclines, in fact, towards the philosophy which was forcefully demonstrated by Tamburlaine in Part I, when he emphasised the link between his word and his sword in the episode involving the Virgins of Damascus.

As we have seen, however, Tamburlaine harbours constantly shifting attitudes to the question of the driving force behind human actions. On the one hand he seems convinced that only self-generated power can dictate human actions. His insistence, on the other hand, that his own deeds are sanctioned by a deity or deities seems to affirm the opposite view. And the structure of the second part of *Tamburlaine* reinforces the ambiguities generated by its protagonist. Marlowe mischievously sets up a situation in which he lures his audience into a series of theological traps by making extended comparisons between Christ and Muhammad. Where Muhammad persistently refuses to intervene on behalf of his faithful followers, the only time Christ is directly invoked, in Act II, he promptly responds by punishing Sigismond, the sinful and faithless follower. Following the medieval polemical tradition, the audience would not have expected otherwise from either.

Marlowe, however, had other ideas. The scene in which Sigismond is justly punished is balanced by the climactic scene, in Act V, where Tamburlaine burns The Koran. At this point Marlowe shocks the audience by allowing Muhammad to respond as promptly as Christ did in the earlier episode. As soon as he burns The Koran Tamburlaine finds himself struck down by a nameless illness; and an audience schooled in the workings of Divine Providence could not have failed to connect the second incident with the first. Up to this point Marlowe has consistently allowed Tamburlaine's terrible and blasphemous deeds to go unpunished, despite the supplications of his victims. The slaughter of thousands, the humiliating torture of his royal captives, even the murder of his own son all pass without apparent consequence. It is only after he burns The Koran that Tamburlaine succumbs to sickness. Stephen Greenblatt observes that 'the one action which Elizabethan churchmen themselves might have applauded seems to bring down divine vengeance' upon him.[45] Marlowe's intention here is not to 'celebrate the transcendent power of Mohammed,' Greenblatt goes on to say, 'but to challenge the habit of mind that looks to heaven for rewards and punishments, that imagines human evils as "the scourge of God"':[46] and there could be no more shocking method by which to challenge such a habit in an Elizabethan audience than to attribute a miracle to the Prophet of Islam. Furthermore, Marlowe seems in this episode to be questioning the Elizabethan preoccupation with the very ideas of cause and effect and poetic justice. I mean cause and effect in the philosophical sense that certain results are expected to follow as natural consequences of certain actions. Honourable behaviour, for example, ought to result in

reciprocally honourable treatment, as it usually does in medieval romances. In the same way, poetic justice refers to 'the rewarding of the virtuous and the punishing of the vicious, usually in a proportional and appropriate manner,' as Jonathan Dollimore puts it.[47]

Marlowe is clearly mocking the audience's belief that God works actively on their behalf when he suggests that if Tamburlaine's illness and consequent death are in any way caused by divine retribution, then Muhammad is its agent.[48] In addition, the manner, mentioned above, in which Tamburlaine treats the governor of Babylon (T2.5.1.80-109) demonstrates that Marlowe is playing on the gap between the audience's expectations and the events taking place on the stage as he does throughout these two plays.[49]

Similarly, Marlowe seems to set up Callapine as a viable candidate to challenge Tamburlaine at the beginning of the second part (T2.1.3). Callapine is Bajazeth's son, and therefore an appropriate figure to avenge the death of the Turkish king (as Orestes avenged the death of his father Agamemnon). He is capable of commanding language in a manner not dissimilar to Tamburlaine's when he persuaded Theridamas to join forces with him at the beginning of Part I (T1.1.2). Callapine's success in persuading his jailer Almeda to set him free and to espouse his cause (T2.1.3) seems to echo the earlier episode, and to set up the young man as a new Tamburlaine, capable of bringing about the fall from power which never took place in the first play. But here, too, Marlowe builds up his audience's expectations only in order to shatter them. Callapine's challenge fails to materialise until the very end of the fifth Act, after Tamburlaine has been smitten with disease: yet even at this point, when

Marlowe's protagonist is at his weakest, he is capable of defeating Callapine's army simply by walking out of his tent. It is by techniques like these that Marlowe seems to present a challenge to the concept of Providence or divine intervention. In any other play, the pattern of divine justice would have been plain in Callapine's defeat. In *Tamburlaine* there are no patterns except for the ones created by the human imagination.

Nevertheless, not even Tamburlaine finally has complete control over the shape of the two plays that relate his adventures. One of the concepts made very clear in *Tamburlaine the Great* is the futility of Tamburlaine's quest, through violence and conquest, to transcend his own mortality. Throughout the two parts of the play, Tamburlaine's belief in his superhuman nature, even in his divinity, is underlined by the unmitigated sufferings of his Muslim adversaries. Their sufferings are a proof of his power and are designed, by contrast, to display his qualities 'as the sufferings of the damned were [...] supposed to contribute to the glory of God'.[50] Even his enemies admit that he is superhuman. Meander, in Part I, for example, speculates that

> Some powers divine, or else infernal, mixed
> Their angry seeds at his conception;
> For he was never sprung of human race. (T1.2.5.9-11)

Ortygius concurs, asking

> What god or fiend or spirit of the earth
> Or monster turned to a manly shape,
> Or of what mould or mettle he be made,
> What star or state soever govern him. (T1.2.5.15-8)

Their grudging admission of Tamburlaine's status as a superhuman reinforces his conviction of his own invincibility. This could explain the sense of shock with which he reacts against his illness. His question

> Shall sickness prove me now to be a man,
>
> That have been term'd the terror of the world? (T25.3.44-5)

suggests that for the first time in his career, not counting the death of Zenocrate, Tamburlaine has been faced with the possibility that he is merely mortal.

Tamburlaine's resistance to the possibility of his limitations as a mortal is echoed by Faustus when he exclaims 'yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man' (*Doctor Faustus*, 1.1.23).[51] Both Tamburlaine, especially in Part II, and Faustus feel confined by their humanity[52], and both struggle to transcend that confinement. Tamburlaine works to overcome these limitations by imposing on others the perception of himself which he forges in word and action, and which leads him to continuous conquest and violence. Faustus, on the other hand, attempts to overcome his limitations through the quest for absolute knowledge which leads him to reject the intellectual circumscriptions imposed by God and to embrace the devil. In the end, however, both heroes are forced to recognise the reality of their mundane limitations. On his part, Tamburlaine grudgingly admits that his earthly conquests must end, but never accepts that he need confine his ambitions to the sphere of mortality. At his death the power of his imagination remains undiminished, and he envisages the gods as fashioning a greater role for him than merely that of the possessor of the earthly crown:

> In vain I strive and rail against those powers

That mean t'invest me in a higher throne,

As much too high for this disdainful earth. (T2.5.3.120-22)

In other words, his mind continues to resist the limitations imposed on mortals by all religions up to and even beyond the end of the play.

Faustus, on the other hand, finally accepts the bounds set by Christianity and pleads with God:

Impose some end to my incessant pain:

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,

A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd.

No end is limited to damned souls. (5.2.169-71)

He seems to recognise that only through total submission to God could he be liberated from his self-destructive quest for power and his sinful contract with the devil. But he also seems unable to make that submission; here he attempts by bargaining to restore the discredited Catholic doctrine of Purgatory before acknowledging with his Protestant audience that 'No end is limited to damned souls.' Indeed, his entire speech is made up of a series of efforts to evade the conclusion which his audience would have deemed inevitable: that human subjects have no control over the events of the afterlife. Like Tamburlaine, his imagination is as frenziedly active at the moment of his death as it was when he made his pact with the devil. It would seem, then, that human resistance to the laws imposed by religion is as impossible as human ambition.

Unlike Faustus, Tamburlaine insists that he will still be in control after death, and enlists the characters he has killed in the course of his career as support for his contention:

Hell and Elysium swarm with ghosts of men

That I have sent from sundry foughten fields

To spread my fame through hell and up to heaven. (T1.5.2.403-5)

Through Tamburlaine and Faustus, Marlowe imagines the afterlife in different ways. In Tamburlaine he celebrates the power of the mind to overcome every political and religious limitation: while in Faustus he charts the struggles of the intellect to resist its practical limitations, and records the inevitability of its failure. One reason for this failure may be that Faustus finds himself trapped in a far more unified religious world than that of Tamburlaine: one where there is only a single God - the Protestant one. Whereas Tamburlaine is capable of playing off one religion against another, and hence of moulding even God to his own ends, Faustus finds himself being moulded by an irresistible dominant ideology, whose seeming enemies - the devils - are in fact the humble servants of the same religious system.

The fact of death, more than anything else, is what highlights the limitations of Tamburlaine and Faustus. Just as Faustus dies with the recognition that 'No end is limited to damned souls,'(5.2.172), so Tamburlaine at his death acknowledges that he has not yet conquered all the world and that the map laid before him is a testimony to that. He implores his sons to fulfil his dream for him. Yet his question, 'shall I die and this unconquered?' (T2.5.3.158) is indicative of a hint of uncertainty. He dies casting a shadow of a doubt on the ability of his sons to accomplish his dream; after all, if he himself had agreed to follow another man's wishes he would not have been Tamburlaine. For his sons to resemble their father they would have to challenge not only their father's authority over them but one another. At Tamburlaine's death, then, his only conceivable successors would seem to be the gods themselves.

Throughout his career Tamburlaine has always responded swiftly and violently to the challenges against him, especially in Part I. In Part II, however, these challenges seem to change in nature to the extent that mere violence is no longer sufficient to overcome them. Long before his death, in fact, Tamburlaine's opponents have started to use death as a form of resistance to his imposition of his will on them. One such incident is the challenge mounted by Tamburlaine's son, Calyphas, to his father's authority. Calyphas announces:

> I know, [...], what it is to kill a man;
> It works remorse of conscience in me.
> I take no pleasure to be murderous,
> Nor care for blood when wine will quench my thirst. (T2.4.1.27-30)

Calyphas' view undermines the whole concept behind his father's ideals and runs counter to Tamburlaine's expectations of his son, especially after that bloody teaching experience of cutting his own arm (T2.3.2.15-18). It is perhaps noteworthy that the vocabulary Calyphas adopts is a kind of mocking variation on Christian themes: the phrase 'remorse of conscience' and the substitution of wine for blood associates him with Sigismond and his followers.

Even though Tamburlaine murders Calyphas, the mere fact that he dies for his ideals rather than adopting his father's is a stark reminder that Tamburlaine's authority is far from omnipotent. In this sense, Calyphas's death is a profound statement of defiance and self-assertion. His rejection of his father's values and his espousal of the pleasure-seeking life demonstrates his desire to assert and define himself independently of Tamburlaine. In so

doing Calyphas shatters the mould in which Tamburlaine tries to cast him. Thus he becomes a real rival for Tamburlaine: a man who is self-defined, as Tamburlaine is. Unlike other opponents of Tamburlaine who tend to rely on others to define them - and unlike the Scythian's other sons who are supposed to be his successors - Calyphas proves himself to be a dangerous source of defiance that has to be destroyed. Tamburlaine shows his recognition of the danger he poses when he describes the killing of Calyphas as a kind of medical treatment for his own body, purging it of infected blood. In this sense one might take Tamburlaine's death as another triumph for Calyphas, since his physician tells us that he dies from a kind of blood-poisoning.

Similarly, Olympia, the captain's wife, presents another challenge to Tamburlaine's authority, in this case, through her resistance to his lieutenant, by refusing to become a concubine. 'Devise,' she says, speaking to herself,

> some means to rid thee of thy life,
> Rather than yield to his detested suit,
> Whose drift is only to dishonour thee. (T2.4.2.5-7)

Her determination to preserve her honour and by extension her identity poses a direct challenge to Tamburlaine's authority. For her, as in the end for Calyphas, the only possibility left for self-assertion is through death. Olympia succeeds by tricking Theridamas into killing her (T2.4.2.59-81). These multiple challenges to Tamburlaine's authority, especially in Part II, come from the most disempowered people, like Olympia, who is a worthy successor to the governor of Babylon. Originally, of course, Tamburlaine himself was one of the disempowered. In their own way these challenges serve to highlight the extent of Tamburlaine's internal and external limitations. The same impulse to

resist authority which induced him to seek power, Marlowe seems to suggest, will ensure that his own authority will meet with increasing resistance as it grows.

IV. To conclude: Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* , Parts I and II, exhibits a number of inimical attitudes and perceptions toward Islam and Muslims in the tradition of the Middle Ages. The most prominent of these are: the perception of Islam as a religion which sanctions violence, and of Muslims as pleasure-seeking barbaric infidels. They are idolaters worshipping the self-professed god Muhammad, a devious trickster who has an unequalled propensity for deserting his followers in times of need - one of the foremost charges against him in the medieval polemical tradition. Marlowe even recirculates, in Part II, the legend of the suspended coffin which, from a polemical point of view, serves to disprove Muhammad's claim to prophethood and to illustrate his failure to work miracles. Moreover, he exploits the long-running animosity between Islam and Christianity to represent Muslims as a constant military menace, enslaving Christians and subjugating them in their bid to conquer Europe.

However, to read Marlowe's play as merely an anti-Islamic tragedy is to do it a great injustice. Evidently, it is true that Marlowe had to employ Islam and Muslims in a manner that catered to the audience's prejudices and to the expectations of the Elizabethan censors. But in doing so he succeeded in freeing himself to consider the diverse political and religious issues of his time and to explore ways of using religion for personal and political ends without

drawing danger on himself. For example, Tamburlaine's blasphemous act against the Koran, in Part II, might well be taken as a symbolic act of contempt for the Christian Scriptures. The bulk of his Elizabethan spectators would not have read it as such, since the Koran is the Scripture of the infidel. Instead they would most probably have seen the burning as an act of Providence against Muhammad and his rival religion. But the language of the episode (T2.5.1.172-201), the imagery, and the context all associate Tamburlaine's blasphemous act with Christianity and Christ more than with Muhammad and Islam. When, for example, Tamburlaine dares Muhammad to come down from heaven and work a miracle (T2.5.1.187) he does so with no Islamic frame of reference to support him. Ascension to heaven is always referred to in association with Jesus Christ and the Crucifixion. Moreover, the legend of the suspended coffin, taken at face value, clearly demonstrates that, as proof of his falsity, Muhammad, unlike Christ, had failed to ascend to heaven. So when Tamburlaine refers to Muhammad as sitting by God himself (T2.5.1.193) he could only be referring to the well established tradition of Christ's resurrection and ascension. It has already been pointed out that Marlowe was familiar enough with the tradition of Islam to have represented the Prophet more accurately if he had wanted to. Instead we must suppose that Tamburlaine's blasphemies are meant to receive much of their force from the echoes they contain of blasphemies against the Christian religion.

On the other hand, Marlowe's audience would no doubt have found much satisfaction in the defeat of Bajazeth and his humiliation at the hands of Tamburlaine. Even Bajazeth himself is aware of this when he bitterly remarks

that his enemies, the Christians, will be ringing their superstitious bells in celebration of his demise (T1.3.3.236-40). Marlowe's audience would have regarded his predicament as an apt punishment for the sins he had committed, chiefly against Christians. But the one Christian we meet, in Part II, is subjected to an equally prompt punishment.

In the case of Sigismond Marlowe uses a Christian, though of a different denomination than his own, to demonstrate to his audience that treachery is a human, and not just a Muslim, tendency. Indeed, the behaviour of the Governor in *The Jew of Malta* implies that it is a particularly Christian trait. Both Sigismond and the Governor could be read as satirical personifications of the religious hypocrisy which allowed members of a particular sect - whether Catholic or Protestant - to commit any act of treachery on the grounds of religion. In the world of *Tamburlaine*, no one religion seems privileged over another: when Sigismond contravenes the teachings of Christ it is Orcanes, the infidel, who is shocked. Orcanes clearly has enough fear of God to prevent him from committing perjury; unlike Sigismond he believes that there is a God who punishes wickedness and rewards virtue. Obviously, Sigismond has a lot to learn from Orcanes, even about his own faith.

In dealing with the notion of the punishment of sin in this episode, Marlowe seems to set the audience up to show them the inconsistency of their thinking. On the one hand they seem to accept that the fate of Bajazeth is a logical conclusion to his wickedness. On the other hand, they do not seem to extend the same kind of thinking to Tamburlaine. His cruelty, violence and wickedness seem to command their admiration rather than their loathing.

Committing atrocities against Muslims is, as far as the Elizabethan audience were concerned, its own justification. So when Tamburlaine becomes ill after burning the Koran, Marlowe represents it in a manner that questions the audience's conception of reward and punishment. By suggesting that Tamburlaine's illness could be a result of that act, Marlowe forces the audience either to accept Muhammad's claim as valid or to accept the absurdity of their logic if Tamburlaine's wickedness is allowed to go unpunished.

Finally, *Tamburlaine the Great* is an outstanding expression of man's desire to transcend his own limitations and be god-like; of man's faith in himself, which supersedes his faith in any single religion. In *Tamburlaine*, God would seem to be a human creation, capable of being adopted to the expedient needs of the powers that be. And its Islamic setting, with its sheer geographical breadth, is both safe territory in which to explore this concept and a perfect enactment of the imaginative potential of the human mind. As such, it could be argued that *Tamburlaine* is different from Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* and Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, which seem very much less sophisticated in comparison. As we should see in the following chapter, the Islamic setting of these two plays is less an enactment of the power of the human imagination than a recognition of the prevailing and sometimes fluctuating political and religious realities of the time.

Notes

[1] John H. Ingram, *Christopher Marlowe and His Associates* (London: Grant Richards, 1904), p.104.

[2] Ibid., p.105.

[3] Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.3.

[4] Ibid., p.41.

[5] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* , ed. by Una M. Ellis-Fermor, in *The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe*, gen. ed. R. H. Case, 6 vols (London: Methuen & Co. LTD, 1930), II, p.85. All subsequent references to Parts I and II are from this edition.

[6] Ibid., p.112.

[7] Ethel Seaton, 'Marlowe's Map,' *Essays and Studies*, 10 (1924), 13-35 (p.35).

[8] *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, ed. by Steuart A. Pears (London: William Pickering, 1845), p.153.

[9] Samuel C. Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.106.

[10] Quoted in ibid., p.106.

[11] Ibid., pp.106-7.

[12] Ibid., p.107.

[13] Ibid., p.106.

[14] *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet* , p.197.

[15] John Addington Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1884), p.625.

[16] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.202.

[17] See Stephen Greenblatt, 'Marlowe and Renaissance Self-Fashioning,' in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers : Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson*, ed. by Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp.41-69.

[18] Huston Diehl, 'The Iconography of Violence in English Renaissance Tragedy,' *Renaissance Drama*, 11 (1980), 27-44 (p.30).

[17] Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*, ed. by Albert S. Cook (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1890), p.16.

[20] Huston Diehl, 'The Iconography of Violence in English Renaissance Tragedy,' p.33.

[21] Robert Kimbrough, '"1*Tamburlaine*": A Speaking Picture in a Tragic Glass,' *Renaissance Drama,* 7 (1964), 20-34 (p.31).

[22] For the impact on the West of the taking of Constantinople, see Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp.37-45.

[23] Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, p.1439.

[24] See Richard Wilson, 'Visible Bullets: Tamburlaine the Great and Ivan the Terrible,' *English Literary History,* 62 (1995), 47-68.

[25] Ibid., p.51.

[26] Ibid., p.50.

[27] Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.112.

[28] Ibid., pp.113-14.

[29] Robert Greene, *Alphonsus, King of Arragon*, in *The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene*, vol.I, ed. by J. Churton Collins (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 120.

[30] G. K. Hunter, *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Traditions: Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Edinburgh: Liverpool University Press, 1978), p.13.

[31] Ibid., p.22.

[32] Gillian E. Brennan, 'The Cheese and the Welsh: Foreigners in Elizabethan Literature,' *Renaissance Studies,* 8, no. 1 (March 1994), 40-64 (p.59).

[33] *Liturgical Services of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, p.519.

[34] Ibid., p.522.

[35] Paul Coles, *The Ottoman Impact on Europe*, p.102.

[36] *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, p.44.

[37] Ibid., p.45.

[38] Ibid., pp.48-9.

[39] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose* , p.101.

[40] Ibid., p.101.

[41] Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.138, n.25.

[42] Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in the English Renaissance Drama*, p.17.

[43] Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* , pp.1006-7.

[44] Ethel Seaton, 'Fresh Sources for Marlowe,' *Review of English Studies* , 5.20 (October 1929), 385-401 (pp.385-7).

[45] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* , p.202.

[46] Ibid., p.202.

[47] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Kent: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1984), p. 72.

[48] Catherine Minshull, 'Marlowe's Sound Machevill,' *Renaissance Drama,* 13 (1982), 35-53 (p.49).

[49] Ibid., p.49.

[50] M. C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* , 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.134.

[51] Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. by Keith Walker, The Fountainwell Drama Texts, 26, gen. ed. Arthur Brown et al (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1973), p.19. All subsequent references are from this edition.

[52] Marjorie Garber, "'Infinite Riches in a Little Room": Closure and Enclosure in Marlowe,' in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers: Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson* (1977), pp.3-21 (p.11).

CHAPTER THREE

THE TREACHERY of MUSLIMS in GEORGE PEELE'S *THE BATTLE of* ALCAZAR and KYD'S *SOLIMAN and PERSEDA*

I. Following the lead of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588-89) and Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1589-92) employed an Islamic setting and characters for their subject matter. Both plays however differ from *Tamburlaine* in their representations of Islam and Muslims by emphasizing a different aspect of their traditional character - their perceived treachery. In its discussion of nationalistic and patriotic issues, *The Battle of Alcazar* introduces the treacherous and Machiavellian Moor, Muly Mahamet, as its protagonist, and despite the presence in the play of the good Moor, Abdelmelec, Muly Mahamet's villainy emerges as the dominant trait of the enemies of Christendom. Similarly, within the context of the siege and conquest of Rhodes and the vital issue of intermarriage, the treachery of Soliman, the Turkish king, and Brusor, the Turkish knight, emerges as the dominant theme of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*. Though different in emphasis from *Tamburlaine*, these two plays could be said to complete the overall picture of Islam and Muslims which Marlowe had helped to establish in the minds of Elizabethan audiences.

II. The theme of the death of three kings in the battle of El-kasar el-kebir in Morocco, in August 1578, attracted the attention of contemporary historians and dramatists alike.[1] In that battle, King Sebastian of Portugal and the Moroccan kings Abd el-Malek and Muly Muhammad lost their lives, as did

Captain Thomas Stukeley, a renegade English Catholic. The theme of the death of kings conforms to the Aristotelian concept of tragedy as a fall from high degree and as an illustration of the vanity of human ambitions, since all three kings aspired to the throne of Morocco and none of them obtained it.[2] But George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588/89) does not restrict itself to this theme; rather it deals with a host of important current issues including English patriotism, anti-Spanish sentiment, developing trade relations with Morocco, the question of the succession to the English throne, and the representation of the Muslim Moors in general.

It is well documented that the main source of Peele's play was the account of the battle given in John Polemon's *The Second Part of the booke of Battailes* (1587), a translation of *Historia de Bello Africano* (1580).[3] Two other accounts of the battle were known in England: *A Dolorous Discourse of a most terrible and bloudy Battel, fought in Barbarie* (London, 1579) and George Whetstone's account in *The English Myrror* (London, 1586).[4]

The main plot of the play centres on the issue of the succession to the throne of Fez which led to a civil war and, ultimately, to the disastrous intervention of King Sebastian of Portugal. Muly Muhammad el-Sheriff, the founder of the Saadi dynasty (1509), was succeeded, in 1518, by his son Muly Muhammad el-Sheikh (Peele's Muly Mahamet Xeque). Before his death (1557), he established what he thought to be a perfect law of succession: that is, his eldest son would inherit the crown, but he in turn would be succeeded by the next in age of his brothers, not by his son. Prince Abdallah (Peele's Abdallas), the son of Muly Muhammad el-Sheikh, who ruled from 1557 to 1574, violated this

law by appointing his son, Muly Muhammad el-Masloukh (Peele's Muly Mahamet), as his successor. To achieve this end he ordered the murder of all his brothers. Two of them, Abd el-Malek (Peele's Abdelmelec) and Abd el-Moumen (Peele's Abdelmunen), escaped, and a third, Ahmed el-Mansour (Peele's Muly Mahamet Seth), was spared because of his youth. The way was paved for Muly Mahamet to ascend the throne. To secure the throne he in turn murdered his younger brothers and his uncle Abd el-Moumen whom he lured back to Fez.

In the meantime, Abd el-Malek, who fled to Constantinople, distinguished himself in the service of Murad III, the supreme Ottoman; the same Murad with whom Elizabeth sought to form an anti-Spanish alliance in 1589. Murad rewarded him by helping him regain his father's crown from his nephew, Muly Muhammad el-Masloukh. Having lost the crown, el-Masloukh sought the help of Sebastian, King of Portugal, to win it back. The ambitious Portuguese king, who regarded himself as Christ's champion in the Crusade against Islam, felt himself obliged to help in order to carry the fight into the Muslim backyard. Against the advice of Abd el-Malek and some of his own courtiers Sebastian recruited forces from among his reluctant subjects, hired mercenaries in Germany and Spain, and persuaded the English adventurer Thomas Stukeley to join the campaign in order to plant the Christian faith in Africa.

Even though Sebastian failed to secure the assistance of his uncle Philip II of Spain, he decide to sail alone to Africa. There he joined forces with el-Masloukh, the deposed king, near El-kasar el-kebir. In the ensuing battle, the three kings, Sebastian, Abd el-Malek, and Muly Muhammad el-Msloukh lost

their lives as did Stukeley, and the Portuguese army was virtually wiped out. Consequently, Ahmed el-Mansour succeeded his brother Abd el-Malek, thereby establishing the rightful law of succession once again.

George Peele's interest in the battle of Alcazar did not necessarily stem from an attraction to Aristotle's conception of tragedy so much as from his deep interest in issues of nationality and patriotism. The death of Sebastian in that battle resulted in the vacant throne of Portugal being seized by Philip II of Spain, the arch-enemy and rival of England. In the following years England did its best to undermine Spanish influence in Portugal and elsewhere, and the rivalry between the two nations culminated in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and the failed expedition to Portugal of Norris and Drake in 1589.[5] Both events generated interest in Spanish-Portuguese affairs and reawakened the public's interest in the battle of Alcazar, which had in a sense set off the chain of events that led to Drake's expedition. The danger posed by Spain also helped to keep the memory of Stukeley alive in the public mind, which could explain the discrepancy between the legendary figure of Stukeley and the historical one.[6] Somehow the English seemed to regard Stukeley not as a traitor who had conspired with the enemies of his country, Philip II and the Pope, to wrest Ireland from English hands, but as a hero worthy of admiration.[7] In Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me*, Part II (1606), for example, Sir Thomas Gresham's factor expresses a high admiration for Stukeley. In reporting the death of the king of Barbary in the battle of Alcazar the factor says:

> Beside the King of Barbarie was slaine,

> Kings of Moroco and of Portugale,
> With Stewkeley that renowned Englishman
> That had a spirit equall with a King,
> Made fellow with these Kings in war-like strife,
> Honor'd his Country and concluded life. (ll. 1290-5)[8]

Even Peele, 'who otherwise beats the patriotic drum in *The Battle of Alcazar*, did not dwell on Stukeley's treachery,'[9] because his adventurous and colourful character seems to have captivated the imagination of the increasingly patriotic Renaissance Englishmen.

In *The Battle of Alcazar*, Peele exploited these historical events to express his nationalism and to demonstrate his readiness to capitalise on popular subjects and popular taste. The play exhibits Peele's strongly anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic feelings. The King of Spain, as David H. Horne points out, is 'painted in the blackest colours, the Pope is ridiculed in the person of the Irish Bishop, and Queen Elizabeth and England are glorified in extravagant terms.'[10] The play also exhibits the anti-Islamic prejudices prevalent at the time, especially in the way it represents the villainous 'dark Moor', Muly Mahamet. Based on the concepts of atrocity and terror associated with the world of Islam, Muly Mahamet is portrayed in a manner which confirms Elizabethan perceptions of 'Moorishness' and which stresses the diabolical significance of his colour. He is cruel, treacherous, lustful, despotic, heathen, barbarous and cowardly. He thinks nothing of murdering his younger brothers and uncle and takes pleasure in luring the unsuspecting Sebastian to his destruction. As a contrast to Muly Mahamet Peele introduces Abdelmelec, a 'light-skinned Moor', who, unlike his dark nephew, possesses almost all the qualities that

would have endeared him to the hearts and minds of an Elizabethan audience. He is honourable, brave, just and courteous; and he is very nearly white.

The task of constructing this favourable representation of Abdelmelec, comparable in the period only to Shakespeare's portrait of Othello, confronted Peele with an unsettling problem. On the one hand he wanted to draw a Moor's character which did not conform to the prevalent popular stereotype, raising the possibility of alienating the audience by challenging their traditional attitudes to the Muslim Moor. On the other, it was necessary, within the context of the play, to have a character who could serve as the instrument of justice, exacting punishment and revenge on the guilty Muly Mahamet without being viewed with the same suspicion and disrespect as any other Moor. In addition, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, the historical Abd el-Malek had been an ally of the English in establishing trade relations which continued through the activities of the Levant Company after his death. For both these reasons Peele needed to depict him as the kind of man with whom Elizabeth might conceivably have forged agreements. To minimise the possibility of alienating the audience he chose to emphasise the blackness of Muly Mahamet and, at the same time, to imply the relative whiteness of Abdelmelec. In so doing, he achieved the twin objectives of creating the character of a good Moor to balance the bad one, and of appeasing the audience by suggesting that despite sharing with black Moors the two essential features of being non-European and non-Christian, Abdelmelec is someone to respect. His non-European whiteness, in fact, symbolises his relative closeness to the

light of Christianity as opposed to the darkness of most Moors which marks their separation from that light.

Peele may well have been struggling to record the emerging political realities and sectarian rivalries of Europe at a time when, as the Armada proved, it was obvious that the Islamic world was not the only enemy of a newly nationalistic Protestant England and that it did not pose an immediate danger to its security. On the contrary, the time might have come when a Muslim country would be an ally against a Christian country like Catholic Spain.[11] For this possibility the audience needed to be prepared, and Peele probably felt that he was doing his patriotic duty.

The Battle of Alcazar opens with the crimes of Muly Mahamet which are swiftly followed by retribution. Through the Presenter and the employment of dumb-shows the audience is immediately treated to a familiar stock of negative attributes for Muly Mahamet, the Muslim dark Moor. He is, as the Presenter says:

> Black in his looks, and bloody in his deeds;
> And in his shirt, stain'd with a cloud of gore,
> Presents himself, with naked sword in hand,
> Accompanied, as you now may behold,
> With devils coated in the shapes of men. (1. LL. 16-20)[12]

Having witnessed the cruel murders of Muly Mahamet's younger brothers and his uncle Abdelmunen the audience promptly reinforces its preconceptions about the typical Moor with the help of the Presenter, who goes on to pile on Muly Mahamet even more negative attributes. He is, besides being 'Negro', 'unbelieving', 'barbarous', 'cruel', and a 'tyrant'. In short, he is the devil

incarnate. Here, the association of Moors with the devil is based on colour. It is an old notion in the Western tradition which was reinforced by the Christian's association of blackness with sin.[13]

This whole episode, illustrated by the Presenter and the dumb-shows, establishes the context in which Muly Mahamet is to be represented and perceived and sets in motion the chain of events which eventually leads to the punishment of the evil 'Negro' Moor. In contrast to Mahamet, Peele represents Abdelmelec as an instrument of retribution, a scourge of God against the murderous treachery of Muly Mahamet. When, for example, he first appears on stage, 'this brave Barbarian lord,' as the Presenter puts it (1. 1. 12), asks the 'distressed Ladies' and 'dames of Fess' to clear their 'watery eyes' and implores them:

> Wipe tears away,
> And cheerfully give welcome to these arms:
> Amurath hath sent scourges by his men. (1. 1. 52-4)

He then informs them:

> [...] I crave to re-obtain my right,
> That Muly Mahamet the traitor holds,
> Traitor and bloody tyrant both at once,
> That murdered his younger brothren both. (1. 1. 83-86)

He ends with a reassurance that he acts for a just Providence, and that 'on this damned wretch, this traitor-king / The gods shall pour down showers of sharp revenge' (1. 1. 87-8). At this point Abdelmelec looks like a conventional stage hero, courteous to women, courageous, and firmly rooted on the side of divine

justice. And unlike predictions made by Marlowe in *Tamburlaine*, Parts I and II, Abdelmelec's are borne out by the play's action.

His desire for revenge is echoed more emphatically by Rubin Archis, Abdelmunen's widow, who, unlike Abdelmelec, is not merely content with the execution of justice. She is determined that the bloody deeds of the offenders be punished in an equally gory manner:

> Of death, of blood, of wreak, and deep revenge,
> Shall Rubin Archis frame her tragic songs:
> In blood, in death, in murder, and misdeed,
> This heaven's malice did begin and end. (1. 1. 109-12)

It is quite clear that Rubin Archis, in her desire for revenge, is driven by her personal loss and painful suffering. On the other hand Abdelmelec is driven more by his strong sense of justice than by his sense of personal injury (1. 1. 83-6 and 1. 1. 117-18).

The barbarity of Rubin Archis's thirst for blood pales in comparison with Muly Mahamet's. Upon learning that Abdelmelec is preparing for war with the help of the Turks, he boasts to his son that even Tamburlaine would not be able to face him, and, threatens with more than Tamburlainian bombast:

> Blood be the theme whereon our time shall tread;
> Such slaughter with my weapon shall I make
> As through the stream and bloody channels deep
> Our Moors shall sail in ships and pinnacles
> From Tangier-shore unto the gates of Fess. (1. 2. 54-8)

To such proclamations his son adds that they should build a huge tower, like Nimrod's, for his father to challenge the gods using the bodies of their enemies (1. 3. 60). Unlike Tamburlaine, however, Muly Mahamet is not a man of

action and his immodest proclamations and boastful claims are just that - proclamations and claims. The reference to Nimrod's tower - the tower of Babel, which was confounded by an act of God - undermines his projects before they have begun, and permits the audience to predict that his speeches will prove insubstantial. As Eldred Jones points out, Peele 'gives him only two positive actions: one is from history - his luring of Sebastian with promises, to fight on his behalf; the other, a superb effort of the playwright's own imagination, is the episode in which Muly obtains lion's flesh for the fainting Calipolis', his wife.[14] Other than that Muly Mahamet remains, throughout, a man of words rather than deeds, and although his words echo Tamburlaine's, they remain the words of a traitor, not a conqueror.[15] When, for example, he receives word that Abdelmelec is advancing with his army and that the towns of the kingdom of Fez have surrendered to him, Muly promptly escapes into the desert with his wife and son. Thus Muly proves that he is not only treacherous, barbarous and cruel but a coward as well.

Nevertheless, Muly Mahamet never fails to parade his imaginative audacity. Having fled into the desert he implores fate and nature to cry out for him as if they were all three working in unison. Modesty is obviously not one of his outstanding characteristics when he demands:

> O fortune constant in inconstancy!
> Fight earthquakes in the entrails of the earth,
> And eastern whirlwinds in the hellish shades!
> Some foul contagion of th' infected heaven
> Blast all the trees, and in their cursed tops
> The dismal night-raven and tragic owl

Breed, and become foretellers of my fall. (2. 3. 4-10)

His wife, Calipolis, however, immediately deflates this moment of self-flattery when she retorts:

Alas, my Lord, what boot these huge exclaims

T'advantage us in this distress'd estate? (2. 3. 16-17)

Like Muly Mahamet's audience she recognises his words for what they are: empty evocations of aimless conflict culminating in nothing more than a prediction of the speaker's demise.

Muly Mahamet's attempt to fashion himself in the mould of Tamburlaine proves even more futile when he offers his hungry wife raw meat for food:

Hold thee, Calipolis, feed and faint no

more;

This flesh I forced from a lioness,

Meat of a princess, for a princess meet. (2. 3. 69-72)

It is ironic that the very action which stands as testimony of his courage should demote him to the level of a wild beast struggling with other beasts for survival. Furthermore, the vulgarity of the situation becomes more pronounced when compared with what Tamburlaine offered his wife - cities and kingdoms. Muly Mahamet is so wrapped up in his own narcissistic fantasies that he fails to recognise the irony of the situation. Once again, however, his heroic posturing is quickly shattered by Calipolis's reaction:

Thanks, good my lord, and though my stomach be

Too queasy to digest such bloody meat,

Yet, strength I it with virtue of my mind,

I doubt no whit but I shall live, my lord. (2. 3. 95-8)

The whole episode demonstrates Muly Mahamet's ability to lie both to himself and to his wife in the face of incontrovertible evidence of his failure. But this is entirely consistent with his character. Throughout the play Muly Mahamet works hard to turn lies, deception and treachery into an art form. Revelling in his father's ability to play the villain Muly Mahamet's son informs his mother, Calipolis, that the king has already sent messengers to Sebastian seeking help. The son proudly reassures his mother, revealing in the process the diabolical intentions of his father:

> Good madam, cheer yourself: my
>
> father's wise;
>
> He can submit himself and live below,
>
> Make show of friendship, promise, vow, and swear,
>
> Till, by the virtue of his fair pretence,
>
> Sebastian trusting his integrity,
>
> He makes himself possessor of such fruits
>
> As grow upon such great advantages. (2. 3. 57-63)

As a perfect example of the procedures of a shifty and untrustworthy Moor, Muly Mahamet's Machiavellian plan is very clear. He will promise Sebastian that he will become his contributory king in exchange for help in regaining his lost crown. Once the crown is won then Muly Mahamet will turn against Sebastian. To this end he instructs his messengers to obtain Sebastian's trust by whatever means possible, which they do in the most barbaric and violent fashion. In order to impress Sebastian they put their hands in a burning flame as a sign of their honesty. The episode is an astonishing variation on the story of the Roman hero Gaius Mucius Scaevola, who burned his own right hand for failing to assassinate an enemy of Rome; except that in this case the Moors'

heroic act of self-sacrifice is performed in the interest of deception. The cruelty of the Moors was proverbial, as we learned in *Tamburlaine*: 'and Moors, in whom was never pity found, / Will hew us piecemeal' (T2. 3. 4. 20-21).[16] The scene is also reminiscent of the episode in *Tamburlaine*, Part II, where Tamburlaine cuts his arm in order to teach his sons courage (3. 2. 115-129). The difference is that the whole point of Tamburlaine's self-wounding has been altered, and that his gesture has effectively lost its significance. The supreme sign of uncompromising honesty has been enlisted in the cause of treason, so that Muly Mahamet might indeed be accused of reconstructing his fortunes on the curse of the tower of Babel.

Having been impressed by this evidence of the messengers' trustworthiness, Sebastian responds:

> [...] return this answer to your king:
> Assure him by the honour of my crown,
> And by Sebastian's true unfeigned faith,
> He shall have aid and succour to recover,
> And seat him in his former empery. (2. 4. 40-44)

Sebastian's trust highlights once again the treachery and deceit of Muly Mahamet. His Machiavellian opportunism, contrasted with Sebastian's rather naïve missionary adventurism, reinforces the anti-Islamic prejudices of the audience, and paves the way for the comparison between two treacherous kings - Muly Mahamet and Philip II of Spain. However, Muly Mahamet remains in a class by himself. He reveals more of his true nature on the eve of the battle:

> Now have I set these Portugals a-work

To hew a way for me unto the crown,

Or with their weapons here to dig their graves. (4. 2. 70-2)

Like Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* (1589-90) and Aleazer in *Lust's Dominion* (1599-1600), Muly Mahamet seems to take pleasure in the most manipulative and calculating forms of villainy. His concern is to fulfil his personal dream of regaining the throne regardless of the consequences, but he glories as much in the inventiveness of his means as in his prospective ends. He perceives reality and life around him as an extension of his vision of himself, to the extent that he is convinced that all things in nature are at his behest, ready to fulfil his desires and respond to his commands. In retrospect, all his actions stem from his relentless self-aggrandisement and the principles of Machiavellian power politics. In his now familiar bombastic manner he calls on all the

[...] bastards of the Night and Erebus, [to]

Rage through this army with your iron whip,

Drive forward to this deed this Christian crew,

And let me triumph in the tragedy,

Though it be seal'd and honour'd with the blood

Both of the Portugal and barbarous Moor. (4. 2. 73-9)

With the battle looming large his language acquires a definitely non-Islamic tone; indeed, he ceases to distinguish between one religion and another, and descends instead into the linguistic darkness of madness and despair. When defeat stares him in the face he loses all awareness of spiritual things and becomes as obsessed with the physical as he was when reduced to starvation in the desert:

Ye elements of whom consists this clay,

This mass of flesh, this cursed, crazed corpse,

Destroy, dissolve, disturb, and dissipate,

What water, earth, and air congeal'd. (5. 1. 89-92)

His inability to recognise the flaws in his vision of himself is made even clearer after his defeat. As he flies once again into the desert he cannot part without firing a last bombastic shot at the victorious Abdelmelec:

accursed Abdelmelec!

Not on earth, yet when we meet in hell,

Before grim Minos, Rhadamanth, and Aeacus,

The combat will I crave upon thy ghost,

And drag thee through the loathsome pools

Of Lethes, Styx, and fiery Phlegethon. (5. 1. 103-8)

At this point Muly Mahamet's speech descends to the darkest corners of a pagan hell - not a Muslim one - from whence he came and to which he is about to return. Ironically, he dies crossing a river, as if he has already begun the chase through the 'loathsome pools' he describes. His body, covered with mud, one of the four elements he invoked, is brought to Muly Mahamet Seth who orders it to be skinned and stuffed in order to act as a deterrent to those who might think of emulating him (5. 1. 251-5). After death this empty body is all that remains of him, a tribute to the emptiness of his rhetoric.

Muly Mahamet's end, no matter how barbaric, is of a piece with his crimes and serves the mechanisms of justice and revenge. This episode as well as the depiction of the battle itself highlight the perceived cruelty of the Moors. The episode also demonstrates that even the victorious Muly Mahamet Seth, the rightful heir of the Muslim state is inevitably as barbaric as his murderous predecessor.

Peele's description of Abdelmelec, too, however sympathetic, does not represent a significant departure from the prevailing attitudes towards Muslims in general and the Moors in particular. It merely reflects the expedient political realities of the time. As has already been pointed out, his character corresponds to the historical Abd el-Malek, king of Morocco, who encouraged trade with Christian countries,[17] and whose agreement with England in 1576 helped supply the Moroccans with the munitions they needed for the war with Portugal.[18] That is why many Catholics regarded Queen Elizabeth as being responsible for the defeat and death of Sebastian at Alcazar. In the words of the Papal Nuncio in Spain: 'there is no evil that is not devised by that woman, who, it is perfectly plain, succoured Muloco [Abd el-Malek] with arms and with artillery.'[19] In this context, Abdelmelec provides Peele with the opportunity to raise the patriotic banner and to drum up support for the policies of the Queen. Abdelmelec's sympathetic representation also signals Peele's intention of using him as an instrument of divine justice and revenge, as Abdelmelec himself asserts:

> War bids me draw my weapon for revenge
>
> Of my deep wrongs and my dear brother's death. (1. 1. 117-18)

To work convincingly as an instrument of justice, Peele endowed Abdelmelec with all the qualities the audience might find admirable. He is a man of unwavering honour, diametrically opposed to Muly Mahamet. The moment he is restored to the throne he decrees that his last brother, Muly Mahamet Seth, is the natural heir to the crown in accordance with the rule of succession laid down by their father. His strong sense of justice repeatedly manifests itself in

his acts of courage and courtesy. Even though he is angered by Sebastian's willingness to aid Muly Mahamet, he nevertheless reveals that he is more charitable than acrimonious towards the Portuguese king. On the contrary, and in a chivalric manner reminiscent of the legendary Saladin, Abdelmelec personally advises him against the course of action he endeavours to take:

> [...] I have myself a soldier been,
> I have, in pity to the Portugal
> Sent secret messengers to counsel him. (3. 2. 9-11)

In his message Abdelmelec warns Sebastian that he has been misled by the devious Muly Mahamet:

> Sebastian, see in time unto thyself:
> If thou and thine misled do drive amiss,
> Guiltless is Abdelmelec of thy blood. (3. 2. 29-31)

This gesture proves that Abdelmelec possesses not only a sense of justice but a strong sense of honour as well. At the same time it demonstrates that integrity can be served by secret correspondence, just as treachery could be served by the apparent open heroism of Muly Mahamet's messengers. There could be no more resounding vindication of Elizabeth's clandestine dealings with the king of Morocco.

Abdelmelec's other qualities demonstrate themselves in the preparation for battle (4. 1. 55-74). His quick thinking, practicality and military knowledge contrast with Muly Mahamet's ineffectual posturing and accentuate the dissimilarities between the two. Even the manner of his death underscores the integrity of his character. Abdelmelec, who dies in battle, accepts death as an

integral part of life and as a spiritual release from the confined space of this world:

> My sight doth fail, my soul, my feeble soul
>
> Shall be released from prison on this earth:
>
> Farewell, vain world! For I have play'd my part. (5. 1. 28-30)

Abdelmelec's emphasis on the spiritual aspects of death dissociates him from Muly Mahamet's concentration on the physical, and whereas death is liberating to the former, it is a horrific act of confinement to the latter. At the same time, Abdelmelec's failing sight grants him no vision of the afterlife. Peele was only prepared to go so far in his claims for Elizabeth's ally.

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, Peele's representation of Abdelmelec does not entirely conform to the popular perception of the Moor during the reign of Elizabeth. Traditionally, Muslim characters in early modern drama, be they Turks or Moors, share the same qualities of brutality and ruthlessness. But on the whole the colour of the Moors and their racial difference were more heavily emphasised. This emphasis on the blackness of the Moor may have originated in Spain.[20] Whereas the Turks, though feared, were admired for their gallantry and military prowess, the Moors were less admired and were more despised than feared for their perceived disloyalty. In general, to the Elizabethan audience a Moor was black, pagan, lustful, treacherous, barbarous, and barely human. He was someone with all the attributes the audience found repulsive and abhorrent, and with no redeeming features. The character of Muly Mahamet possesses all these attributes and confirms the audience's assumptions and prejudices. The representation of Abdelmelec, on the other hand, does not.

In the context of the play, Peele's emphasis on the blackness of Muly Mahamet allows him to lay equal emphasis on the physical fairness of Abdelmelec and provides the background against which his nobility, bravery, dignity, honour, and sense of justice may be magnified. As has been pointed out, it also represents an attempt to pander to the audience by presenting them with Muly Mahamet as the typical Moor in order to alleviate any unsettling feelings they might experience in having a Moor like Abdelmelec on stage. But the representations of Muly Mahamet and Abdelmelec also bear witness to an element of confusion in the Elizabethan imagination, which stems from its entertainment of two opposing sentiments concerning Muslims in general and Moors in particular. They could either be admired as noble enemies, as in the case of Saladin, or hated and despised as the proponents of a rival religion. This double vision, as it were, of Muslims is evident from time to time in other plays of the period like Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and Greville's *Mustapha*.

The representations of the two Catholic kings, Sebastian of Portugal and Philip II of Spain, also provide two contrasting views of England's enemies. Though the play is on the whole critical of Sebastian, the overall treatment of the youthful king is rather sympathetic, whereas Philip II is treated with conspicuous contempt. Sebastian is portrayed as a naïve and ambitious young man who is neither treacherous nor dishonourable and who has a wholly misguided religious zeal. His naiveté and ambition render him susceptible to Muly Mahamet's cunning and the still more impenetrable deviousness of Philip II. The play also illustrates that for Sebastian the quest for fame is quite inseparable from his Christian missionary duty. His burning desire to lead his

country on a mission of 'holy Christian war' (2. 4. 66 and 2. 4. 135), his stated objective 'to plant the Christian faith in Africa' (2. 4. 165), can only be equalled by his unrelenting quest for fame and personal glory. This twin objective of enlarging the boundaries of Christendom on the one hand and of achieving personal fame on the other - the shared aim of the expansionist policies of every European nation at the time - is best expressed by the Spanish ambassador, who candidly states that the point of Sebastian's North African campaign is 'to propagate the fame of Portugal, / And plant religious truth in Africa' (3. 2. 8-9). The statement is repeated by one of Sebastian's own captains:

> A noble resolution then it is
> In brave Sebastian our Christian king,
> To aid this Moor with his victorious arms,
> Thereby to propagate religious truth,
> And plant his springing praise in Africa. (3. 3. 13-17)

Muly Mahamet cleverly exploits Sebastian's ambitious tendencies by promising, as Sebastian reports it, to

> [...] yield and to surrender up
> The kingdom of Morocco to our hands,
> And to become to us contributory;
> And to content himself with th' realm of Fess. (2. 4. 14-17)

Meeting Muly Mahamet at Tangier Sebastian makes his intentions very clear:

> Lord Mahamet, we have adventured,
> To win for thee a kingdom, for ourselves
> Fame, and performance of those promises
> That in thy faith and royalty thou hast
> Sworn to Sebastian King of Portugal. (3. 4. 8-12)

The weight Sebastian lays on the 'Fame' and the fulfilment of material 'promises' he expects to achieve through his alliance might well have raised the audience's doubts about the validity of his claims to be a missionary. These doubts would have been augmented by their awareness that his chief ally is a Muslim and their foreknowledge of that Muslim's character. Sebastian's gullibility in taking Muly Mahamet at his word could be taken to extend to gullibility about all things religious - a distinctively Catholic trait. A Christian who could be deceived by the Pope rendered himself susceptible to the deceptions of all the devil's disciples, one might suppose.

Nevertheless, despite his support for a Muslim monarch Sebastian doggedly refers to himself as a Christian champion against Islam. He has absolutely no doubt that his cause is a righteous one and that his African campaign is going to be successful and divinely blessed. Hence he orders his captains:

> And to this war prepare ye more and less,
>
> This rightful war, that Christian's God will bless. (3. 4. 75-6)

In a sense, Sebastian is tempting God to act on his behalf, while allowing his insatiable desire for fame and glory to cloud his judgement of the political and military situation, to the extent that he proves unable to foresee the imminent failure of his expedition. Against the better advice of some of his captains he rejects the secret counsel of Abdelmelec:

> Because Abdelmelec, as pitying us,
>
> Sends messages to counsel quietness,
>
> You stand amazed, and think sound advice,
>
> As if our enemy would wish us any good:
>
> No, let him know we scorn his courtesy,
>
> And will resist his forces whatsoe'er. (4. 2. 10-15)

It is interesting that Sebastian recognises Abdelmelec's advice as courtesy yet rejects it; and interesting too that he has a double standard with regard to Muslims. In Abdelmelec's case he thinks it impossible that 'our enemy would wish us any good'; in Muly Mahamet's he is convinced of the 'faith and royalty' of his word. Like all tragic characters he only recognises his error of judgement when faced with destruction. Having witnessed his army torn apart by the Moors he declares:

> Stukeley, alas, I see my oversight!
> False-hearted Mahamet, now, to my cost,
> I see thy treachery, warn'd to beware
> A face so full of fraud and villainy. (5. 1. 67-70)

Sebastian's double standards and reckless adventurism lead to his eventual annihilation, having neither fulfilled his personal ambition nor achieved his political and religious objectives. Peele's contemporaries would no doubt have recognised his death as a tragic waste: but they may also have congratulated themselves on the spectacle of one of England's major rivals in the fields of trade, colonisation, and religion, over-stretching its resources and suffering the disastrous consequences of its misjudgement.

Peele is careful to make explicit the contrast between Sebastian's behaviour as the monarch of a competitive nation and the conduct of his chief rival, Elizabeth I. Throughout the play, the Portuguese king serves as a kind of Presenter through whom Peele may demonstrate his patriotism and express his admiration for Elizabeth. As one might expect from the author of *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584), the praise and flattery he heaps on the Queen are boundless. For example, in trying to persuade Stukeley to abandon his Irish

expedition Sebastian explains that faced with the might of Elizabeth's England his mission is doomed to failure before it begins:

> [...] for heaven and destinies
> Attend and wait upon her majesty.
> Sacred, imperial, and holy is her seat,
> Shining with wisdom, love and mightiness. (2. 4. 107-10)

The Queen commands all the combined resources of nature, fortune, and time. In her are united the best elements and attributes that are scattered in fragments among the other characters in the play:

> Nature that everything imperfect made,
> Fortune that never yet was constant found,
> Time that defaceth every golden show
> Dare not decay, remove, or her impair;
> Both nature, time, and fortune, all agree,
> To bless and serve her royal majesty. (2. 4. 111-16)

Then in an obvious reference to the Armada he asserts that

> The wallowing ocean hems her round about;
> Whose raging floods do swallow up her foes,
> And on the rocks their ships in pieces split. (2. 4. 117-19)

The whole episode of *The Battle of Alcazar*, with its equally matched antagonists and uncertain outcome, is explained in these speeches as a foil to the stability and unquestioned superiority of Elizabeth's regime. Elizabeth's chief rival in the play is not Sebastian or Stukeley but Philip II of Spain.

Unlike Sebastian, Philip is represented as a devious, calculating, and treacherous king who is constantly scheming to consolidate his power and expand his kingdom at the expense of England's 'royal majesty'. This attitude

is hardly surprising when we bear in mind that the play was probably written in 1588, the year the Armada was defeated. The continuing rivalry between Spain and England inevitably nurtured the feelings of suspicion and xenophobia which found expression in literature, especially drama; Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, contemporaneous with *The Battle of Alcazar*, develops somewhat similar sentiments. In these circumstances the picture of Philip II speaks for itself. He is the guardian and protector of all the enemies of England, who provides a haven which is the reverse of Elizabeth's, 'where all traitors dance / And play themselves upon a sunny day' (2. 4. 120-21). He promises to help Sebastian in his 'war with Moors and men with little faith' (3. 1. 19), only to renege on the pretext of an imminent Turkish invasion (3. 4. 35-8). In fact, as the play presents it, Philip withholds his assistance to Sebastian as part of a secret deal with Abdelmelec in which the Spanish king gets what Abdelmelec described as 'our offer of the seven holds' or territories (3. 2. 18). Sebastian, however, remains unaware of Philip's designs just as he is unaware of Muly Mahamet's, susceptible as he is to the suggestions of every kind of traitor.

Stukeley paints a picture of Philip as dark as that of Muly Mahamet, in which the Catholic king emerges as the deadly European equivalent of a Negro Moor. In a candid assessment of the position of Spain in relation to Portugal, Stukeley advises:

> Sit fast, Sebastian, and in this work
> God and good men labour for Portugal!
> For Spain, disguising with a double face,
> Flatters thy youth and forwardness, good king. (3. 1. 48-51)

The duplicity of Philip II underscores the perceived duplicity of Catholics in general and plunges the play into the midst of the sectarian conflict between Reformers and counter-Reformers. Indeed, the play makes clear, through Sebastian and Stukeley, that the duplicity of Philip, being more subtle than that of Muly Mahamet, is also much more dangerous. Stukeley insists that Philip should not be trusted:

> Philip, whom some call the Catholic king,
> I fear me much thy faith will not be firm,
> But disagree with thy profession. (3. 1. 52-4)

Peele, it seems, sees Muly Mahamet and Philip as two sides of the same religious coin. Both are devious, treacherous, and motivated by mere self-interest to the exclusion of commercial as well as religious values. Both unashamedly exploit the naïve Sebastian to achieve their own ends - Muly Mahamet to regain a lost kingdom, Philip to expand an existing one. However, the more inimical representation of the subtle Philip also reflects the growing nationalistic tendencies of Peele and his England and illustrates the continuing rivalry between Protestant England and Catholic Spain in their quest to control the routes of international trade in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

The representation of Thomas Stukeley conforms neither to the historical facts nor to the patriotic feelings of Peele. Historically speaking, Stukeley was a Catholic renegade who tried to wrest Ireland from Queen Elizabeth's control for the Pope in Rome. Nevertheless, Peele, as if proud of Stukeley's attributes, presents him as a hero: a brave Englishman who fought for Christianity against Islam and died in the company of kings.[21] There seems to be an element of nationalism in Peele's attitude towards Stukeley, a sense of pride in a fellow

countryman whose fame extends well beyond the boundaries of England. For example, on his first appearance in the play we find Stukeley and his companions being welcomed by the governor of Lisbon who sings their praises:

> Welcome to Lisbon, valiant Catholics,
> Welcome, brave Englishmen, to Portugal:
> Most reverent primate of the Irish church,
> And, noble Stukeley, famous by thy name. (2. 2. 1-4)

Stukeley, never chary of self-promotion, makes a long speech in which he gives full vent to his proud and adventurous nature:

> There shall no action pass my hand or sword,
> That cannot make a step to gain a crown;
> No word shall pass the office of my tongue,
> That sounds not on affection to a crown;
> No thought have being in my lordly breast,
> That works not every way to win a crown:
> Deeds, words, and thoughts, shall all be as a king's;
> My chiefest company shall be with kings;
> And my deserts shall counterpoise a king's:
> Why should not I, then, look to be a king?
> I am the Marquis now of Ireland made,
> And will be shortly king of Ireland:
> King of a mole-hill had I rather be,
> Than the richest subject of a monarchy.
> Huff it, brave mind, and never cease t'aspire,
> Before thou reign sole king of thy desire. (2. 2. 69-84)

This unambiguous expression of upwardly mobile individualism, for which there was a growing enthusiasm in Elizabethan England, bears a marked

resemblance to Tamburlaine's. Like Tamburlaine, Stukeley is driven by an insatiable desire for the 'sweet fruition of an earthly crown', a desire to fulfil his limitless potentialities and aspirations with little or no regard for those artificial social and political obstacles set in his way by tradition or hierarchy. This strong sense of individuality in turn mandates all the actions of Stukeley to the extent that his allegiance is definitely to himself and to his dream, not to a country or a religion. Peele seems willing to accommodate Stukeley's overwhelming self-interest as an admirable quality, evidence of the princely imagination typical of Englishmen; he therefore hardly dwells on Stukeley's designs against his country. Indeed, these designs are dismissed by the governor of Lisbon, who reproaches Stukeley and his companions before their Irish project can be set in motion:

> Under correction, are ye not all Englishmen,
> And 'longs not Ireland to that kingdom, lords?
> Sans scandal to the holy see of Rome,
> Unhonourable is this expedition,
> And misbeseeming you to meddle in. (2. 2. 20-25)

It is interesting here that honour seems to be a virtue which could be perceived independently of religion and political interests, even by pagans and Catholics.

Stukeley responds to the governor's comment with a discourse which reflects the vision of a man not bound to one place, but who seeks to fulfil his vision and achieve his objectives wherever he can, regardless of geographical location. He contends that he owes loyalty only to himself, and argues that his resolve is

> To follow rule, honour, and empery,

Not to be bent so strictly to the place

Wherein at first I blew the fire of life,

But that I may at liberty make choice

Of all the continents that bound the world;

For why I make it not so great desert

To be begot or born in any place,

Sith that's a thing of pleasure and of ease

That might have been perform'd elsewhere as well. (2. 2. 29-37)

Stukeley's extreme individualism serves a twin objective. On the one hand, it provides a motive for Stukeley's act of treason which exonerates him from the charge of acting in the interests of the Papacy as Sebastian does. On the other, it articulates the expansionist policies of the emerging colonial powers of the sixteenth century. At that time, national boundaries were increasingly being regarded as no obstacle to the acquisition of wealth and power on a global scale. In a world full of tantalising commercial opportunities, it was inevitable that the intellectual and physical maps be redrawn in order to accommodate the developing world order of which a new breed of individuals and nations regarded themselves as autonomous components. Stukeley represents the new breed of adventurous individuals, both fearless and ambitious, who are willing to test their potentialities to the limit in pursuit of their goals and dreams. Such individuals, no matter how unconventional, often appear larger than life and bolder than their stay-at-home contemporaries. Consequently, they tend to be treated with admiration and their errors forgiven or overlooked.

Stukeley's decision to join Sebastian in his African campaign could be said to have been made purely for self-interest. But Peele uses it to portray him not as a traitor fighting his own country but as a hero in the cause of a specifically

non-Catholic brand of Christianity against Islam. It does not escape Sebastian's attention that the decision offers Stukeley a chance for glory and possible profit; but the glory it offers is as much national as personal:

> Tell me, then, Stukeley, for that's thy name I trow
> Wilt thou, in honour of thy country's fame,
> Hazard thy person in this brave exploit,
> And follow us to fruitful Barbary,
> With these six thousand soldiers thou hast brought,
> And choicely pick'd through wanton Italy? (2. 4. 84-9)

The expedition can be cast as a blow struck for his 'country's fame' because Stukeley was persuaded to forego his Papal mission to conquer Ireland in order to undertake it. Sebastian persuades him to stop fighting for Catholic interests by depicting Elizabeth and England as the true centre of Stukeley's political and religious values, both 'sacred' and 'imperial', despite her Protestant faith:

> T'invade the island where her highness reigns,
> 'T were all in vain, for heavens and destinies
> Attend and wait upon her majesty,
> Sacred, imperial, and holy on her seat,
> Shining with wisdom, love, and mightiness. (2. 4. 106-10)

Sebastian's willingness to praise Elizabeth might spring in part from Peele's knowledge of the close relationship which had sprung up between the English court and Don Antonio, the pretender to the Portuguese throne, in the course of the 1580s.[22] He goes on to offer the following advice:

> Advise, thee, then, proud Stukeley, ere thou pass
> To wrong the wonder of the highest God;
> Sith danger, death, and hell do follow thee,
> Thee, and them all, that seek to endanger her.

> If honour be the mark whereat thou aim'st,
>
> Then follow me in holy Christian wars,
>
> And leave to seek thy country's overthrow. (2. 4. 130-6)

This clinches Sebastian's argument. Elizabeth is rendered untouchable and her enemies are destined to fail because she enjoys the unequivocal blessing of God. Besides, as Sebastian puts it, Islam is the common enemy against which both Protestants and Catholics should unite. Thus with the lure of glory in Africa Stukeley decides to join Sebastian, declaring:

> Saint George for England! And Ireland now
>
> adieu,
>
> For here Tom Stukeley shapes his course anew. (2. 4. 166-7)

The quest for fame and glory has taken Stukeley from England through to Spain, Rome, Ireland, and now to Africa. It has eventually taken him from being a traitor to the possibility of becoming a national hero.

It should be noted that Stukeley does not make any apologies for his actions, nor does he try to disguise his self-promoting objectives under either the cloak of religion or the banner of patriotism. When Sebastian implores his captains to follow him into battle Stukeley's response is instantaneous. He likes to remain in the forefront: 'For my part, lords, I cannot sell my blood / Dearer than in the company of kings' (4. 2. 68-9). This clearly echoes the assertion he made earlier that he would rather be a 'king of a mole-hill' than the 'subject of a monarchy' (2. 2. 81-2). Such proclamations, no matter how vain, suggest that Stukeley, like Tamburlaine whose quest was to conquer the world, is not content to let fate determine his life, but is determined to fashion his own fate and his own destiny.

In his protracted dying speech Stukeley recounts the history of his tempestuous and eventful life. In Spain he lived 'like a lord'; in Rome he was 'received with royal welcomes of the Pope' (5. 1. 155), and was 'graced by Gregory the Great' who then created him the 'Marquis of Ireland'. Having been 'made lieutenant-general / Of those small forces that for Ireland went' (5. 1. 160-1), he came to Lisbon where he joined Sebastian in his ill-fated expedition. At this point, he seems belatedly to acknowledge that fate, after all, does control his destiny: 'But from our cradles we were marked all / And destinate to die in Afric here' (5. 1. 171-2). Then in a final attempt to redeem himself he asks his fellow countrymen to be kind to him and judge him not harshly but sympathetically:

> Stukeley, the story of thy life is told;
> Here breathe thy last, and bid thy friends farewell:
> And if thy country's kindness be so much,
> Then let thy country kindly ring the knell.
> Now go and in that bed of honour die,
> Where brave Sebastian's breathless corpse doth lie. (5. 1. 173-8)

Peele seems to have granted Stukeley his dying request. In *The Battle of Alcazar* he is remembered not as a traitor but as a brave and a gallant man who conducted himself admirably and honourably and fought for the glory both of his country and of his faith.

Another text which deals primarily with Captain Stukeley and the battle of Alcazar is the anonymous play *The Famous History of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (1598-1600), first published in 1605. [23] As with Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me*, Part II, and Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, this play

represents Stukeley in the most sympathetic manner in contrast with the official Elizabethan view of the man as a defamed person and a dishonourable pirate.[24] The story of the battle of Alcazar itself only occupies the last five hundred lines or so of the play (ll. 2460-2982).[25] We are told that Stukeley is forced by bad weather to dock in Portugal where he agrees to join Sebastian's African campaign (ll. 2470-80). When Sebastian introduces Stukeley to Muly Hamet [Mahamet], he introduces him as 'the brave Irish Marquesse' (l. 2558). In the course of the battle Stukeley is wounded, and in a speech to Vernon, his friend, he declares that

> though this parched earth of Barbary,
> Drinke no more English bloud but of us twaine,
> Yet, with this bloud of ours the bloud of kings,
> Shall be commixt, and with their fame our fame
> Shall be eternizde in the mouthes of men. (ll. 2944-48)

His life-long ambition of being in the company of kings of foreign lands and his desire to achieve fame demonstrate themselves in this speech. Such qualities, with their concomitant assumption that the lowliest English blood is equal in worth to that most royal blood of other nations, would certainly have endeared him to an Elizabethan audience. He recognises that the end is at hand, but before it comes he asserts that his and Vernon's swords 'shall ring [their] farewell on the burganets, / Of these bloud thursty and vnciuill Turks' (ll. 2998-9). This concluding remark only sums up the prevalent attitudes of the time towards Muslims in general; its crudeness is indicated by the substitution of 'Turks' for 'Moors', a confusion which Peele avoided. The play also refers to the treachery of Muly Mahamet in duping Sebastian (ll.

2485-2512), and Philip's broken promise of assistance (ll. 2460-66), while glossing over Stukeley's broken promise to the Pope. Clearly by the time it was written Stukeley had established himself as an English national hero, and this aspect of his death could be stressed at the expense of a lifetime of resistance to Elizabethan interests.

III. To sum up: even though *The Battle of Alcazar* represents Muly Mahamet as a stereotypical Moor, like *Tamburlaine*, Part II the play provides a departure from the standard anti-Islamic polemic by laying emphasis on the existing sectarian and national rivalries between England and Spain, Protestants and Catholics. Peele composed his play at a time when anti-Spanish feeling was at its highest level in the wake of the Armada and of the failed attempt to support Don Antonio of Portugal in 1589.[26] In these circumstances, and in the context of burgeoning relations between England and Morocco, the anti-Islamic sentiments in the play were mitigated by the stronger anti-Spanish ones. This is reflected in the way Peele exploits the parallels between his Muslim and his Catholic characters.

In both sets of representations, Muslim and Catholic, a sympathetic character is measured against its unsympathetic opposite. Among Muslim characters Muly Mahamet receives the standard treatment of the Moor. He is black, barbarous, heathen, treacherous, murderous, and, above all, despotic. The play makes it clear that these qualities are associated with the Moor not only because of his religion but because of his colour as well. His equivalent on the Catholic side is Philip II of Spain. His subtle duplicity, as opposed to

the crude duplicity of Muly Mahamet, is accentuated by his marked absence from the stage and by the fact that his treacherous acts are reported by others; he remains a powerful but invisible puppet-master who manipulates his followers and his victims from a safe distance. His movements are carefully calculated to cover all eventualities: and his contradictory agreements with Sebastian and with Abdelmelec remain unknown to either party until the moment when they come to fruition. Above all, Philip II is the opposite of the conspicuously virtuous Queen Elizabeth.

Sebastian on the other hand, though Catholic, seems to attract the sympathy both of Peele and of his audience. His crusading campaign against Islam commands respect tempered with pity for his errors of judgement. He is the victim of his excessive ambition and the double standards this brings with it, which encourage him to ally himself with Muly Mahamet, despite the fact that he knows him to be the usurper of the Moroccan throne. In doing so, Sebastian places himself on the wrong side of the law and loses some of the audience's sympathy as well as tarnishing his reputation. His demise owes more to his own rashness than to the treachery of Muly Mahamet. This becomes especially evident when he rejects Abdelmelec's appeal to withhold his support for Muly's attempt on a throne to which he has no conceivable claim.

In the same way, on the Muslim side Abdelmelec is sympathetically portrayed as the rightful heir to the Moroccan throne. His quest for revenge against Muly Mahamet is less motivated by personal injury than by his strong sense of justice and the desire to restore the legitimate succession to the Moroccan dynasty. His charitable counsel to Sebastian, though unsuccessful,

demonstrates chivalric qualities which do not go unappreciated even by Sebastian himself (5. 1. 69-70). In depicting Abdelmelec, Peele seems to be testing and stretching the imagination and tolerance of his audience. He presents them with a Moor who does not conform to their traditional preconceptions, a Moor towards whom they can show understanding and sympathy both because he is safely distant, safely dead, and very much less dangerous than the principal enemy of England, King Philip II of Spain. Moreover, he presents them with a Moor whose historical namesake was instrumental in opening the trade links between England and the Muslim East, especially after Pope Pius V expelled Queen Elizabeth and England from the Catholic Church in 1570.[27] At that point the English merchants had the advantage over the Catholics who were prohibited, by the Pope, from dealing with the Muslim world; a point made very clear by Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in London, when he advised Philip II:

> Two years ago the English opened up the trade, which they still continue, to the Levant, which is extremely profitable to them, as they take great quantities of tin and lead thither, [...]. It is of double importance to the Turk now, in consequence of the excommunication pronounced [...] by the Pope upon any person who provides or sells to infidels such materials as these.[28]

Against such a background the increasingly patriotic Elizabethan audience would surely have appreciated Peele's favourable representation of Abdelmelec.

IV. Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1589-92)[29] is a tragedy about justice, death, and revenge, which deals with the tragic love of Erastus, a Christian Knight of Rhodes, for Perseda, a Christian lady from Rhodes, together with the treacherous actions of Soliman, the Turkish King, which result in the destruction of nearly all the major characters in the play. With its emphasis on the dishonesty of Muslims, the play complements the representation of Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, and differs from it principally in having a Turk for its protagonist. Unlike Peele's play, *Soliman and Perseda* makes no attempt to introduce a favourable representation of any of its Muslim characters. On the contrary, it presents Islam and Muslims as the major source of danger to Christianity and urges the audience to be aware of that danger, which could manifest itself either in military conquests or, more subtly, in various kinds of social infiltration, especially inter-marriage.

The play has for its principal source Henry Wotton's novella, *A Courtlie Controversie of Cupids Cautels* (1578).[30] The Novella, as well as the play, uses the conquest of Rhodes by Soliman the Magnificent in 1522 as the historical setting for the story, though the events could hardly be said to record historical facts. Even the scene in which Soliman stabs Amurath, his brother, for having killed Haleb, another brother, has no historical basis and could only allude to Murad III's murdering of all his brothers on his accession to the throne in 1574.[31] Soliman is known to have killed not his brothers but his eldest son Mustapha in 1553 as part of a power struggle between his sons for succession to the throne[32] which forms the subject of Fulke Greville's play *Mustapha* (1594-6). Both *Mustapha* and *Soliman and Perseda* fail to do

justice to Soliman's illustrious career as one of the most successful rulers and generous patrons of the arts in the sixteenth century.[33] Instead they choose to depict him as yet another barbarous Muslim, who quickly loses the magnanimity he displays at the beginning of both tragedies.

The action in *Soliman and Perseda* is sparked off when Erastus, while taking part in the competitions between knights from different countries in honour of the wedding of the governor's daughter, wins the competition but unwittingly loses the chain given him by Perseda, his betrothed, as a token of her love. Ferdinando finds the chain and he gives it to Lucina, his beloved. When Perseda sees the chain on Lucina she promptly accuses Erastus, and all men, of deception and disloyalty. Erastus then decides to recover the chain from Lucina, and disguised as someone else he succeeds in cheating her out of it in a game with false dice. However, Ferdinando sees Erastus wearing the chain and demands that he give it back. Erastus refuses, a duel ensues in which he kills Ferdinando, and Erastus is forced to flee from Rhodes to save his life, leaving Perseda behind. He seeks refuge in Turkey, where the news of his military prowess has preceded him, and becomes a close friend of Soliman, the monarch. In the meantime, the Turks invade Rhodes, and Perseda and Lucina are captured and offered to Soliman as his share of the spoils. He gives Lucina to his henchman Brusor and immediately falls in love with Perseda, who resists his advances. At this point Soliman discovers that she is the woman Erastus had hoped to marry. In a spontaneous act of generosity Soliman appoints Erastus governor of Rhodes and gives him Perseda's hand in marriage. But soon afterwards the monarch is overcome with lust, and allows

himself to be persuaded by Brusor, the Turkish Knight who envies Erastus' successes, to murder his Christian rival in order to get Perseda for himself. He therefore has Erastus falsely accused of treason, convicted and put to death. At once Soliman is filled with remorse and orders the death of the judge responsible for the conviction, together with the false witnesses and the Janisaries (soldiers) who strangled Erastus. Perseda accuses Lucina of complicity with the murder and stabs her to death in response. She then decides to raise an army to resist the lustful Soliman and to protect both her chastity and Rhodes. Finally Perseda disguises herself as a man and tricks Soliman into killing her in order to escape his lustful attentions. As she dies she completes her revenge by granting him a kiss from her poisoned lips. Soliman dies soon afterwards, but not before having the penitent Brusor put to death in his turn. The play ends with Soliman and Perseda being buried next to Erastus followed by a debate between Fortune, Love, and Death in which each claims to have the upper hand over the world. Death however concludes that he has no power over Queen Elizabeth 'whose life is heauens delight, and Cynthias friend' (5.5.41).

The play employs nearly all the stereotypical Elizabethan notions of Islam and Muslims. The Muslim Turks are represented, as usual, as treacherous and violent, and 'their traditional treachery is exemplified by the Turkish Knight's action in taking advantage of Christian hospitality to spy out the fortifications of Rhodes.'[34] At the same time, even though the play reiterates familiar preconceptions of the time, it refrains from presenting its Muslim characters as a simple foil for their Christian counterparts, who are themselves neither

innocent nor untainted. The Christian characters in the play are almost as guilty of the crimes of violence, lust, and treachery as are their Muslim counterparts. For example, Erastus's killing of Ferdinando and his deception of Lucina, Perseda's vengeful stabbing of Lucina, and Lucina's treachery against Erastus, all leave them in a moral house of glass, stranded among a wilderness of stones. It could be argued here that Kyd's intention was to demonstrate that any contact with the infidel is bound to lead to contamination, as is the case for the Christians of Rhodes. England, too, the play might be suggesting, could be in danger of becoming contaminated through her growing commercial relations with Islamic nations in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

The character of Soliman, as Kyd draws it, is a fine example of the traditional Eastern tyrant. However, he shows an admirable degree of magnanimous sensibility despite his violent and barbaric nature. Unlike Tamburlaine before him, Soliman is capable of showing both remorse and kindness. As Arthur Freeman argues, in *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (1967), 'all his actions follow a pattern of impetuousness followed by regret'.[35] When Soliman kills his brother Amurath, in retribution for slaying their brother Haleb, he mourns both of them with all the resources of emotive rhetoric:

> Oh, Haleb, how shall I begin to mourne,
> Or how shall I begin to shed salt teares,
> For whom no wordes nor teares can well suffice? [...]
> Yet, Amurath, thou wert my brother too,
> If wilfull folly did not blind mine eyes.
> I, I, and thou as vertuous as Haleb,

And I as deare to thee as vnto Haleb,

And thou as neere to me as Haleb was. (1. 5. 83-100)[36]

He laments the paradoxical system of justice which requires a man to kill his own brother in retribution for the very same act (1.5.105-11). And he ends his self-searching thoughts on wrath and justice on a very sombre note: 'Thus, thus, let Soliman passe on his way, / Bearing in either hand his hearts decay' (1.5.115-16). His remorse is clearly genuine, and the dignified language of these concluding couplets of his soliloquy - as balanced in sense as they are in rhyme - leave the audience with a decidedly positive impression of the Turkish king.

In showing these emotions Soliman reveals the complexity of his psychological make-up, which constantly fluctuates from one extreme to the other. He shows the same complexity of feelings over the death of Erastus. After the Christian's execution Soliman is obviously prepared to blame the death on anyone rather than himself. He mourns him as a man 'whose life to me was dearer then mine owne' (5. 2. 105), then in a fit of bloody rage befitting a despot, kills the two Janisaries who strangled Erastus and orders the death of the two false witnesses and the Marshal. This episode dramatises the unpredictability and violent nature of tyrants in general and Soliman in particular. Soliman carries his bloody and barbaric actions even further after the death of Perseda. Having killed Basilisco and Piston, whom he considered rivals for the love of Perseda, to avenge her death, Soliman demands of Brusor: 'Then tell me, (his treason set aside) / What was Erastus in thy opinion?' (5. 4. 101-2). Brusor replies with unexpected candour:

Faire spoken, wise, courteous, and liberall;

Kinde, euen to his foes, gentle and affable;

And, all in all, his deeds heroyacall. (5. 4. 103-5)

This moment of honesty and truth, on the part of Brusor, the man who persuaded Soliman to put Erastus to death, is more than the tyrant can tolerate and he promptly sends his henchman to his death to conclude this orgy of murder and cruelty. Soliman's inability to recognise that he is the primary cause of nearly all the injustices inflicted on other characters in the play, with the exception of Amurath, contributes to the hardening of his character as the play progresses.[37] It also springs from his failure to accept responsibility for his actions. He is increasingly ready to avenge the murders he commits by punishing others. For example, for the death of Haleb and Amurath it is the Island of Rhodes which bears the brunt of his anger:

Then farewell, sorrow; and now, reuenge, draw neere.

In controuersie touching the Ile of Rhodes

My brothers dyde; on Rhodes ile be reuenged. (3. 1. 6-8)

For Erastus's death, it is Brusor who is held responsible, not Soliman: 'Yet iustly how can I condemne my selfe, / When Brusor liues that was the cause of all?' (5. 4. 92-3). Only in his final speech, having already been poisoned, does Soliman take responsibility for his murderous career. He commands the Janisaries:

Ah, Ianisaries, now dyes your Emperour, [...]

Affright me not with sorrowes and laments:

And when my soule from body shall depart,

Trouble me not, but let me passe in peace,

And in your silence, let your loue be showne. (5. 4. 133-9)

He requests that his body be buried, with Perseda's, next to Erastus's tomb, and goes on:

> Forgiue me, deere Erastus, my vnkindness.
>
> I haue reuenged thy death with many deaths:
>
> And, sweet Perseda, flie not Soliman,
>
> When as my gliding ghost shall follow thee,
>
> With eager moode, thorow eternal night. (5. 4. 147-51)

In the end Soliman expresses remorse for his brutality and very admirably accepts his death with an echo of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which the Roman hero was shunned by Dido when he met her spirit in Hades. At this point Kyd seems to recognise that the crimes of Soliman have not a little in common with the disastrous errors of the protagonists of Classical epic and tragedy.

Nevertheless, the brutality of Soliman underscores the brutality of all Muslims. As Rhodes is taken, for example, Brusor revels in the sight of the dead governor and his son-in-law:

> There lies the Gouernour, and there his Sonne:
>
> Now let their soules
>
> Tell sorrie tidings to their ancestors,
>
> What millions of men, opprest with ruine and scath,
>
> The Turkish armies did <oer-throw> in Christendome. (3. 5. 2-6)

Then he offers the Christian captives the choice between conversion to Islam or death (3. 5. 7). Soliman reports these events to Erastus with pride, not shame:

> Rhodes is taken, and all the men are slaine,
>
> Except some few that turne to Mahomet. (4. 1. 41-2)

It is clear that Brusor and his fellow Muslims have a twisted conception of knighthood by the standards of the European romance tradition. Instead of

promoting the chivalric qualities close to the heart of the English knight, Brusor builds his fortunes on the bloodiness and ruthlessness of his campaigns. When questioned about his bravery, Brusor's response reveals his sanguinary nature:

> The desert plaines of Affricke haue I staind
> With blood of Moores, and there in three set battles fought:
> Along the coasts held by the Portinguze,
> Euen to the verge of golde abounding Spaine,
> Hath Brusor led a valiant troope of Turkes,
> And made some Christians kneel to Mahomet. (1. 3. 56-61)

Brusor also provides the best illustration in the play of Muslim treachery. While the other Knights, English, Spanish, and French, were in Rhodes to celebrate the wedding of the Princess, Brusor was engaged in a spying mission as part of the Turkish preparations for their imminent invasion of the island (1. 5. 5-7 and 3. 1. 47-50). Furthermore, the appointment of Erastus as governor of Rhodes triggers Brusor's envious betrayal of him. In response to the Christian's promotion Brusor convinces Soliman that Perseda should be his:

> If so your life depend vpon your loues,
> And that her loue depends vpon his life
> Is it not better that Erastus die
> Ten thousand deaths then Soliman should perish? (4. 1. 238-41)

His motivation could hardly be described as knightly or chivalric, and his contrivance against Erastus is even less so:

> Ill fetch him backe againe,
> No sooner shall he land vpon our shore,
> But witnes shall be ready to acuse him
> Of treason doone against your mightines,

And then he shall be doomd by marshall law. (4. 1. 244-49)

Soliman agrees to the scheme and instructs Brusor to execute it. Thus, Soliman is no less treacherous than Brusor, for he agrees to prepare the judge and the false witnesses himself (4. 1. 253).

It is ironic that Soliman should descend to the level of a scheming rogue when we bear in mind the complimentary words spoken of him by Erastus before his escape from Rhodes:

> To Turkie must I goe; the passage short,
> The people warlike, and the King renownd
> For all heroyicall and kingly vertues. (2. 1. 269-71)

It is even more ironic that the same Soliman who assures the fugitive Erastus that

> though you Christians
> Account our Turkish race but barbarous,
> Yet haue we eares to heare a iust complaint
> And iustice to defend the innocent,
> And pitie to such as are in pouertie,
> And liberall hands to such as merit bountie (3. 1. 58-63)

should participate in such a scandalous and treacherous scheme. In betraying the trust of Erastus and in breaking his own word Soliman proves to the audience the validity of their prejudices against Muslims.

What motivates Soliman to commit such a treacherous act against his Christian admirer is his insatiable lust. As has been noted, lasciviousness was one of the vices most commonly attributed to Muslims by European tradition; and Kyd makes it the principal weakness of Soliman's character. In the episode where he offers Lucina to Brusor and persistently harasses Perseda, the

audience would certainly have come to expect the despicable act of deflowering Christian virgins from Turks like Soliman and Brusor. Soliman's lascivious description of Perseda caters to their voyeuristic anticipation of witnessing Turkish lechery in action:

> Faire lockes, resembling Phoebus radiant beames;
> Smooth forhead, like the table of high Ioue;
> Small pensild eye browes, like two glorious rainbowes;
> Quick lampelike eyes, like heauens two brightest orbes;
> Lips of pure corall, breathing Ambrosie;
> Cheekes, where the Rose and lillie are in combate;
> Neck, whiter then the snowie Apenines;
> Brests, like two ouerflowing Fountaines,
> Twixt which a vale leads to the Elisian shades,
> Where vnder couert lyes the fount of pleasure
> Which thoughts may gesse, but tongue must not prophane.
>
> (4. 1. 77-87)

Despite its excessive use of the comparative, the speech clearly hints at the dark consequences of Soliman's inexorable attraction to Perseda's 'fount of pleasure' by placing it among the 'Elisian shades' - the classical dwelling of the just which can be attained only by dying.

Nevertheless, despite his evident excitement at Perseda's appearance, Soliman appears at first to be capable of ruling his passion as a good king ought. When he discovers that Perseda and Erastus are in love he immediately respects their wish to be together, declaring that he loves them both equally (4. 1. 171). But he soon regrets his decision and upsets the balance of his affections:

Yet of the two Perseda mooues me most,

I, and so mooues me, that I now repent

That ere I gaue away my hearts desire. (4. 1. 207-9)

He goes on to reproach himself for his rashness:

Foolish Soliman, why did I striue

To do him kindnes, and vndo my selfe?

Well gouernd friends do first regard themselues. (4. 1. 219-21)

And at this moment, just as he has begun to redefine good government in his own interest, the envious Brusor intercedes with his diabolical scheme to destroy Erastus.

In order to mitigate the enormity of the crime he anticipates, Soliman offers a feeble justification for it based on the sheer power of physical desire:

See where he comes, whome though I deerely loue,

Yet must his bloud be spilt for my behoofe;

Such is the force of marrow burning loue. (5. 2. 12-14)

However, Soliman fails to convince the audience, and himself, that his divided love is a good enough reason for him to absolve himself of responsibility for his actions. When Erastus inquires if his arrest is part of a treacherous plot of which Soliman is ignorant (5. 2. 17-20), Brusor denies that the king knows anything about it, but Soliman responds in an aside, 'yes, thou, and I, and all of vs betray him' (5. 2. 23). This is an admission of hypocrisy: Soliman knows very well that Erastus is innocent of the charges brought against him, and is convinced of his loyalty. But his remark, 'bright Persedas beautie stops my tongue' (5. 2. 33), suggests that by this time the habit of keeping quiet about his real motivation - a habit which began when he warned that 'tongue must

not prophane' his thoughts about Perseda - has now become deeply entrenched, and indeed that it now governs him.

The play presents a number of other instances where Soliman is represented as sensual and self-indulgent. For example, after having given Brusor the order to attack Rhodes Soliman turns to Erastus and says:

> And now, Erastus, come and follow me,
> Where thou shalt see what pleasures and what sportes
> My Minions and my Euenukes can deuise,
> To driue away this melancolly moode. (3. 1. 149-52)

Similarly, when Soliman agrees with Brusor to murder Erastus, and with memories of Perseda bearing down heavily on him, he seeks refuge in the sanctuary of his Harem:

> And now, to ease my troubled thoughts at last,
> I will go sit among my learned Euenukes,
> And heere them play, and see my minions dance.
> For till that Brusor bring me my desire,
> I may asswage, but neuer quench loues fire. (4. 1. 257-61)

Strikingly enough, Soliman always refers to his feelings for Perseda as love. Only once does he admit that they have more to do with lust than love, moments before Erastus is strangled. In a state of apparent anguish and remorse Soliman cries: 'O vniust Soliman: O wicked time, / Where filthie lust must murther honest loue' (5. 2. 90-1). By this admission Soliman clearly defines the conflict as being between faithful chastity, represented by Christians, and filthy lust, represented by Muslims.[38]

Although Soliman's changeful nature makes it rather difficult to determine the sincerity of his feelings, the play, nevertheless, emphasises throughout the

shifting relationship between the two pillars of his character - sensuality and violence, with some struggle to retain a sense of honour. Whenever he decrees or commits a violent act he seeks solace in the world of pleasure. He does so after ordering the attack on Rhodes, after the murder of Erastus, and finally after having killed Perseda in battle, when he seeks the kiss he has always longed for. That kiss, however, proves to be the agent of death. Soliman's death, argues Frederick S. Boas, is 'the needful expiation of his crimes'.[39] For beginning with his brother Amurath and concluding with Basilisco and Piston Soliman has shown a frighteningly violent and barbarous nature by which his flashes of sensibility and tolerance have been eclipsed.

The choice of the infidel Turk, Soliman, with his unlimited capacity for treachery, corruption, and murder, as the protagonist of *Soliman and Perseda* conforms to the conventions of Elizabethan revenge tragedy.[40] In particular, Kyd's choice conforms to the concept that the heroes of revenge tragedies for the most part are deeply flawed, and that they act in obedience to a fundamentally unchristian impulse. Soliman's corruption, however, does not obscure the fact that a number of the Christian characters in the play, namely Erastus, Lucina, and Perseda, possess characteristics not dissimilar to those of the protagonist. In adopting similar tactics to Soliman's they tarnish their image as exemplary figures and would probably have lost much of the admiration of an Elizabethan audience, who showed little tolerance for treacherous Machiavellian tactics.[41] Nevertheless, the audience probably viewed them with a more lenient eye than their Muslim counterparts.

Although basically chivalric and gallant Erastus reveals a willingness to cheat, by the use of false dice, in his attempt to win Perseda's chain back from Lucina (2. 1. 201-43). Having lost the chain he had sworn to keep, Erastus is prepared to do any thing at all to regain it: 'it must be mine / By game, or change, by one deuise or other' (2. 1. 208-9). But his success in regaining the chain through trickery comes at a tremendous cost - Ferdinando's death and the necessity for his own escape to Turkey, the action from which all his subsequent problems proceed.

Erastus's military reputation is well known in Turkey, especially to Brusor who experienced his fighting skills at first hand during his visit to Rhodes. Asked by Soliman, Brusor speaks of Erastus in glowing terms:

> A worthie Knight of Rhodes, a matchless man,
> His name Erastus, not twentie yeares of age,
> Not tall, but well proportioned in his lims:
> I neuer saw, except your excellence,
> A man whose presence more delighted me. (3. 1. 17-21)

No sooner does Soliman express his heartfelt desire to win virtue by capturing Erastus in war than the Rhodian Knight comes in seeking refuge. When Soliman offers to grant him his wishes Erastus requests the freedom to go on living as a Christian (3. 1. 96). Furthermore, he magnanimously turns down Soliman's proposal that he join the military campaign against Rhodes:

> If poore Erastus may once more intreate,
> Let not great Solimans command,
> To whose behest I vowe obedience,
> Inforce me sheath my slaughtering blade
> In the deare bowels of my countrimen. (3. 1. 121-25)

Erastus certainly does not wish to betray Rhodes or its people. In retrospect, his rejection of Soliman's offer indicates that he is far from being vindictive. Even Soliman recognises the virtue of his decision, reassuring him that:

> Thou shalt not neede Phylippo nor his Ile,
>
> Nor shalt thou war against thy Countrimen:
>
> I like thy vertue in refusing it. (3. 1. 139-41)

Erastus's position on Rhodes is in keeping with the chivalric qualities he has displayed up to this point. Even his trickery in trying to recover the lost chain reinforces these qualities, in the sense that he is forced into it by his determination to meet the demand of his mistress, even though he recognises that this could lead him to the 'hard doom of death' (2. 1. 167). His readiness to sacrifice himself for his lover's sake highlights the selfish and destructive desire of Soliman. It demonstrates, in fact, that whereas Soliman's treachery is generated by the desire to satisfy his lusts, Erastus's trickery (which is no more than that) is motivated by a desire to serve his mistress. Thus, even an act which would normally have tarnished his reputation could be taken as enhancing it. In this sense the flaw lies within the institution of love which requires lovers to go to such lengths in the service of their mistresses. Similarly, in the institution of chivalry, the killing of Ferdinando in a duel is not condemned as a needless crime but glorified as an act of valour, especially since it is done in self-defence (2. 1. 244-47). It is the misfortune of Erastus that in living up to what is required of him he becomes the subject of his own perverse destiny:

> Ah, fickle and blind guidresse of the world,
>
> What pleasure hast thou in my miserie? (2. 1. 252-3)

In his heart of hearts Erastus knows that he is not to blame:

> Ah, if but time and place would giue me leaue,
> Great ease it were for me to purge my selfe,
> And to acuse fell *Fortune*, *Loue*, and *Death*;
> For all these three conspire my tragedie. (2. 1. 258-61)

The play seems to suggest that Erastus, unlike other major characters, is the victim of a struggle for power between Love, Fortune, and Death who 'see the play and debate the question: Which has the most important power in the tragedy?'[42] He is also the victim of two competing systems: a system of poetic justice in which, as a rule, no slayer escapes some penalty, normally death,[43] and a chivalric system which glorifies the slaying of others in defence of one's honour.

Unlike Erastus, Perseda seems to have some control over her own fate. She uncompromisingly refuses to listen to Erastus's explanation of how he lost the chain she gave him as a token of her love (2. 1. 153-66). Her refusal in turn triggers off the chain of events which leads to their destruction. Initially she seems unable to see beyond the confining limits of her jealousy and, therefore, shows little inclination to suffer for love to the extent she demands of Erastus. She immediately returns to Erastus his ring and tells him to give it to the woman she thinks his lover:

> Ile keepe no tokens of thy periury:
> Heere, giue her this; Perseda now is free,
> And all my former loue is turnd to hate. (2. 1. 150-52)

Only when she learns the truth about the chain and that Erastus has been forced to flee to Turkey as a result of his ill-fated attempt to recover it does she

experience 'a reversion of feeling'.[44] Even then she lays the blame on the stars: 'Ah, poor Erastus, how thy starres malign' (2. 2. 32). This reversion, no matter how genuine, does not alter the fact that her stubborn demands have instigated Erastus's action.

Although Perseda is quite capable of manifesting the emotions of love, joy, and remorse, she more often chooses to reveal a harsher side of herself. Her summary judgement on Lucina (5. 3. 42-7), who betrayed Erastus, for example, typifies her vengeful and unpitying cruelty - in marked contrast to Erastus' lack of vindictiveness. When she stabs her to death (5. 3. 52-3) - an act of which Basilisco proved incapable - her ferocity comes as a shock from the heroine of a romance; and her decision to let Lucina lie 'a prey to rauening birds' (5. 3. 55) suggests that her nature has hardened beyond all recognition by this stage in the action. The incident helps to prepare the audience for her ultimate act of revenge against Soliman. Perseda is certainly as capable of taking revenge as is Bel-Imperia in *The Spanish Tragedy*, who stabs her intended groom for assassinating her lover (4. 4. 59-66).[45]

Like Bel-Imperia, Perseda consistently refuses to compromise her integrity, whether with Erastus or with Soliman. She refuses point blank to succumb to Soliman's lustful advances, and prefers death to losing her chastity and honour (4. 1. 101-27). At this point her defiance is commendable, since it reaffirms the moral superiority of virtuous love over lust and desire. 'Let me liue a Christian Virgin still, / Vnless my state shall alter by my will' (4. 1. 142-3), she begs the Turkish king, who finally consents. The same admirable chastity is demonstrated by Paulina in Massinger's *The Renegado*. However, when

Perseda's defiance turns into active revenge against Lucina, an Elizabethan audience might well have considered her to have lost her position of moral superiority.[46] In challenging Soliman to a duel, disguised as a knight, Perseda tries to recover some of the moral high ground she has lost. She begins by vehemently denouncing him:

> thou wicked tirant,
> Thou murtherer, accursed homicide,
> For whome hell gapes, and all the vgly feendes
> Do waite for to receiue thee in their iawes:
> Ah, periur'd and inhumaine Soliman,
> How could thy heart harbour a wicked thought
> Against the spotlesse life of poore Erastus? (5. 4. 36-42)

She obviously feels that Erastus represents the spotless innocence that is absent from Soliman's make-up. More controversially, she believes that her stabbing of Lucina and her plans for Soliman's death are justified revenge and therefore do not contravene her own claims to innocence. Her revenge against Lucina could be interpreted as a rejection of the compromising position adopted by the latter, who not only failed to challenge Soliman's will but seems to have taken an active part in the plot against Erastus.

By killing Lucina Perseda also eradicated the contagion by which means Islam would have been able to destroy Christian culture. Unlike Aaron in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* who contributed towards the destruction of Rome through his sexual relationship with Tamora, Brusor's attempt to marry Lucina and so to strike a blow against Christianity through inter-marriage is thwarted as a result of Perseda's prompt action. Nevertheless, Perseda's plan

to lure Soliman to self-destruction might be deemed the project of a heart which is quite capable of harbouring 'wicked thoughts'. Part of her revenge against the king is to incite him to kill her, knowing how devastating the discovery will be to him:

> Soliman. What, my Perseda? Ah, what haue I done?
>
> Yet kisse me, gentle loue, before thou die. (5. 4. 65-6)

He thus walks into the trap of her poisoned lips. His death marks the fulfilment of both moral and poetic justice.

In her denunciation of Soliman Perseda uses most of the stock criticisms levelled against Muslims in the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. He is cruel, perjured, and murderous. In contrast, Christians represent the antithesis of what Muslims are; Erastus, for example, is just, valiant, loyal and loving, and above all, 'the flower of Christendome' (5. 4. 43-7). This contrast between Muslims and Christians, though not always taking centre stage, is present throughout the play. The treacherous designs of Brusor in his spying mission on Rhodes (1. 5. 1-6) and his diabolical plans against Erastus (4. 1. 222-49) not only serve to confirm the despised qualities of Muslims but to highlight the noble and chivalric qualities of Christians in the person of Erastus. Whereas Brusor orders the killing of the Christian prisoners who refuse to convert to Islam (3. 6. 10), Erastus kills Ferdinando in an equal duel (2. 1. 245-47). Even Erastus's trickery in reclaiming the lost chain seems like a minor indiscretion compared to Brusor's actions. The only redeeming quality of Brusor is his recognition that he can no longer accommodate the despotic and whimsical demands of Soliman, and his decision to make a stand in this respect. His

truthful evaluation of Erastus after his death (5. 4. 103-5) clearly indicates that Brusor has repented of the jealousy which motivated him to propose Erastus's death to Soliman. Similarly, it demonstrates the development of his tragic character as he recognises his own responsibility for the first time. Thus, having seen his Lucina 'butcherd dispightfullie without the walles' of Rhodes (5. 4. 4), Brusor himself is condemned to death by Soliman, and dies with a measure of the audience's sympathy, despite the crimes he has committed (5. 4. 111-12). The tyrannical violence of Soliman, on the other hand, is unequalled by any Christian character in the play. His initial magnanimity seems to diminish, as the action progresses, to the point where only his barbarity and brutality are evident. Only at the end of the play does he seem to regain his magnanimity and to accept responsibility for the deaths and destruction he has brought about. There is an air of nobility and a sense of regret in his final speech, where he orders the Janisaries to bury Perseda and himself next to Erastus, as if in recognition of the need to place himself as close to the Christian knight in death as he proved far from him in life (5. 5. 147-51).

The only Christian character that seems to harden as the action of the play progresses is Perseda, whose stabbing of Lucina and poisoning of Soliman illustrate that process. Her insistence, for example, on Lucina's body being left lying outside the walls of Rhodes is more an act of aggression than of revenge. Similarly, her last words to Soliman, 'a kisse I grant thee, though I hate thee deadlie' (5. 4. 67), seems to represent more a frightening example of pitilessness than a quest for justice. In so doing Perseda sacrifices her claim to moral superiority and the nobility of her preference for death before dishonour

(4. 1. 101-27). All in all, her capacity for vindictiveness works in Soliman's favour, in so far as it helps by comparison to mitigate the extent of his cruelty, especially at the end. What really works in Perseda's favour, however, is her courageous ability to preserve the edifice of faithful love and chastity in the face of the emotional anarchy represented by Soliman.

This point is certainly not lost on Soliman who, though morally inferior, attempts to present himself as occupying the opposite position. However, he finds it difficult to justify his unchecked lust. Even the expressions of physical desire exchanged between Lucina and Ferdinando do not diminish the moral corruption of Soliman's self-centred erotic yearnings. For when Ferdinando inquires:

> When shall the graces, or *Lucinas* hand
> With Rosie chaplets deck thy golden tresses,
> And *Cupid* bring me to thy nuptiall bed,
> Where thou in ioy and pleasure must attend
> A blisful war with me, thy chiefest friend? (2. 1. 12-16)

he does so within the context of the intended marital vows sanctioned by society; the speech includes a reminder that 'Lucina' is a name for Juno, the goddess of marriage. Lucina's answer confirms the supremacy of the social and moral order in relation to desire:

> Full fraught with loue and burning with desire,
> I long haue longd for light of Hymens lights. (2. 1. 17-18)

To Soliman, on the other hand, the moral and social order is definitely subservient to his lust and desire, and he is prepared to smash every social institution in order to obtain his ends. The distinction between Lucina's

commitment to marriage and Soliman's willingness to break marital laws might well be seen as a confirmation of European anxieties about the contamination of Christian culture by barbarous Muslim influences, as presented by inter-racial marriage. These anxieties will be more fully explored in my chapter on Massinger's *The Renegado*.

At the same time, Soliman feels obliged to pay lip-service to moral law. Not to be outdone by his Christian counterparts, he chooses to espouse the contentious issue of justice in order to claim the moral high-ground from which he tries to justify his crimes. Thus the killing of Amurath, though tormenting to Soliman, is presented as an act of justice, cursed as it may be, since Amurath first killed Haleb. The treacherous murder of Erastus, though not justified, curiously becomes the justification for countless other murders (5. 4. 148), including that of Brusor. It is interesting that both Soliman and Perseda invoke justice to support their killings and that both seem to firmly believe in the honesty of their intentions. What they fail to realise is that both have had a hand in Erastus's fate. Perseda, by stubbornly demanding the return of the lost chain, has triggered the events which led to Erastus's death, and Soliman has made that death possible through his crimes. In the end, the course of justice is served only when these two characters, fittingly, exact revenge on one another.

Though working from entirely different religious and cultural contexts, Soliman and Perseda are not dissimilar in their progressively hardening natures. Both seem to be driven by an innate desire to fashion and manipulate their world according to their own visions which are based on chivalric tradition and religious perceptions. In the end both are destroyed by these

visions. Their destruction is a reminder of their failure to recognise that within the context of the conflict between the chivalric and religious traditions lie the seeds of corruption and destruction. In this sense, the play seems to suggest that despite their apparent differences Christianity and Islam are not dissimilar in their ability to destroy each other, as is made manifest in the mutual destruction of Soliman and Perseda. Furthermore, the relationship between Soliman and Perseda, as the play makes clear, is a relationship of sexual attraction and rejection. On his part Soliman makes no secret of his lustful desire for Perseda, whose religious traditions dictate the rejection of such a relationship. However, in her rejection of Soliman's desire and in her quest for revenge, which is part of a chivalric tradition, the dying Perseda ends up by granting Soliman the long sought-after kiss from her poisoned lips. In granting such a kiss, Perseda sacrifices her religious traditions for the requirements of chivalry, and demonstrates that the only possibility of physical proximity between herself and Soliman, or for that matter between Christianity and Islam, is through death or annihilation.

In having the Christian characters commit acts only expected of Muslims the play seems to suggest that, though in possession of divine enlightenment, Christians are in danger of transgressing their moral, religious, and social values by coming into contact with the rival forces of evil and temptation. The triumph of Erastus and Perseda through their physical destruction may finally serve as a reminder of the superiority of the values and ideals they stand for over those represented by Soliman and Brusor. Nevertheless, in having transgressed in the first place, Erastus and Perseda testify to the power of the

rival values upheld by Muslims, and the fact that all principal characters in the play share the same fate suggests that Europe may be dangerously vulnerable to contamination by the followers of Islam.

In conclusion, it could be argued that the two plays, *The Battle of Alcazar* and *Soliman and Perseda*, though similar in their depiction of the treacherous Muslim, represent two different points of view with regard to the relationship between England and the world of Islam. On the one hand, Peele seems to support the policies of Elizabeth, who seems to have had no hesitation in seeking the support of Muslims against Spain 'during the national crisis of the 1580s',[47] and who did not make any attempt to keep those contacts secret.[48] Despite that support and despite his fervent anti-Spanish attitudes he still manages to depict Muly Mahamet in a manner in keeping with the Elizabethan audience's preconceptions. On the other hand, Kyd's representations of Soliman and Brusor may be said to reflect his apprehension with regard to Elizabeth's policy of close trade relations with Muslims, especially 'after the crisis had passed'.[49] After 1588, even Elizabeth wished to appear to placate public opinion, both at home and on the Continent, which still regarded Islam as the common enemy of Christianity; a point of view vehemently espoused by James I.[50] The praise of the Spanish Knight and Spanish bravery (1. 3. 35-38) could be said to indicate the play's lack of anti-Spanish sentiment and, to a certain degree, to be suggestive of Kyd's support for a more conciliatory policy toward Spain.

At the same time, in their representation of the violence of Muslims against members of their own families, either for the sake of justice or for political

ends - such as succession to a throne - *The Battle of Alcazar* and *Soliman and Perseda* prepare the stage for Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham*, which are the subject of the next chapter. Within the context of the issue of the succession and the problem of tyranny these two plays take the patricidal and fratricidal nature of Muslims as their point of emphasis.

Notes

[1] John Yoklavich, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp.230-1. Vol. 2 of Charles T. Prouty, gen. ed., *The Life and Works of George Peele*, 3 vols.

[2] George Whetstone, *The English Myrror* (London: I. Windet, 1586), pp.84-5.

[3] Warner G. Rice, 'A Principal Source of *The Battle of Alcazar*,' *Modern Language Notes*, 58 (1943), 428-31.

[4] John Yoklavich, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, p.230.

[5] David H. Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp.78-9. Vol. 1 of Charles T. Prouty, gen. ed., *The Life and Works of George Peele*, 3 vols.

[6] John Yoklavich, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, p.269.

[7] Ibid., p.252.

[8] Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me*, Part II, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.

[9] John Yoklavich, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, p.252.

[10] David H. Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele*, p.78.

[11] See Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, pp.1006-7.

[12] George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, in *The Works of George Peele*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, 2 vols (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), I, p.228. All subsequent references are from this edition.

[13] Anthony G. Barthelemy, *Black Face Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southern* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), p.2.

[14] Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen*, p.45.

[15] Anthony G. Barthelemy, *Black Face Maligned Race*, p.83.

[16] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part II, p.232.

[17] Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen*, p.138, [n. 25].

[18] Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*, p.16.

[19] Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen*, p.139, [n. 25].

[20] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.101.

[21] John Yoklavich, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, p.247.

[22] Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*, p.83.

[23] For a detailed comparative study of Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* and *Captain Thomas Stukeley* see John Yoklavich, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, pp. 247-73.

[24] Ibid., p.269.

[25] *The Famous History of Captain Thomas Stukeley*, ed. by Judith C. Levinson (The Malone Society Reprints, 1975). All subsequent references are from this edition.

[26] W. W. Greg, ed., *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: 'The Battle of Alcazar' & 'Orlando Furioso'* (The Malone Society: Oxford University Press, 1922), p.8.

[27] Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, p.273.

[28] Ibid., p.376.

[29] Studies of *Soliman and Perseda* have devoted little space to critical analysis of the play. Most of them deal with the problem of authorship and with the play's historical importance. See, for example, Frederick S. Boas, 'Introduction', *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. Liv-Lxi; Thomas W. Baldwin, 'On the Chronology of Thomas Kyd's Plays', *Modern Language Notes*, 40 (1925), 346; W. J. Lawrence, '*Soliman and Perseda*', *Modern Language Review*, 9 (1914), 523-25; Marion Grubb, 'Kyd's Borrowing from Garnier's *Bradamante*', *MLN*, 50 (1935), 169-71; Arthur Freeman, 'Shakespeare and "*Soliman and Perseda*"', *MLR*, 58 (1963), 481-87.

[30] Louis Wann, 'The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama,' p.171.

[31] A. D. Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty* (Oxford, 1956), p.31.

[32] Metin Kunt, 'State and Sultan up to the Age of Suleyman: Frontier Principality to World Empire', in *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age*, ed. by Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London and New York: Longman, 1995), p.29.

[33] See Christine Woodhead, 'Perspectives on Suleyman', in *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age*, pp.164-190.

[34] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, pp. 496-7.

[35] Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 161.

[36] Thomas Kyd, *Soliman and Perseda*, in *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. by F. S. Boas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 170. All subsequent references are from this edition.

[37] Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems*, p.162.

[38] Leonora L. Brodwin, *Elizabethan Love Tragedy*, 1587-1625 (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 66.

[39] Frederick S. Boas, *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, p. lxi.

[40] Fredson T. Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, 1587-1642 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 80.

[41] Ibid., p. 80.

[42] Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), p. 395.

[43] Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, p. 80.

[44] Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy*, p. 65.

[45] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, in *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. by F. J. Boas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 91-2.

[45] Leonora L. Brodwin, *Elizabethan Love Tragedy*, p. 67.

[47] Franklin L. Baumer, 'England, the Turk, and the Common Corps of Christendom,' p.33.

[48] Ibid., p.33.

[49] Ibid., p.33.

[50] Ibid., p.34.

CHAPTER FOUR

ISLAM and MUSLIMS in GREVILLE'S *MUSTAPHA* and *ALAHAM*

I. The linked issues of succession to the throne and the parricidal violence of Muslims dealt with in Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* and Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* provide the focal point of attention in Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1594-96) and *Alaham* (1598-1600).[1] These two plays should be read as companion-pieces in their analysis of religion and ethics and of the effects of self-love on the moral consciousness. Whereas fear is the consequence of self-love in *Mustapha*'s Soliman, ambition is its outstanding consequence in Alaham.[2] As Ronald Rebholz puts it, 'Soliman, possessing temporal prosperity, fears its loss; and that overpowering fear distorts his vision of what is naturally virtuous. Alaham, without temporal power, aspires to its heights; and that hope leads him to redefine "good" and "evil" conduct to suit his desires. Hala, Alaham's wife, whose lust for Caine and hatred of Alaham becomes her religion, essentially repeats the pattern of conduct displayed by Rossa.'[3] Rossa is Soliman's wife, whose lust for power leads her to destroy Mustapha, Soliman's rightful heir, in order to secure the throne to her descendants.

In his *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, Greville states that his purpose in writing *Mustapha* and *Alaham* was 'to trace out the high waies of ambitious Governours, and to shew in the practice, that the more audacity, advantage, and good successe such Soveraignties have, the more they hasten to their owne desolation and ruine.'[4] In both plays the struggle for power within the factional monarchy leads to a state of instability and political unrest regardless of

whether the monarch is strong, like Solimun, or weak, like the old king of Ormus. But the plays are also preoccupied with the concept of the opposition between good and evil, right and wrong, the human and the divine. In this respect, *Mustapha*, with its conflicting attitudes, 'raises questions about the causes and extent of man's surrender to self-love, the ease of choosing the good, and the necessity of religion.'[5] *Alaham* answers these questions in terms of the Christian doctrine of original sin and that sin's 'destructive effects on the fallen man's moral consciousness and institutions.'[6] The idea that man can easily follow nature without divine assistance, which is questioned in *Mustapha*, readily gives way in *Alaham* to a dark pessimism about man's unaided capacity for goodness.[7] In it Greville demonstrates that the fall of states is due to the fallen nature of men. His fear that one of the feuding factions at the English court might assume tyrannical power is more obvious in this play than in *Mustapha*, partly because the monarch, in the person of the old king of Ormus, has become weaker, like Queen Elizabeth in her later years.[8]

Even though *Mustapha* and *Alaham* clearly deal with political issues, Greville nevertheless cautions against regarding them purely in these terms. In the *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, he implores the readers to view his tragedies as more of a 'perspective into vice and the unprosperities of it' than 'any bare murmur of discontented spirits against their present Governments, or horrible periods of exorbitant passions among equals' (p. 151). In order to dispel any lingering thoughts about his political intentions he freely admits sacrificing to the fire *Antonie and Cleopatra*, the younger brother to *Mustapha* and *Alaham* because of 'many members in that creature (by the opinion of those few eyes,

which saw it) having some childish wantonnesse in them, apt enough to be construed, or strained to a personating of vices in the present Governors and Government' (*Life of Sidney*, p.156). Then, rather paradoxically, he states that his tragedies could be read allegorically. Every character the tragedies render may find a real life contemporary counterpart, and for every line or incident he can recall an historical event because 'the vices of former Ages being so like to these of this Age' it will therefore 'be easie to find out some affinity, or resemblance between them' (*Life of Sidney*, p.225). This state of constantly signaling different interpretative directions persists throughout his discussion of his tragedies. It suggests that Greville is reluctant to make an unambiguous political commitment to one or other of the Elizabethan political factions. In addition, he is quick to assert his unwavering support of Queen Elizabeth, whom he describes as the 'she-David of ours' who 'ventured to undertake the great Goliath among the Philistines abroad,' by which he means 'Spain and the Pope' (*Life of Sidney*, p.165).

Whether he admits it or not, Greville's tragedies display considerable political astuteness and topical relevance. Above all, they make complex comments on the art of government and governing in relation to the people and the state.[9] Furthermore, they illustrate Greville's position mid-way between dedication to God and to the world 'most cogently expressed in the closing Choruses in *Mustapha*'.[10] From this mid-point he emphasises the fact that misgovernment by tyrants brings chaos, as does rebellion.[11] Greville believes that the only viable alternative to chaos is the kind of stability which can only be provided by a government capable of strong leadership and unwavering

justice.[12] Though he sympathises with the masses, as demonstrated by the character of Achmat in *Mustapha*, Greville balances these sympathies by stressing the need for a powerful and unified government. In other words, the state 'ought not to disregard the moral principle'[13] which empowers kings to 'Make them good subjects, that ill people are' ('A Treatise of Monarchy,' stanza 360).[14] Moreover, the ruler, though granted power to govern, should have his or her power placed under the check of the authority of the law.[15]

In this respect, both tragedies bring into focus many political points relevant to the state of England of the time. *Mustapha* illustrates the dangers of government under a tyrant; *Alaham* the perils of a state ruled by a weak king, with the aging Queen, Cecil, and Essex in the background of the action.[16] The relationship between the Cecil and Essex factions in Elizabeth's court was marked by hostility. Other than 'the competition for immediate power,' there was the 'concern on both sides about who would be the monarch to succeed the aging Queen and who would stand uppermost in his or her favour.'[17] Another point Greville makes is the precarious situation rulers invariably find themselves in when it comes to selecting their counsellors. They need devotion and advice from their subjects, but they can never be certain whether that devotion and advice are genuine or deceitful. The situation is best illustrated by Soliman's relationship with Rossa and Alaham's with Hala. Each woman exploits her hold over her husband in an effort to secure the throne to her posterity, regardless of the consequences to the state as a whole.

Greville's purpose in writing his plays, therefore, is not just to 'protest against divine laws nor to trace divine retribution, but rather to show the

inevitable workings of man's fallen nature in politics; he proves how, without any obvious divine intervention, evil brings its own downfall.'[18] Within this context, his choice of Muslim characters, history and setting is indicative of his belief that they exemplify the inescapable conditions and ruthless politics of the truly fallen.[19] The association of Muslims with fallen man was not unfamiliar to playwrights in much of the literature of the medieval period and after.[20] The choice is also indicative of Greville's desire to locate controversial events in far-off Muslim lands in order to safely 'shoot his wit' at 'ambitious governors'.[21] This cautious approach is warranted since the events in both plays could be said to resemble events in contemporary England and the court of Elizabeth.

II. The events in Greville's *Mustapha* are based on the history of Soliman II (The Magnificent) who, in 1553, after having subjugated most of Central Europe and North Africa, murdered his son and heir, Mustapha. The first European writer known to have dealt with Mustapha's death was the Frenchman Nicholas Moffan in a pamphlet written in Latin in 1555 entitled *Sultani Solymanni Torcurum Imperatoris horrendum facinus.*[22] This work was translated into English in 1570 by Hugh Goughe under the title *The Offspring of the House of Ottomans.*[23] Another early English account of the story could be found in Thomas Newton's *A Notable Historie of the Saracens* (1575).[24] There also appeared in 1561 a play called *La Soltane* by the Frenchman Gabriel Bounin, which was performed the same year and dealt with the death of Mustapha. In England, too, there was a dramatisation of the story of

Mustapha, in Latin, under the title *Solymannidae* (1581).[25] Greville used all these sources to plot his play's events. They start with Soliman's slaying of Mustapha, his much loved and worthy son and heir, at the instigation of the scheming Rossa, his concubine and later his wife, who wanted Zanger, her own son by Soliman to succeed to the throne. Against the better advice of Achmat, his Basha, and Camena, his daughter by Rossa, Soliman orders Mustapha's death after having seen Rossa murder Camena as part of her elaborate plan to convince him of her honesty. In the meantime, Mustapha's murder unleashes a rebellion by the people which puts Achmat in a dilemma. He either has to support the people's uprising, thus risking the stability of the state, or use his prestige with the people to preserve order at the cost of letting Soliman and Rossa go unpunished. After a lengthy and agonised internal debate, Achmat ultimately chooses stability and order over rebellion and chaos, thereby saving Soliman's skin and preserving the monarchical system.

The immediate concern of Greville in *Mustapha*, therefore, is to examine the dangers of excessive power, the evils of intrigue and ambition, and the problems of tyranny and revolt. In the course of pursuing these issues, he could not help but engage with a much deeper one, namely, the sense of man as being a helpless, bewildered creature at the mercy of conflicting forces within, and under the scrutiny of omnipotent forces without. This is the dilemma stated by the '*Chorvs Sacerdotvm*' at the end:

> *Oh wearisome Condition of Humanity!*
> *Borne vnder one Law, to another bound:*
> *Vainely begot, and yet forbidden vanity,*
> *Created sicke, commanded to be sound,*

What meaneth Nature by these diuerse Lawes?

Passion and Reason, self-diuision cause. (ll.1-6)[26]

This sense of human incapacity and discord is the underlying theme of the play. For his commentary on these disturbing issues Greville employs the choruses as vehicles, especially the last two, and the picture they paint is a gloomy one. Man, fallen as he is, is thrust into the perennial situation where he constantly has to make a choice between two extremes: either to follow his natural disposition and make much of life in this world and seek tangible goods, or to opt for a life completely governed by faith, even though this type of life may not be attainable. The first choice is encouraged by the Tartars, the second by the Muslim priests.

All of Greville's major characters in the play are embroiled in this situation of destructive conflict. As Jonathan Dollimore expresses it, the struggle 'situates the play's main protagonists between the opposing poles of secular and divine, the corrupt and the virtuous.'[27] He then explains that 'Mustapha, [...], is possessed of a totally divine orientation. By contrast Rossa is bent on secular power at any cost. Situated between is Soliman for whom consciousness is synonymous with uncertainty, conflict and contradiction.'[28] In fact, not only Soliman, Mustapha and Rossa face making a choice between the two poles of conflicting claims but Achmat and Camena do so as well. Soliman's choice is between being a monarch or a father; Mustapha's is between obedience or self-interest; Camena's is between her duty to her father or her duty to her brother; and Achmat's is between tyranny and stability or

rebellion and chaos. None of these choices is easy, and most are likely to prove agonising.

From the beginning of the play, Soliman's suspicion and fear of Mustapha involve him in an inward struggle between his role as a monarch whose duty is to safeguard the interest of the state, and that of a father who trusts and loves his son. He debates the issue within himself and seeks the counsel of his courtiers, who are divided into two opposing factions. Soliman's inward struggle reveals itself more clearly in a debate with Rossa who accuses Mustapha of plotting to kill the king. Soliman replies:

> *Mustapha* is through misprision hither come,
> Brought to the practise of this crafty slaue,
> Carelesse in which he make the others tombe:
> His netts are layd; our thoughts for stales pitch'd
> down,
> To catch our selues in, and in vs, the Crowne.
> But Natures lawes haue conquered Princes doubts;
> And between King, and man, what was begonne,
> Concludes betwixt a Father and a Sonne. (1.2.76-83)

Rossa who leads the faction of counsellors driven by self-interest, nurtures Soliman's fear and advises him to kill Mustapha. Her motives are purely those of personal ambition. She wants the throne to be passed on to her posterity. She repeatedly counsels Soliman that his obligations as a monarch ought to displace his duty as a father, and that the state can only be preserved through order and obedience, otherwise chaos will reign supreme. Soliman agrees, observing that people should not be allowed political freedom because 'If *libertie* they finde, then *Anarchie* they make' (1.2.216), and adds:

This Throne grew not by delicate alliance,

Combining State with State, all States to Lawes,

Of idle Princes, and base subiects cause.

We grew by curious improuing all;

Our selues to people, people vnto vs;

Worth, through our selues, in them we planted thus.

(1.2.224-29)

Soliman here is also expounding the argument that the role of force, not alliances or the consensus of the people, in obtaining and maintaining the throne is both crucial and undeniable.

The state of uncertainty and contradiction in which Soliman finds himself is obvious in the way his state of mind fluctuates with the advice he gets from his different counsellors. In a debate with Achmat, the leader of the faction of counsellors motivated by the common good of the state as they see it, Soliman exhibits stronger signs of torment than he did with Rossa. 'Speake plaine,' he says, 'and free my soule from this disease, / That with the ruin of mine owne would please' (2.2.134-35). Earlier Soliman confessed to Achmat that he was torn between two states of being:

Two States I beare; his Father, and his King;

These two, being Relatiues, haue mutuall bonds;

Neglect in either, all in question brings.

My Sonne climes vp with wings of seeming Merit;

His course, Applause; and mine, the scale of Order;

By Dissolution, he builds vp Content;

And I displease, by planting Gouernment. (2.2.15-21)

The reference to 'applause' here brings an additional element into the frame, namely, the attitude of subjects to the two powerful figures, the King and his

son. It also suggests a hint of jealousy felt by Soliman with regard to the soaring popularity of Mustapha. The whole episode demonstrates that Soliman both admires Mustapha's merits and popularity and fears them. On the one hand, they prove to him Mustapha's worth as an heir to the throne, on the other they prove what others construe as Mustapha's ruthless ambition and evil designs. Achmat espouses the former view, Rossa the latter. Her counsel seems to sway Soliman who castigates himself on showing, albeit fleetingly, paternal feelings:

> No, No: This *father*-language fits not Kings,
>
> Whose publike, vniuersall prouidence
>
> Of *things*, not *Persons* alwayes must haue sense. (2.2.38-40)

Soliman reaches the stage where he is totally convinced that he is motivated not by fear but by the quest for justice:

> *And he that breakes diuine, and humane Law,*
>
> *Shall no protection out of either draw.* (2.2.42-3)

It is out of this misguided sense of justice and responsibility that Soliman orders the execution of Mustapha.

The overall state of Soliman's indecision however persists, underscoring the complicated nature of his situation. He loves Mustapha, as he admits to Camena, but also fears him, as much because of other people's views of him as for Mustapha's view of himself. In this sense, fear is the driving force behind Soliman's tyrannical behaviour. As a consequence, Mustapha has to die because 'While he remains aliue, I liue in feare' (2.3.202), as Soliman states. Yet he clearly recognises the divided nature of his experience - his affection for Mustapha and his fear of him, which is itself compounded of the fear of doing

wrong and the fear of being wronged. At this point it becomes obvious that Reason is incapable of fashioning any order out of this chaos and Soliman decides to seek 'help from above'. This only proves his confusion and, ultimately, his spiritual destitution. The fact that his view of his situation is determined by his self-interest rather than the common good of the state will always cloud Soliman's judgement whether he looks within or without. As a result, his spiritual experience throws him even deeper into turmoil and confusion:

> My powers, and spirits, with prayers are confused,
> Nor iudge, nor rest, nor yeeld, nor raigne I can:
> No God, no Diuell, no constant King, nor Man.
> The Earth drawes one way, and the skie another. (4.1.35-8)

Torn between the earthly world and the world of spirit, there remains only one course of action available to Soliman:

> If God worke thus, *Kings must looke vpwards still,*
> *And from these Powers they know not, choose a will.*
> Or else beleeue themselues, their strength, occasion;
> Make wisdome conscience; and the world their skie:
> So haue all Tyrants done; and so must I. (4.1.39-43)

Deprived of divine guidance, Soliman decides to substitute himself for the deity and depend on his own initiative.

Compared to Soliman, Mustapha makes his choice with ease, and sticks to it with resolve. He must obey the monarch in order to save the state. Against the advice of Heli, the Muslim priest, who advises him to defy the king and lead a rebellion, Mustapha chooses to obey his father when he summons him rather than risk destabilising the state. In a Christ-like manner he elects to face

his destiny, proclaiming that it is his religious duty, as stipulated by The Koran, to be obedient despite the death that awaits him. He even argues that obedience to kings is a duty all subjects must perform because 'Our Gods they are, their God remaines aboue. / *To thinke against annoynted Power is death*' (4.4.150-1). For Mustapha, as a monarch, Soliman must be his God - which puts the prince in the position of God's son; but the audience is aware that the analogy is flawed, since Soliman had ceased to look to the God 'above' for counsel. Nevertheless, the resemblance between Mustapha and Christ is carried through even in Mustapha's last words, as reported by Achmat, when he asks forgiveness for himself and those who wronged him. The language, the tone, and the overall sense of passivity is more Christian than Muslim. Mustapha's perception of himself as the forgiving and obedient son in the following speech, owes more to the Christian tradition and the story of the Crucifixion than to any comparable Islamic tradition:

> *O Father! Now forgiue me;*
> *Forgiue them too, that wrought my ouerthrow:*
> *Let my Graue neuer minister offences.*
> *For, since my Father coueteth my death,*
> *Behold, with ioy, I offer him my breath.* (5.2.84-8)

Mustapha's invocation develops the concept of the son accepting the will of his father, something Islam requires and Muslims respect and fully understand; but he refers to it in the context of the Christian concept of the divine 'Father' and the 'Son' which Islam and Muslims totally reject. For Greville, then, Mustapha seems more attuned to Christian principles than his Father does: a situation which augurs ill for the state Soliman governs.

It is ironic that the course of action taken by both Soliman and Mustapha, through the tyranny of the former and the almost fanatical humility of the latter, in order to preserve stability, prosperity and order in the state, leads instead to quite the opposite - chaos and rebellion. As a result the play brings into question the validity and effectiveness of absolute monarchy where a single ruler must rely on his or her own decision alone. It also suggests that, after all, kings may not necessarily have the divine right to rule as Mustapha suggests (4.4.150-1). After the rebellion, the character upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility of saving the state and restoring order is Achmat, not the absolute monarch Soliman.

Throughout the preceding events, Achmat has consistently demonstrated his good intentions, his concern for the common good and the welfare of the state, and his unwavering conviction of Mustapha's innocence. He has also shown an admirable sense of justice. It is not surprising, then, that the murder of Mustapha provokes his contempt and indignation:

> Tyrants! Why swell you thus against your Makers?
> Is rays'd Equalities so soone growne wilde?
> Dare you depriue your People of Succession,
> Which Thrones, and Scepters, on their freedomes build?
> Haue feare, or loue, in Greatnesse no impression? (5.2.1-5)

Achmat deplores Mustapha's murder and describes it as a crime against nature, humanity and God, as well as against the people:

> Nature is ruin'd; Humanitie fall'n a sunder;
> Our *Alcoran* prophan'd; Empire defac'd;
> Ruine is broken loose; Truth dead; Hope banisht. (5.2.9-11)

He very movingly concludes: 'My heart is full; my voyce, and spirits tremble' (5.2.12). Then his passion overcomes him and he calls for the people to rebel:

> Question these Thrones of Tyrants;
>
> Reuiue your old equalities of Nature;
>
> Authority is more than that she maketh.
>
> Lend not your strength to keepe your owne strengths vnder.
>
> Proceed in Furie: *Furie hath Law, and Reason,*
>
> *Where it doth plague the wickednesse of Treason.* (5.3.92-7)

However, when the people actually rebel and the prospect of anarchy seems closer than ever, Achmat hesitates and expresses his doubts about whether rebellion is the right course of action to be pursued. He knows that although Soliman is guilty of tyranny and murder and has long neglected his duty to uphold the good of many, incumbent upon him as a monarch (5.3.78-89), nevertheless the political alternative, no matter how just, is ruinous to all (5.3.99). In addition, Achmat is not completely certain that the people, as fallen human beings, have the right, through mutiny, to 'pull sacred Scepters downe' (5.3.103). Hence, after a long debate he decides to follow his reason, instead of his passion, and strive ' to saue high rais'd Soueraignitie, / Vnder whose wings there was Prosperitie' (5.3.113-14). The alternative is simply anarchy, statelessness and destruction (5.3.109-110).

Achmat's resolution to intercede with the masses on behalf of the state, and ultimately Soliman, should not be interpreted as condoning Soliman's actions but as an attempt to strike a balance between monarchic absolutism and rebellion and disorder; between despotism and anarchy. He has already stated that a king derives his sovereignty solely from being the guardian of the good

of his subjects whether he is chosen directly by the people or through succession (5.3.84-5). The implication is that the primary task of a strong monarch's authority is the fulfillment of the common good of the state and its people, and this is the option most favoured by Achmat, and seemingly by the author of *Mustapha*. Achmat's preferred concept of monarchy is not modeled after Soliman '(Who, swolne with practise of long Gouernment, / Doth staine the Publike with ill managing)' (5.3.79-80). Greville claims to have modeled it after the government of Queen Elizabeth which he considers to be the 'most desirable and practicable'.[29] Greville maintains that the Queen, '[...] this blessed, and blessing Lady, with a calme minde, as well in quiet, as stirring times, studied how to keep her ancient under-earth buildings, upon their first well laid foundations' (*Life of Sidney*, p.175). Unlike Soliman, Elizabeth was wise in the ways of government and

> foresaw, that every excesse of passion exprest from the Monarch in Acts, or Councels of Estate, would infallibly stir up in the people the like cobwebs of a popular spinning, and therefore from these piercing grounds, she concluded, that a steady hand in the government of Soveraignty, would ever prove more prosperous, then any nimble or witty practise, crafty shifting, or Imperious forcing humors possibly could be. (*Life of Sidney*, p. 176)

Given this interpretation of Elizabeth's style of government, one might suspect that Achmat would have been more than happy to serve under her. Instead, he feels that he must make the unenviable decision to support the rule of murderous tyranny against that of popular democracy. His situation illustrates the predicament of the human condition. The choices mortals face do not

always involve clear distinctions between good and evil. More often than not, they make their choices between a greater and a lesser evil. The most difficult of choices is having to sacrifice the good for the lesser evil as Achmat does. Having to choose between justice for the murdered innocent or the survival of the murdering tyrant, Achmat decides to support the tyrannical monarchy solely because it maintains order and stability, the only hopes, in his opinion, for a prosperous state.

III. Having employed the action and characters to present a commentary on man's individual conduct and individual responsibility the play utilises the choruses as a commentary on the general issues of the human condition, especially those relating to power, religion and morality.

The first chorus, 'Chorvs Primvs of *Basha's* or *Caddies*,' explores and comments on the issue of power and its relation to tyranny. Power certainly leads to tighter and tighter control, and, perhaps of necessity, to despotism. One instrument of control is institutionalised religion. Men of religion have always subverted religious values for the sake of worldly gains and for the sake of the state. The Bashas of the chorus contend that this is the tyrannical nature of Islam, where

> The *Mufti*, and their spirituall iurisdictions,
> By course succeed these other guilt-inflictions:
> Conscience annexing to our Crescent starre
> All freedomes, that in Mans fraile Nature are;
> By making doctrines large, strict, milde, seuere,
> As Power intends to stirre vp hope, or feare:

Which heauenly shaddow, with earth-centers fixt,

Racke men, by truth, and vntruths, strangely mixt;

And proue to Thrones such a supporting cause,

As finely giues Law to all other Lawes. (ll.65-74)

Even though tyranny is hardly an art perfected by Muslims, Islam is made to represent the most repressive form of religion. The chorus contends that by its own nature, Islam fosters and breeds tyrannical power by suffering 'God to wayne, / Vnder the Humors of a *Sultans* raigne' (ll.219-20). Then the chorus paints a very gloomy picture of the workings of tyranny:

It takes aduantage to deuoure the Iust,

Because to *Lawes*, that *limit Thrones*, they trust

Ruines the wise, whose eye discernes too much,

And thereby brings Powers errors to the touch;

Discards the Learned, for the difference

They make between the truth, and Princes sense;

Staines the Religious, as if they withstood

Powers will, the stamp of all that's currant good:

Yet saues it some, that they may witnesse beare,

Where Power raignes, their Worth must liue in feare. (ll.201-10)

The Bashas continue their discourse and reveal that, in fact, they favour changing the existing political order, concluding that '*Thrones should not be infinite*' (l.218). However, the sentiment could easily be dismissed as so much hot air, since their pretence to favour the existing order leaves them susceptible to charges of hypocrisy. Their relationship with the existing order, though, is less than beneficial to them, as they wryly observe:

Thus like the Wood that yeelds helues for the *Axe*,

Vpon it selfe to lay an heauy taxe:

We silly *Bassha's* helpe Power to confound,

With our owne strength exhausting our owne ground. (ll.75-8)

They are caught in an inescapable situation where their political allegiances seem to render their efforts to sponsor political change a 'futile endeavour in a corrupt world.'[30]

The second chorus, 'Chorvs Secondvs of Mahometan *Priests*,' expounds the issues of tyrannical power and its manifestations in the context of a comparison between Christians and Muslims. While Christians debate every issue of religion and strive to save the fallen man, the Muslim only ever has recourse to violence, force and worldly gain:

Lawes we had none, but what our Priests inspir'd;

Our right was lesse; for we had nought to claime:

To propagate it selfe the Truth desir'd,

And to that end, at all mankinde did aime:

So that while Soules we only sought to saue,

They are with God, and we their Empires haue. (ll.13-18)

The disparity between what Muslims profess to believe in and their actual deeds magnifies the extent of their hypocritical state of being. They even made 'vice' into a 'discipline' through which they spread their demonic and 'evil empire' (ll.61-6). Conversely, the spread of the Muslim empire suggests that the Christians are weak, and that their forms of government do not work too well. The perceived barbarity of Islam and Muslims, as opposed to the civility of Christianity and Christians, is dealt with in the most unfavourable manner. While the Christians are tolerant, civil and peaceful, Muslims are presented as the opposite:

For Force, not Right, our Crescents beare in Chiefe;

Campes, and not Courts, are Mappes of our Estate,

Where Church, Law, Will, all Discipline in briefe,

Establisht are to make Worth fortunate:

We scorne those Arts of Peace, that Ciuil Tether,

Which, in one bond, tye Craft, and Force together. (ll.73-8)

What makes this comparison even more forceful is the fact that it is presented from the point of view of Muslim '*Priests*'. They speak with pride of their Spartan way of life and with disdain of the Christians' interest in science and knowledge, and of their delicacy of body, both of which create, as they state, a gulf of unbridgeable differences between the two sides:

Of *Cell-bred* Sciences we chew no cudde;

Our Food and Garments ouerloade vs not;

When one Act withers, straight another buddes;

Our Rest is doing; good successe our Lot;

Our Beasts are no more delicate than we:

This odds haue *Turkes of Christianitie*. (ll.79-84)

The allusion to Muslim indifference to knowledge is of course deeply ironic, given the heavy reliance of the early humanists on Islamic scholarship. A faint ghost of this traffic in knowledge - inevitably reversed so that Greville depicts Muslims as indebted to Christians - is present in the Priests' admiration for the intellectual achievements of their enemies:

Yet by our traffike with this dreaming Nation,

Their Conquer'd Vice hath stain'd our Conquering State,

And brought thinne Cobwebs into reputation

Of tender Subtiltie; whose stepmother Fate

So inlayes Courage with ill shaddowing Feare,

As makes it much more hard to doe, than beare. (ll.85-90)

Here intellectual 'subtiltie' is represented as a deadly contagion which is gradually eating away at traditional Muslim fortitude. The Priests seem to be haunted by the disconcerting feeling that the victorious might soon be corrupted by the weaknesses of the conquered.

The chorus continues the comparison between Christians and Muslims in terms of the relationship between religion and government, the Church and the State. Religion and government are inseparable in Islam and the State is subservient to religious laws. But the chorus presents a different picture:

> Our *Sultans* rule their charge by *Prophets* Sawes,
> And leaue the *Mufti* Iudge of all their Lawes:
> The *Christians* take, and change Faith with their Kings,
> Which vnder Miters of the Scepter brings.
> We make the Church our *Sultans* instrument:
> They with their Kings will make their Church content.
> They wrangle with themselues, and by dispute
> In questions, thinke to make the one side mute. (ll.151-8)

From these lines we understand that the tyranny of Islam is an open and naked one whereas Christianity's is more subtle in its ways. There is also a hint of disapproval concerning this subtlety as well as the divisions between different Christian sects.

The chorus of 'Mahometan *Priests*' goes on to criticise Mustapha for his timid passivity - a symptom perhaps of contamination by the values of Christianity - and castigates him for abandoning his sense of justice. They even suggest that Mustapha's passivity and submissive obedience are in fact the fruits of a false sense of religious duty (ll.185-92) which they themselves

have taught him. The implication, however, is that Islam itself is a false religion shamelessly parading in the cloak of a true one.

The second chorus concludes that tyranny is man-made, not God-given. Wherever people forfeit their rights and liberty, tyrants will thrive and prosper. It lies with the individual's sense of responsibility and self-worth to control his or her own destiny, otherwise he or she will be both the instrument and the victim of tyranny:

> *Mankinde is both the Forme,*
> *And Matter, wherewith Tyrannies transforme:*
> *For Power can neither see, worke, or deuise,*
> *Without the Peoples hands, hearts, wit, and eyes:*
> *So that were Man not by himselfe opprest,*
> *Kings would not, Tyrants could not make him beast.* (ll.205-10)

In essence, all the characters in the play submit to the tyranny of power, whether it springs from within or from without. It follows that Soliman finally submits to his love for Rossa; Mustapha to his fanatical sense of obedience; Rossa to her evil desire; Camena and Achmat to their sense of duty; and the chorus to their reluctance to involve themselves in affairs of state.

The third chorus, 'Chorvs Tertivs of Time: Eternitie,' which takes the form of a debate, contrasts time with eternity and contemplates mutability and the vanity of earthly things. Time claims to have supremacy over everything and castigates the Prophet Muhammad for trying to defy mutability:

> *Mahomet* in vaine, on Trophee of my might,
> Rais'd by my chang'd aspects to other Nations,
> Striues to make his Succession infinite,
> And robbe my wheeles of growth, state, declination.

But he, and all else, that would master *Time*,

In mortal Spheres, shall find my power sublime. (ll.37-42)

The Prophet Muhammad's failure could be said to resemble Rossa's failure in her wicked attempt to keep the throne for her posterity, and at the same time symbolises the expected decline of Islam. Time then adds that mutability, after all, is a good thing for without it even '*the Fates*, [...], *can make no progression*' (l.51). Time goes on to suggest that human beings will not be happy with a life of eternity in which the future will be now and disorder will reign eternally (ll.67-72). In response Eternity counters by claiming supremacy even over Time, let alone other things. Eternity accuses Time of being allied with a world of finality, disintegration, and decay:

What means this New-borne childe of Planets motion?

This finite Elfe of Mans vain acts, and errors?

Whose changing wheeles in all thoughts stirre commotion?

And in her owne face, onely, beares the Mirror.

A Mirror in which, since *Time* took her fall,

Mankinde sees Ill increase; no Good at all. (ll.79-84)

Eternity concludes the debate by challenging Time:

Doe what you can: Mine shall subsist by Me:

I am the measure of *Felicitie*. (ll.149-50)

Eternity's counter argument here is that happiness can only be attained in eternal life, an idea Time has already rejected. Eternity, therefore, implies that the preservation of states, including Soliman's, is an impossible task given the long history of crimes committed by fallen Man. As a consequence, as the fourth chorus will argue, the murder of Mustapha will bring chaos to the state

and Achmat's intervention will only delay the collapse into anarchy, not prevent it.[31]

The decline of empires as a natural and logical consequence of the fall of man is the topic of the commentary in the fourth chorus, 'Chorvs Qvartvs of Conuerts to Mahometisme':

> Angels fell first from God, Man was the next that fell:
> Both being made by him for Heau'n, haue for themselues
> made Hell. (ll.1-2)

The result is a state of confusion in which men 'can beyond depriuings ill their knowledge extend' (l.6). As Jonathan Dollimore argues, 'the absolute,' in this case, 'comes inevitably to be defined negatively, as a determining absence.'[32] The chorus argues that the loss of our 'once happy States' (l.8) is due to the fall of Man from Grace and the consequent corruption of his morality. Having fallen in this corrupt state Man created tyrannies by striving 'to raise more towers of *Babel* vp, abouc the Truth' (l.16), and by creating 'the outward *Church*, whose nature is her Founders to deuoure' (l.18). These two monstrous creations allied together, have led to the perversion of truth and the enslavement of Man himself. This alliance between the tyrant and the 'outward *Church*' eventually crumbles and the former allies become enemies, each striving to attain full control:

> Whence she that erst rais'd Kings, by pulling freedome downe,
> Now seekes to free inferior Powers, and only binde the Crowne.
> In which aspiring pride, where Wit encountreth Wit,
> The power of the Throne vnequall is, and turnes the scale
> with it. (ll.23-6)

With the references to '*Priests*' and '*Sultans*' (ll.29-30), both Catholicism and Islam seem to be implicated. Therefore, because disputes and schisms occur society disintegrates and descends into chaos inciting people to take control

> [...] by pulling quils each from the others wings,
> They iointly all are cried downe, by letting fall their Kings.
> A fate prepar'd to shake that *Ottoman* succession,
> Which erst, remoued from mens eyes, wrought reuerend
> impressions. (ll.113-16)

However, once this collapse of the monarchic system has occurred, people will have less faith and will become less willing 'to sacrifice their liues to Power, for fame when they be dead' (l.120). This seems to be an attack on the Muslim Priest's earlier call for rebellion, in his debate with Mustapha, when he demanded:

> Then let them stirre, and teare away this veyle
> Of pride from Power; that our great Lord may see
> Vnmiracled, his owne Humanity.
> People! Looke vp aboue this *diuans* name;
> This vent of Error; snare of Libertie;
> Where punishment is Tyrants taxe, and fame.
> Abolish these false Oracles of might. (4.4.205-10)

The chorus seems to regard this call by the Muslim Priest as a rather disingenuous and discredited attempt to play the role of the instrument of divine justice.[33]

The subject of the last two choruses is a commentary on the desolation and despair of mankind caught between two opposites: religion and nature; the

spiritual and the worldly. On the one hand, the Tartars of 'Chorvs Qvintvs' express an astonishing vehemence of atheistic feeling, deploring religion:

> Vast *Superstition*! Glorious stile of Weaknesse!
> Sprung from the deepe disquiet of Mans passion,
> To desolation, and despaire of Nature. (ll.1-3)

They criticise the people and their prophets for setting 'on worke the sword of Tyrants' (l.5) and for 'Fashioning one God; yet him of many fashions, / Like many-headed Error, in their Passions' (ll.8-9). Mankind should neither trust 'these Superstitious dreames' (l.10) nor wait for miracles because the time of miracles is past:

> *False Miracles, which are but ignorance of Cause,*
> Lift vp the hopes of thy abiected Prophets. (ll.15-16)

The atheistic sentiments become more explicit when the chorus states that there is no place for religion and that

> Man should make much of *life, as Natures table,*
> *Wherein she writes the Cypher of her glorie.* (ll.24-5)

They conclude that Man should

> Forsake not Nature, nor misunderstand her:
> Her mysteries are read without Faiths eye-sight. (ll.26-7)

There is nothing in this world that cannot be discerned by mankind without outside help. Therefore, human beings should not look beyond for explanations that lie within the reach of their Reason. In the course of their discourse, the chorus seems to blame Mustapha's death on the religious zeal with which he and Soliman pursued their ends. Nature, the chorus states, '*neither taught the Father to destroy, / Nor promis'd any man, by dying, ioy*' (ll.32-3).

The opposing point of view is expressed by the Muslim priests, in the '*Chorvs Sacerdotvm*,'. They lament the impossible situation in which Man finds himself, a state of contradictions and despair:

Oh wearisome Condition of Humanity!
Borne vnder one Law, To another bound:
Vainely begot, and yet forbidden vanity,
Created sicke, commanded to be sound. (ll.1-4)

They deliver a stinging attack on nature as the creative power which, through imbuing him with contradiction and conflict, fabricated Man so awkwardly that one side of him wars against the other, thus rendering his life unbearable:

What meaneth Nature by these diuerse Lawes?
Passion and Reason, selfe-diuision cause:
Is it the marke, or Maiesty of Power
To make offences that it may forgiue? (ll.5-8)

Having denied the goodness of nature they emphatically add that it bears full responsibility for Man's transgression of the laws it initially imposed (ll.9-10). Even though the Priests profess all the signs of deep religious devotion they, nevertheless, do not seem to comprehend the complexity of Man's predicament because their religion is incapable of providing satisfactory answers. Their statement

Yet when each of vs, in his owne heart lookes,
He findes the God there, farre vnlike his Bookes. (ll.23-4)

admits that the solution to Man's problems is neither in nature nor in the traditional and institutional concept of God but is in the 'knowledge of God within the heart, that is to say, a personal religion.'[34]

The choruses' admission underscores the falsity of Islam and highlights the apparent discrepancies between what it teaches and what it actually does. By implication, this attack on Islam applies to Christianity, and all other religions, as well. As Ronald A. Rebholz argues, 'the Chorus Sacerdotum, [...], delivers the most penetrating attack on the conventional Christian concept of the good God before *King Lear* and the plays of Webster.'[35] Moreover, the chorus implies that divine intervention, through the rigidity of established religion, only brings confusion, desolation and despair.

Even though *Mustapha*'s setting, action, and characters originate in Muslim lands, Greville's concern is not necessarily anti-Islamic. The play, nevertheless, exhibits the traditional inimical views of Islam held in the Christian West throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, namely, that Islam is a violent, tyrannical, and false religion that is concocted by a false Prophet and is quite incapable of delivering the truth even to its own followers. For example, the tyrannical behaviour of Soliman, the hypocritical Muslim Priest, and the evil Rossa, even though counterbalanced by Mustapha, Achmat, and Camena, are represented in a manner not unfamiliar in other plays of the period already studied. A more specific example of the play's use of anti-Islamic attitudes is the Priest's reference to the Prophet Muhammad as

> False *Mahomet*! Thy Lawes Monarchall are,
> Vniust, ambitious; full of spoyle, and blood,
> Hauing, not of the best, but greatest, Care. (4.4.32-4)

Other than its illustration of the Priest's hypocrisy, this reference, coming from a Muslim priest, acquires an air of authenticity in confirming the perversion of Islam as a religion antithetical to Christianity. But it does not do justice to

Greville to interpret *Mustapha* merely as an anti-Islamic polemic. He clearly uses the play's negative representation of Islam and Muslims as an instrument of delocalisation through which he discusses political and religious issues relevant to his time and daringly expresses his deep mistrust of institutionalised religion in general and Christianity in particular.

IV. Like *Mustapha* before it, *Alaham*'s setting is the Muslim East, or to be more specific, Ormus, in modern Iran, at the mouth of the Gulf. Though Greville used his sources freely, the events and action in the play are based on a chapter in the narrative of the Italian traveller Ludovico di Varthema whose *Itinerary* was first published in Rome in 1510.[36] Greville may have come across this chapter in one of the numerous editions of the *Itinerary* which appeared in different European languages throughout the Sixteenth Century.[37]

In the 'Prologus,' the Ghost of an old king of Ormus rises from Hell and announces that all the sins of his ancestors are to come to Ormus as curses to his descendants. The plot begins with one such curse, when prince Alaham, the second son of the present king, blinds his aged father and his elder brother Zophie, the rightful heir to the throne, then orders their murder along with that of his sister Caelica, who tried desperately to protect them. Alaham also destroys Mahomet and Caine, the two influential Bashas most likely to threaten his right to the throne. He does so by setting his estranged wife, Hala, against them. Her lustful relationship with Caine which has resulted in a bastard son incurs Alaham's wrath and he has him murdered. Alaham then tries to convince Hala that Mahomet has committed the murder. Then, in her desire to

avenge the murder of her lover Caine, Hala decides to kill Alaham and seize the throne for her child by the murdered Caine. She succeeds in poisoning Alaham at the time of his coronation. Before his death Hala approaches Alaham, intent on killing his son by her in front of his very eyes to add to his torment, but, instead, she mistakenly kills her beloved illegitimate child. When she discovers her error she immediately kills her remaining son, and finally commits suicide to complete the tragedy.

Alaham, once again, like *Mustapha*, could hardly be said to concern itself solely with Islam and Muslims. Once again it is a commentary on the affairs of government, and a vehicle through which Greville projects his thoughts on a wide range of political, philosophical and moral issues relevant to his time. His choice of characters and incidents from Islamic countries, it has to be said, follows the vogue to which most playwrights subscribed in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, starting with Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, and Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*. Even though Greville remains less feverish in his anti-Islamic attitudes than, for example, Kyd or Peele, *Alaham*, nevertheless, exhibits a more subtly anti-Islamic slant in the way it represents Islam as tyrannical and Muslims as cruel and barbarous.

Interestingly enough, *Alaham* begins in a pagan Hades where all Muslims supposedly reside for eternity: the hell with which Peele's Muly Mahamet was so familiar. In a scene reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 28, where the Prophet Muhammad and Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, are depicted in the deepest circle of hell,[38] the ghost of the old king of Ormus rises from hell's

deepest and darkest core to speak the prologue. He speaks candidly of the sufferings of hell's inmates, condemned to endure eternity in a place that is

> vpon no centre placed,
> Deep vnder depthes, as farre as is the skie
> Aboue the earth; darke, infinitely spaced:
> *Pluto* the King, the Kingdome, miserie.
> The Chrystall may Gods glorious seate resemble;
> Horror it selfe these horrors but dissemble. (ll.15-20)[39]

We are informed that their state of eternal deprivation is a man-made condition, a result of their unbridled and unsatisfied passion. The cardinal sins that damned these sinners, the Muslims chief among them, are:

> *Atheisme*, where creatures their Creator lose;
> Vnthankfull *Pride*, nature, and graces fall;
> *Hate* of Mankinde, in Man vnnatural;
> *Hypocrites*, which bodies leaue, and shadowes choose,
> The persons, either Kings by fortune blest,
> Or men by nature made Kings of the rest. (ll.34-9)

Muslims, Greville suggests, inhabit hell in the company of ' tyrants that corrupt authoritie' who are made furies to torment 'the weaker ghosts' of 'the weaker Kings' (ll.40-45). The weaker kings, though condemned to an eternal life in hell, are ordered to go back to earth to tempt the world with every possible sin (ll.49-50). Theirs is the appalling condition of being both the tormented and, at the same time, the tormentors of their posterity.

In an interesting rendering of the Senecan theme used by Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the King of Ormus himself, being a weak monarch, who allowed his Bashas to usurp his power and subsequently kill him, is sent to

earth to destroy his posterity as a punishment for the chaos he brought on the state. The ghost explains that his descendants 'haue their sinnes inheritance from me' (l.58), a statement which corresponds to the Christian doctrine of original sin. He then declares that the present king, another who is 'weak both in good, and ill,' will be destroyed by Alaham, his ambitious son:

> [...] whom he know'th ill,
>
> Yet to beware lackes actiue constantnesse,
>
> A destinie of well-beleeuing wit,
>
> That hath not strength of iudgement ioyn'd with it. (ll.85-8)

The reason for the present king's murder, he explains, is that Alaham has made 'Desire his idoll' (ll.89-90). His unlimited political ambition is the recipe for disaster to the state, and will bring on another manifestation of the curse of the original murder of the king of Ormus by his trusted Bashas.

Like *Mustapha*, *Alaham* deplores the machinations of faction-led government, and detests its effects on the stability and welfare of the state. In the case of *Alaham* this instability is the result of the weakness of the monarch, as Alaham explains:

> With Kings not strong in vertue, nor in vice,
>
> I knew truth was like pillars built on ice.
>
> Factions besides I in the *Basshas* mou'd,
>
> And in their diuers witts my malice cast,
>
> Conspiracy with good successe I prou'd:
>
> For Kings are easily ledd away with many,
>
> That, hearing all, want strength to iudge of any.
>
> Thus we exil'd him with pretence of State,
>
> Whom (it is true) I for my selfe did hate. (1.1.75-83)

In making this candid assessment of the conditions of government under a weak monarch Alaham is far from being more interested in the common good of the state than in his own lust for power. The speech suggests that Alaham has worked hard to introduce the kind of inward dissolution which the Priests in *Mustapha* attributed to the debilitating affects of Christianity. As in *Mustapha*, the quarrelling factions in the court usually contribute contradictory counsels to the monarch which naturally result in his intellectual and spiritual confusion. Worse still, these factions, Alaham and the Bashas included, clothe their self-interest in the guise of commitment to the public good of the state. The conspiracy Alaham refers to is the banishment of Mahomet, the good courtier, in which all factions took part. Mahomet is the most respected and sympathetic character in the play, who, in the words of the 'Prologvs,'

> [...] with honor faine would change the tide
> Of times corrupt; here stopping violence,
> There countermining craft, and pleading right. (ll.111-13)

The interest of religion, as well as of the state, is the mask behind which Alaham hides his true intentions when he insists on deposing his father:

> [...] I Gods champion am;
> And will my father for a while depose,
> Lest he the Kingdome, we the Church doe lose. (1.1.224-6)

These hypocritical slogans are designed to justify his political ambitions as a genuine desire to serve the common good of the state and the church. They are also designed to recruit Heli, the Muslim priest, to Alaham's cause:

> So be the God eternall my beleefe;
> As I my father from his State depose,
> Only for feare the Church should honor lose. (1.1.233-5)

Then Alaham presents the concept of the reciprocal relationship between the church and the state as he sees it:

> The Church it is one linke of Gouernment,
> Of noblest Kings the noblest instrument.
> For while Kings sacred keepe her mysteries,
> She keepes the world to Kings obedient;
> Giuing the body to obey the spirit,
> So carrying power vp to infinite. (1.1.237-42)

Although Greville believes that there should be a symbiotic reciprocity between Religion and Law, Church and State, and between the temporal and the Divine, he, nevertheless, adamantly believes in the 'futility of appealing to Scripture as a guide in political matters.'[40] For Greville, spirituality is a matter for the Church. The state should only function to create political conditions which restrain anarchy and evil and assist the individual to take control over his spiritual life.[41] Alaham's conception of the relationship between the church and state, however, is the very position Greville attacks in his 'Treatise on Religion':

> All outward churches ever knowe him thus,
> They beare His name, but never runne His race:
> They knowe enough for their selfe condemnation,
> His, doeinge knowe him, to their owne salvation.
> ('Religion,' stanza 62)[42]

His attack could be said to be directed against 'Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and most generally, any church which preaches "faithless merits" or clerical domination of the secular magistrate.'[43]

The Machiavellian Alaham then realises that his best hope of achieving his objective of seizing power is through his wife Hala, whose lust for Caine and ambition for power is well known to him. His plan is shamelessly to exploit Hala in order to destroy both Mahomet and Caine in order to secure the throne for himself:

> These *Bashas* with themelues she shall betray;
>
> Arts of reuenge are written downe in lust.
>
> What cannot women doe with wit, and play? (1.1.304-6)

He invokes the evil spirits to bring this diabolical plan to fruition:

> [...] I inuoke that blacke eternity,
>
> As apt to put in action, as deuise!
>
> Help me, that haue to doe with Princes power,
>
> To plucke downe King, with Kings authority;
>
> And make men slaues, with show of liberty. (1.1.319-23)

On her part, Hala wants to destroy Alaham, too, in order to secure the throne for her lover Caine, and then, after his death, to her children by him. She is as hypocritical as Alaham in concealing from him her real motives of hatred and revenge, showing him love and dedication instead:

> My state of mind, good will, and homage is;
>
> My being, reuerence; my end, your will;
>
> Selfe-loue it selfe payes tribute vnto this. (2.2.21-3)

Each is playing the same game of trying to outwit the another. To this end, Alaham insinuates to his wife that Mahomet has traduced her, describing her as deceitful (2.2.36), and urges her to avenge her reputation. Despite being aware of Alaham's designs, Hala agrees with him and declares that she will take her revenge on Mahomet (2.2.74-6). Alaham even convinces her to persuade

Caine to kill Mahomet for her, thereby getting rid of both his rivals. Hala's declaration convinces Alaham of her love for him and, ultimately, this trust leads to his destruction. Alaham, having succeeded in trapping Hala in his web of deceit, fails to foresee that he has fallen into his own trap. He does not recognise that Hala, in fact, hates him, 'loves Caine,' and 'is indifferent to Mahomet except as he blocks her way to power.'[44] Once again, Alaham invokes the dark forces of evil to help cultivate his plans:

> *Mischiefe*! Now claime thy due. *Malice*! feare not,
> To offer all thy sleights to wicked wits;
> *Ruine lights not amisse where ere it hits.*
> My engines worke, care is already past;
> My hopes arise out of these *Basshas* blood:
> If both, my wish; if either dye, my good. (2.2.77-82)

Similarly, Hala, in turn, invokes the same dark forces of hell and its spirits in her bid to destroy Mahomet and Alaham:

> *Furie*! then spurre thy self, embedlam wit;
> Poyson my thoughts, to make my reason see
> Pleasure in crueltie, Glorie, in spite:
> *Rage to exceed examples doth delight.* (2.2.142-5)

Needless to say here that the intensity of Hala's passionate speech underscores her destructive and vengeful nature and, at the same time, highlights the extent to which she is prepared to distort her understanding in order to achieve her goals.

The question of lawful and natural succession in a monarchy, which comprises an important theme in *Mustapha*, is ever present in *Alaham* as well. Alaham, in his attempt to usurp power, argues that his elder brother, the lawful

heir, is unfit to ascend to the throne. This argument is refuted at once by Mahomet: 'the second borne are not borne to the Crowne' (1.2.43). He reasserts the right of the heir to assume the mantle of power in a lawful process of succession. At the same time, Mahomet informs Alaham that ability, not heredity, is the key to succession:

> Kings children are no Kings; Authority
>
> Goes not by blood; she sets another rate:
>
> Vse, is her kinne; Grace, her affinity. (1.2.99-101)

On the face of it, Mahomet seems here to agree with Alaham that the heir must be fit to govern. However, his affirmation that being fit to govern depends on having the right and grace on your side seems designed to deny Alaham the right to the throne. Hugh N. Maclean argues that, in espousing such a view, Mahomet 'is the moral politician whom Greville would place at the side of the "true king,"' and that 'his sentiments are evidently Greville's.'[45] It is obvious that Greville has his doubts about the hereditary right of the monarch, though he accepts it, and seems to endorse the principle of choice by the people. Greville may have formulated these opinions with the childless and ageing Queen Elizabeth in mind. His opinions certainly acquire added importance in light of 'the doctrine of the divine right of kings' as preached by James I, with which Greville agreed only in so far as it helped to preserve stability and order.[46]

Like Achmat in *Mustapha*, Mahomet is the voice of moderation, legality, and stability. His opposition to Alaham is an expression of his belief in the sanctity of lawful institutions. He is adamantly opposed to radical change and rebellion because they lead to disorder. The political and philosophical views

of both Achmat and Mahomet could be said to reflect Greville's attitudes towards the state and its institutions, and to demonstrate his strong opposition to insurrection. This opposition manifested itself when Greville unhesitatingly supported the Queen against Essex, his mentor and kinsman, and even took part, in 1601, in the siege of Essex's mansion, despite the fact that he had been resident there until March 1600.[47] This goes to suggest that Greville was prepared to act on his belief in gradual and peaceful change as the key to progress. He was a man of reformation not revolution. However, the choice between change and stability is not always easy to make, as demonstrated by the painful choice Achmat has to make between tyranny and chaos.

The determination of Alaham to fulfil his dream of possessing the throne unchallenged is revealed by the good Spirits in 'Chorvs Primvs'. They register that he will seek

> The ruine of his King, and father, for ambitions sake;
> Against the lawes of Nations, power, and natiue blood;
> As if the vttermost of ill a Scepter could make good. (ll.54-6)

Alaham's evil and ambitious designs and his subsequent punishment for them epitomise the state of the fallen man, whose fate, having lost the grace of God, is to inhabit the eternal wilderness. Islam and Muslims, being regarded as the most visible manifestation of false religion and the fallen man, can hardly escape the vicious cycle of ill begetting ill and endless disorder. As the good Spirits in 'Chorvs Primvs' put it, Alaham and Hala are the embodiment of tyrannical order achieved in the absence of grace:

> He makes wrong triumph ouer right, and innocence;
> She makes her lust religions lord, confusion her defence. (ll.61-2)

Then they continue their assessment:

> So while the o'reswoll'n pride of this *Mahumetan*,
> By wounding of his Princely race, plays false with God and
> man;
> He in it doth disperse those clouds of reuerence,
> Which between man, and Monarchs Seate keep sweet
> intelligence;
> And while he would be lord of order, nature, right,
> Brings in disorder, that deuouring enemy of might,
> Which with her many hands vuweaues what time had
> wrought,
> And proues, what power obtaines by wrong, is euer dearly
> bought. (II.67-74)

This '*Mahumetan*,' Alaham, who forsook the true God and disregarded His Grace is condemned, by his actions, to a life of doom and disorder. However, Alaham's achievements, condemned as they are, are the result of the inspiration his false religion instilled in him. In other words, despite being a false and fallen religion, Islam has the undeniable power to unite and inspire its followers. Greville expresses this view more clearly in 'A Treatise of Monarchy,' Section VI. In it he states that false religion, be it Islam or Catholicism, does not necessarily lack the power to unite and inspire:

> And is not Mahometts forg'd alchoran
> Both with the heathen in authority,
> And to the Christians mis-ledd Miter throne,
> Become a uerie racke of tirranny?
> Their spirits united, eating men like food,
> And making ill ends with stronge armies good. (stanza, 204)

Obviously, Islam is admired for its discipline and organisational power, but these very same qualities lead it to perpetrate the tyranny which Greville abhors. Greville, argues Geoffrey Bullough, believes that the fundamental value of religion is 'quite independent of its absolute truth.'[48] That is why Greville seems to admire Islam for its discipline even though he detests it for its tyranny. The tyrannical nature of Islam, as Greville sees it, is inherent in its philosophy of

> Making the Sultan and the Caliph one,
>
> To tyranize both Cair, and Babylon. ('Monarchy,' stanza, 207)

Instead of making religion and law the two independent stabilising pillars of the State, as Greville believes they should be, Islam, much like Rome, puts them together in the hand of the ruler, effectively making them instruments in the service of despotism.

It should also be made clear that the cruelty and barbarity of Alaham and Hala represent the manifestation of Greville's conception of evil, not necessarily as the absence of good, but as the active force of the devil 'who by self-will brought death and sin on us all'.[49] This concept is based on the idea that evil is not God's creation but rather the product of the rejection of grace and salvation. As the 'Prologvs' puts it:

> *Priuation* would raigne there, by God not made;
>
> But creature of vncreated sinne,
>
> Whose being is all beings to inuade,
>
> To haue no ending though it did beginne:
>
> And so of past, things present, and to come,
>
> To giue depriuing, not tormenting doome,
>
> But horror, in the vnderstanding mixt;

And memorie, by Eternities seale wrought;

Vnto the bodies of the euill fixt,

And into reason by our passion brought,

Here rackt, torne, and exil'd from vnitie;

Though come from nothing, must for euer be. (ll.21-32)

The process described here recalls the contamination of Islam by 'fear' imposed by captive Christians, as it was construed by the 'Chorus' in *Mustapha*. This helps to explain Greville's choice of Islam as a subject; its proverbial unity had long embarrassed the warring Christian churches, so that an episode in which this unity was exposed as fragile or illusory may have seemed attractive on two counts. Taking place as it did in an undivided state it gave Greville a chance to explore the causes of disunity from their inception: while at the same time the episode could be taken to prove that Muslims were by no means immune to the conflicts which had 'rackt' Christendom since before the Reformation.

Both Alaham and Hala, having rejected God's grace, are actively involved in bringing about the destruction of themselves and those around them. Hala's lust and the ambition she shares with Alaham are the manifestations of that innate evil which places them, as Muslims, beyond redemption. Alaham's spiritual and moral depravity demonstrates itself in the sheer joy he experiences after he decrees the murder of his father and brother, having already murdered Caine and Mahomet. He gloatingly congratulates himself on his success in securing the throne and chillingly recalls his banished scruples:

When I ordain'd this maske, and first decreed

A spacious death for Prince, and Parent too;

I felt nice tendernesse. (5.1.16-18)

But he quickly dismissed that tenderness in favour of his murderous ambition:

> that cuill weed,
> Which some call Dutie; others, Natures Lawes:
> Should I haue lost a Crowne for such applause?
> No, No: Each State peculiar wisdomes hath,
> *The way of Princes is to hide their mindes.* (5.1.18-22)

Obviously, Alaham's success is enough to justify his unnatural and evil deeds. His moment of triumph, however, is short lived.

Immediately after his coronation, a messenger enters and informs him that the terrible murders, by fire, of the king, the prince, and the princess have caused the people to rebel (5.2.67-74). At that moment, the poison administered to him by Hala through the crown and mantle begins to take effect, and begins to alter his mood as well as his body. He is taken by surprise by these alterations:

> What change is this, that now I feele within?
> Is it disease that workes this fall of spirits?
> Or workes this fall of spirits my disease?
> Things seeme not as they did; horror appears. (5.2.75-8)

The descent of Alaham into the pit of moral deprivation is so deep that only through the apparent loss of control over himself does he experience brief moments of self questioning and remorse. Though he adopted the morals of self-interest and tried to banish his tender feelings, Alaham could not altogether obliterate the last vestiges of the knowledge of good:

> What thoughts be these that doe my entrailes teare?
> You wandering spirits frame in me your hell;
> I feele my brother, and my sister there.

Where is my wife? There lacks no more but she:

Let all my owne together dwell with me. (5.2.87-91)

At this point Alaham finds it hard to determine whether the agonies he feels are physical ones or the pangs of conscience; and as in *Mustapha*, he sees the influx of 'Christian' virtues as a weakness which will eventually undermine his hard-won power. His admission of his inner hell suggests that, for the first time, Alaham is exhibiting emotions that could possibly be recognised as humane. These feelings of pain are still more clearly manifest when Hala kills Caine's child in front of Alaham. Thinking it his own, Alaham cries:

Earth! Stand'st thou fast vnder this vglinesse?

And fall'st not downe to that infernall deepe,

Which feares (perchance) worse than it selfe to keepe?

Eyes! Close your liddes: There is no more to doe:

Yet know, you haue seene that before you die,

Which no Age will beleeue; *One worse than I.* (5.3.84-9)

It is ironic that Alaham should regard the murder of the child as more dreadful than the murder of his father, brother, and sister, which were cause for him to celebrate. But then again, as has been noted earlier, there seems to be a little residual feeling of remorse left in him. By contrast, Hala, like Rossa, remains totally possessed by her own dark nature to the very end and defiantly declares:

My wombe perchance did yeelde, but not my heart.

With *Alaham* his father he must dwell:

I will goe downe, and change this Ghost with hell. (5.3.144-6)

Hell, of course, is the place where, the play makes clear, all Muslims reside, and where Hala will be finally united with the poisonous passions and evil

Spirits she constantly invokes. Here, however, she implies that a constant traffic is going on between the Islamic world she inhabits and the underworld - an idea which recalls the beginning of the play and the prologue spoken by the king of Ormus. The world of factional politics is a hell, it seems, which bids fair to outstrip the 'infernall deepe'.

In *Alaham*, the discussion of the 'ways by which sin infects the human heart' is the function of the choruses, especially the first three.[50] The evil spirits and the furies seem to control the minds and bodies of Hala and Alaham, who, although they constantly invoke them, are rather active participants in evil than simply passive followers of these spirits and furies. The good spirits of 'Chorvs Primvs' in the play act as a counterbalance for the evil spirits in 'Chorvs Secondvs' and strive to implore people to do good by rekindling in them the love of virtue (ll.24-3). However, their inability to inspire Hala and Alaham to do good (ll.50-74) is not only the result of the influence of the deceptive evil spirits (ll.37-50), but is indicative of the innately evil nature of both characters. The good spirits argue that the only sure result of evil is its ultimate self-destruction, as is the case with Hala and Alaham (ll.75-8). Nevertheless, the good spirits seem to resign themselves to the fact that men will always keep making evil choices where these are available:

> *For who maintaines one vice to multiply another,*
>
> *Incestuously begets more heyres vpon his owne first mother* [...]
>
> The act being all in one, and but the same in all,
>
> Saue that bondage of the vice delighteth to enthrall:
>
> So in mans choice, suppose his ends indifferent:
>
> The good, and ill, like equall wayes; yet will the worst

content. (ll.95-102)

The evil spirits in the 'Chorvs Secondvs of Furies: Malice. Crafte. Pride. Corrupt Reason. Euill Spirits' respond that they are working to gain complete control over man. In the course of their argument, which follows Caine's failure to kill Mahomet, they quarrel over which of them plays the most important role in bringing mischief to mankind (ll.1-150) with each fury claiming the supremacy. They conclude that humanity has reached a stage of spiritual depravity where they no longer need to mask their intentions beneath the guise of the virtues of '*Iustice, Religion, Honour,*' and '*Humblenesse*' (l.117). Continuing human respect for these virtues, even if they are false in the fallen state of humanity, has diminished the Furies' chances of total success in corrupting men (ll.113-22). But the evil spirits very confidently predict that these 'shadow' or false virtues cannot prevent but only delay the total subjection of 'heaven to hell' (ll.119-26). Having painted a grim picture of the human condition, the evil spirits conclude that it is only a matter of time before they achieve their objective of total control over man: 'time is ours: What need we haste? / Since till time ends, our raigne is sure to last' (ll.141-2). Whatever the outcome of succession questions, it seems, the reign of evil will continue unaltered.

A direct confrontation between the good and evil spirits occurs in 'Chorvs Tertivs'. The evil spirits point to the failure of the good spirits to influence man's state of being and even belittle their apparent dominance in the 'prelapsarian state of innocence'[51] as merely a temporary success;

> *A lasy calme, wherein each foole a pilot is:*
>
> *The glory of the skilfull shines, where men may goe amisse.* (ll.39-40)

They state that loss of that state of innocence is exemplified by the fate of almost all the characters in the play, especially Caine who is dead by Alaham's orders and whose death has already triggered Hala's plans for revenge. They even advise the good spirits to 'striue not to carry men against affections streames' (l.44) because of their inability to influence people, and point out:

> Keepe therefore where you are; descend not, but ascend:
>
> For, *vnderneath the Sun, be sure no braue State is your friend.*
>
> (ll.69-70)

In turn, the good spirits counter by emphasising the fact that the seeming triumph of the evil spirits is merely temporary and deceptive:

> Then play here with your art; false miracles deuise;
>
> Deceiue, and be deceiued still; be foolish, and seem wise;
>
> In peace erect your Thrones; your delicacie spread,
>
> *The flowers of time corrupt soone spring, and are as quikly dead.*
>
> (ll.77-80)

Then the good spirits repeat their earlier assertion that evil in the end will certainly consume itself:

> If to be nothing be the best that could befall;
>
> Your subtile *Orbes*, to real beings, then must needs be thrall.
>
> And so proue to the good but like those *showres of raine*,
>
> *Which, while they wet the husbandman, yet multiply his gaine.*
>
> (ll.105-8)

The fate of all the characters in *Alaham,* especially Alaham and Hala, finally proves that the promised triumph of goodness is attainable and that waiting for it in patience is a quite justifiable philosophical stance.

If the first three choruses of the play discuss the problem and origin of evil as an essential element of human nature, the fourth chorus of 'People' provides an insight into the problems of politics and government. The chorus implies that 'maintaining the shadows of good government extends the life of the state, though not for ever.'[52] The chorus also argues that the 'art of government' is 'the maintenance of balance between the latent, but dangerous power of the people and the power of the Crown,'[53] and that without this balance the people will revolt, as is the case under Alaham:

> We are the glasse of Power, and doe reflect
> That Image backe, which it to vs presents:
> If Princes flatter, straight we do neglect;
> If they be fine, we see, yet seeme content.
> *Nor can the Throne, which Monarchs doe liue in,*
> *Shaddow Kings faults, or sanctifye their sinne.* (ll.43-8)

The chorus warns the monarchs who defy the people's power that the people are but the instruments of fate through which God manifests His will:

> Kings then take heed! Men are the *bokes of fate*,
> Wherein your vices deep engrauen lye,
> To shew our God the griefe of every State. [...]
> Yet know, *Your errors haue this proper doome*,
> *Euen in our ruine to prepare your tombe.* (ll.73-8)

The inability of Alaham and Hala to heed such a warning call has in the end brought about their destruction, with their ambitious designs far from being achieved.

V. The fusion of the political and the moral is an outstanding concern of both *Mustapha* and *Alaham*. Fulke Greville has shown, throughout the two plays, that he is concerned with 'the practice of, and the response to government'.[54] In *Mustapha* his concern is with tyranny and the subject's response to it; in *Alaham*, with weak monarchy and the subject's response to it.[55] In *Mustapha*, the despotic power of Soliman is founded on the people's submission but is ultimately challenged by the same people who, after the murder of Mustapha, have lost their awe of and respect for the tyrannical monarch, and risen in revolt.[56] In *Alaham*, the usurpation of power and the crimes committed by the evil Alaham in the presence of a weak monarch provoke the people's revolt. The result in both cases is disorder. The plays argue that the inability of mankind to establish good governments is the direct result of the imperfect condition of fallen man who forsook God for the devil.[57] That state of imperfection finally leads Achmat to support Soliman although he is not the king in whom men see good authority reflected.[58] Instead, Achmat decides that maintaining stability and order through the power of tyranny is far preferable to the chaos brought about by the power of the people. In this sense, *Mustapha* hints that good government lies in striking a balance between the absolute authority of the monarch and the demands of the people. *Alaham*'s message is that the secret of successful and good government lies with the people and no 'monarch who does not hear their cries can be safe, no matter how exalted or clever he may be.'[59] The people in 'Chorvs Qvartvs' put it very emphatically:

> [...] if Kings be the *head*, we be the *heart*;

And know *we loue no soule, that doth not loue vs.* (II.15-16)

Although Greville clearly intended his plays 'to trace out the high waies of ambitious Governours' (*Life of Sidney*, p.221), he could nevertheless hardly deny that they also work at a more personal and moral level. He obviously believed that his work would provide 'a perspective into vice, and the unprosperities of it' (*Life of Sidney*, p.151), not for those 'on whose foot the black Oxe had not already trod,' but for those 'that are weather-beaten in the Sea of this World, such as having lost the sight of their Gardens, and groves, study to saile on a right course among Rocks , and quick-sands' (*Life of Sidney*, p.224). In this context, Greville's work is an attempt on his part to bridge the gap between 'the realm of grace and nature' and to reconcile the apparent 'opposition between heaven and earth'[60] in the nature of fallen men. The complex questions posed by the 'Chorvs Sacerdotvm' in *Mustapha* provide the clearest example of Greville's concern with this state of division in men. Their provocative statement in which they appear to blame God for creating man sick but commanding him to be sound, though blasphemous, does not elicit any condemnation since it has been made by unregenerate Muslims.

Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham* primarily concern themselves with religious, philosophical, and political issues relating to the human experience in general and late Elizabethan England in particular. However, the representations of the Muslim characters with their monstrosities of patricide, fratricide, and infanticide largely reinforce the negative image already cultivated at the time. The choice of Muslim characters and setting may have been dictated by Greville's need to disguise his message by de-localising the

events of the plays into the history, real or imagined, of a hostile people. It may also have been dictated by his Calvinist belief in the doctrine of predestination, providing him with a stock of eternally damned - and unregenerate - characters to choose from.[61] Either way, Greville's representations of Muslim characters follow the established patterns of negativity and hostility of his time, and prepare, through the treatment of Hala's lustful relationship with Caine, the final element in the picture of Islam in early modern England. This element of lust is what Massinger's *The Renegado* largely deals with, and is the subject of the following chapter.

Notes

[1] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1938) I, p.38; G. A. Wilkes, 'The Sequence of the Writings of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke,' *Studies in Philology*, 56 (1959) 489-503 (pp.495 and 503).

[2] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.135.

[3] Ibid., p.135.

[4] Fulke Greville, *Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 221. All subsequent references are from this edition.

[5] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p.136.

[6] Ibid., p.136.

[7] Ibid., p.136.

[8] R. M. Cushman, 'Concerning Fulke Greville's (Lord Brooke's) Tragedies *Alaham* and *Mustapha*,' *Modern Language Notes*, 24 (1909) 180-1 (p.180).

[9] Geoffrey Bullough, *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, pp. 21-2.

[10] Hugh N. Maclean, 'Fulke Greville: Kingship and Sovereignty,' *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 16 (May 1953) 237-71 (p.237).

[11] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, p.37.

[12] Ibid., p.37.

[13] Hugh N. Maclean, 'Fulke Greville: Kingship and Sovereignty,' p.240.

[14] Fulke Greville, 'A Treatise of Monarchy,' in *The Remains: Being Poems of Monarchy and Religion*, ed. by G. A. Wilkes (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.125. All subsequent references to 'Monarchy' are from this edition.

[15] Hugh N. Maclean, 'Fulke Greville: Kingship and Sovereignty,' p.250.

[16] See Robert Lacey, *Robert Earle of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp.131-6.

[17] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p.100.

[18] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, p.2.

[19] Peter Ure, 'Fulke Greville's Dramatic Characters,' *The Review of English Studies*, n. s. 1 (1950) 308-323 (p.314).

[20] Richard F. Hardin, *Civil Idolatry* (London and Toronto: associated University Press, 1992), pp.44-5.

[21] E. P. Kuhl, 'Contemporary Politics in Elizabethan Drama: Fulke Greville,' *Philological Quarterly*, 7 (1928) 299-302 (p.301).

[22] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.498.

[23] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, p.9.

[24] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.498, [n.3].

[25] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, p.20.

[26] Fulke Greville, *Mustapha*, in *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, II, p.136. All subsequent references are from this edition.

[27] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p.123.

[28] Ibid., p.123.

[29] Hugh N. Maclean, 'Fulke Greville: Kingship and Sovereignty,' p.240.

[30] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p.127.

[31] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p.202.

[32] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, p.127.

[33] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p.204.

[34] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, p.251.

[35] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p107.

[36] Warner G. Rice, 'The Sources of Fulke Greville's *Alaham*,' *Journal of English and German Philology*, 30 (1931) 179-87 (p.184).

[37] Ibid., p.186.

[38] Dante, *The Inferno*, in *The Divine Comedy*, tr. Ichabod Chalres Wright, 5th edition (London: Bell & Daly, 1872), p.113.

[39] Fulke Greville, *Alaham*, in *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 2, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, p.138. All subsequent references are from this edition.

[40] Quoted in Hugh N. Maclean, 'Fulke Greville: Kingship and Sovereignty,' p.242.

[41] Ibid., pp.248-9.

[42] Fulke Greville, 'A Treatise of Religion,' in *The Remains: Being Poems of Monarchy and Religion*, ed. by G. A. Wilkes, p.218.

[43] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p.310.

[44] Peter Ure, 'Fulke Greville's Dramatic Characters,' p.317.

[45] Hugh N. Maclean, 'Fulke Greville: Kingship and Sovereignty,' p.266.

[46] Ibid., pp.263-5.

[47] Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628: A Critical Biography* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.28.

[48] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1938), p.3.

[49] Ibid., p.10.

[50] Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628*, p.153.

[51] Ibid., p.157.

[52] Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville*, p.139.

[53] Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628*, p.158.

[54] John Gouws, ed., *The Prose Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.133.

[55] Ibid., p.133.

[56] Ivor Morris, 'The Tragic Vision of Fulke Greville,' *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1961) 66-75 (p.70).

[57] Ibid., p.69.

[58] Hugh N. Maclean, 'Greville's "Poetic",' *Studies in Philology*, 61 (1964) 170-91 (p. 183).

[59] Ivor Morris, 'The Tragic Vision of Fulke Greville,' p.70.

[60] Richard Waswo, *The Fatal Mirror: Themes and Techniques in the Poetry of Fulke Greville* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), p.3.

[61] Peter Ure, 'Fulke Greville's Dramatic Characters,' p.321.

CHAPTER FIVE

MUSLIM SENSUALITY and CHRISTIAN CHASTITY in PHILIP MASSINGER'S *THE RENEGADO*

I. The obviously Catholic language and ideas of *The Renegado* (1624) attest to the religious convictions of Philip Massinger as well as to the changing attitudes in England towards the Catholics, at home and abroad, during the reign of James I. The Anglo-Spanish peace of 1604 and James's marriage negotiations first with the Spaniards and then with the French[1] helped create an atmosphere of diminished hostility - even reconciliation - which manifested itself in the way Catholicism and Catholic characters are represented. *The Renegado* therefore offers an interestingly different perspective on the relationship between Islam and the Christian West than those presented in the Protestant dramas we have examined so far. As one might expect, Massinger's play follows the established polemical and literary traditions of the Middle Ages in setting Islam and Muslims in direct opposition to Christianity and Christians. Once again the characters represent the customary opposing forces of good and evil. The Christians, who are generally good, are in the right; the Muslims, who are basically evil, are in the wrong and are, of course, eventually foiled. The play also employs the contrast between Muslims and Christians to probe, along with the controversial concept of religious renegadism, conversion and re-conversion, the issues of sexual relationships between different races and different faiths, fidelity and infidelity among friends and enemies, and the peculiarly Catholic contrast between chastity and sensuality as ideological weapons. However, unlike the other plays in this study which

depicted Islam and Muslims in ways that fulfilled the expectations of the audience *The Renegado* ventures to depict 'Islamic civilization as sophisticated and tempting, as dangerous precisely because it could be attractive' as an alternative way of life.[2]

By depicting 'a direct confrontation between characters' representing 'Christian and Islamic values', as those values are seen from a Western point of view,[3] Massinger provided his audience with a time-hallowed formula which they could understand and appreciate. For as we have seen, throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Islam was attacked by Christians for being a self-indulgent religion which promotes pleasure-seeking and allows promiscuous sexuality and even sodomy. It was also attacked for allegedly using these licentious practices to attract converts to its ranks. In 1299, for example, William of Adam, Bishop of Sultania, stated that:

> In the Muslim sect any sexual act at all is not only not forbidden, but allowed and praised. So, as well as the innumerable prostitutes that there are among them, there are many effeminate men who shave their beard, paint their own face, put on women's dress, wear bracelets on the arms and feet. [...] The Muslims, therefore, forgetful of human dignity, are shamelessly attracted by those effeminates, and live together with them as with us husband and wife live together publicly.[4]

According to William, Islam is a religion of self-indulgence which has little regard for chastity as a virtue. He also suggests that lewdness and foul lust are inherent characteristics of a religion which, as Christians discovered to their horror, sanctions polygamy. The personal history of the Prophet Muhammad,

especially his marriages, was used as a proof of its sexual laxity in a larger campaign to discredit the new religion, Islam.

In general, Christians were scandalised by what they perceived as the licentiousness and sensuality of Muhammad in contrast with the probity and purity of Jesus Christ. Muhammad's marriage to the divorcee of his adopted son sent shock waves throughout Christendom and was taken as an essential proof of the falsity of his claim to Prophethood.[5] George Sandys, in *A Relation of a Journey Begunn An. Dom. 1610*, speaks of the Prophet Muhammad as a master deceiver driven by his sexual desires; a man

> so insatiably lecherous, that he countenanced his incontinency with a law: wherein he declared it, not only to be no crime to couple with whom-soever he liked, but an act of high honour to the party, and infusing sanctity. Thus planted he his irreligious Religion.[6]

Furthermore, Sandys claims that many Christians converted to Islam not only because of sectarian divisions but, most of all, because of the appeal of the indulgent Islamic doctrine to 'their affections.'[7] He then describes, in detail, The Muslim Paradise with its beautiful and amorous Virgins, who perform no other task but gratifying the needs of their men, and who have their lost virginity daily restored. In addition the Muslims in Paradise shall have 'boys of divine feature [...] minister unto them all variety of delicate viands.'[8] Sandys finds this kind of Paradise both repugnant and attractive - as his lavish description suggests. To Christians this picture of Paradise, full of sensual pleasures, served to highlight the contrast between Islam, the religion of indulgence, and Christianity, the religion of austerity and asceticism. And the

Christian polemicists were well aware that the former qualities might well exert a stronger hold on their readers than the latter.

This perception of Islam was paramount throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and even later. As late as the nineteenth century, we find Edward A. Freeman speaking of Muhammad as a man who fell prey to his lust and, worse still, sought to produce divine revelations 'to justify in himself the gratification of passions which he condemned in others.'[9] This is a point which Donusa, the Turkish Princess in *The Renegado*, argues in defence of Vitelli's behaviour and her own.

Against this background of hostile attitudes towards Islam and Muslims Massinger skilfully drew his characters using the Spanish and English sources available to him, such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and George Sandys' *Relation of a Journey*.[10] *The Renegado* tells the story of Grimaldi, a Christian 'turned Turk' and a pirate, who is brought to a realisation of his crimes against God and his fellow Christians. It also concerns the search of Vitelli, a Venetian gentleman, for his sister Paulina, who has been sold by the Christian renegade into captivity in the court of Asambeg, the Viceroy of Tunis. Disguised as a merchant, Vitelli inspires the passionate love of the Turkish Princess Donusa. He almost succumbs to Donusa's blandishments, and would have done so had it not been for his guardian and spiritual adviser, the Jesuit Father Francisco. In the meantime, Paulina preserves her virtue despite her captivity and the allurements of Asambeg. Donusa, whose love of Vitelli lands them both in prison, renounces her religion and converts to Christianity, and all escape to Europe in the galley of Grimaldi, the repentant renegade.

II. The play, with its concubines, eunuchs, amorous women, audacious lovers, and jealous men, provides the audience with a picturesque oriental atmosphere[11], both strange and attractive, and at the same time confirms their attitudes towards both Christianity and Islam. At the very beginning, Massinger introduces an episode which sets the tone for the rest of the play. The episode deals with the fanatical behaviour of a Muslim Mufti, a religious person, as sardonically reported by Gazet, Vitelli's servant. In Act I, scene i, Gazet warns Vitelli:

> Take you heede sir
> What colours you weare. Not two houres since there landed
> An *English Pirats* whore with a greene apron,
> And as she walk't the streets, one of their Mufties,
> Wee call them *Priests* at *Venice*, with a Razor
> Cutts it off, Petticoate, Smocke and all, and leaues her
> As naked as my Nayle: the young Frie wondering
> What strange beast it should be. (*The Renegado*, 1.1.48-55)[12]

The prospect of a fanatical Mufti roaming the streets of Tunis enforcing the law of the colour green, the exclusive colour of Islam, with his sharp razor is both farcical and oppressive. More oppressive though is the pettiness of a holy system of justice which sacrifices public decency for the sake of upholding the law. This episode clearly demonstrates the supposed barbarity of the Muslims, the fanatical rigidity of their dogma, and the stupidity of their religious leaders and their lack of judgement. For, even to a Muslim, the sight of a non-Muslim wearing green is less controversial than the sight of a naked person, let alone a woman, in public. Moreover, the Mufti's action actually contravenes the basic

Islamic principles of personal and public decency. Gazet's description of a Mufti as the equivalent of 'Priest at Venice' might be taken as an anti-Catholic remark by a seventeenth-century audience, in which it is insinuated that Italian priests share the absurd fanaticism of the Muslim holy men. But the remark's air of casual anti-Catholicism is a red herring, since Massinger himself was a Catholic; and he demonstrates his religious sympathies in his representation of Father Francisco.

In contrast with the Muslim religious figures in the play, Father Francisco is depicted as the preserver of genuine religious enlightenment. His rebuke to Vitelli concerning his failure to control his passions evinces an admirable combination of conviction and rationality. When Vitelli, on seeing Francisco, exclaims

> O wellcome sir, stay of my steppes in this life,
> And guide to all my blessed hopes heereafter.
> What comforts sir? haue your indeauours prosper'd?
> Haue wee tired *Fortunes* malice with our sufferings?
> Is she at length after so many frownes
> Pleas'd to vouchsafe one cheerefull looke vpon vs? (1.1.64-9)

Francisco replies in the most fatherly yet chiding manner:

> You giue too much to fortune, and your passions,
> Ore which a wise man, if Religious, triumphs.
> That name fooles worship, and those tyrants which
> Wee arme against our better part, our reason,
> May add, but neuer take from our afflictions. (1.1.70-4)

When Vitelli interrupts trying to justify his position, (1.1.75-6), Francisco continues his rebuke regardless:

I exact not from you

A fortitude insensible of calamitie,

To which the Saints themselues haue bowde and showne

They are made of flesh, and bloud; all that I challenge

Is mainly patience. (1.1.76-80)

He reminds Vitelli that to control his passion and use his wisdom is more important than letting his anger get the better of him. Francisco's rebuke of Vitelli's irrationality, together with his emphasis on the rational control of passions, present a sharp contrast to the Mufti's barbaric action. The episode also reveals that Francisco's task is to exhort Vitelli to act in the manner of an exemplary Christian. Vitelli certainly needs Francisco. He relies on Francisco's help throughout the play, especially in the face of Donusa's seduction and the temptations of the flesh. Vitelli also needs Francisco to help control his other rampant passions. In this sense, the play shows a marked tendency to promote Catholic principles. A Protestant would be likely to rely more heavily on his own experience and less on a priestly guide.

When Francisco informs Vitelli that Paulina has been sold by the renegade Grimaldi to Asambeg, (1.1.90-120), he instantly forgets the virtue of patience recommended by Francisco, and threatens to discard his disguise and rescue her. His anger and disgust are obvious when he describes Paulina's predicament. She must be rescued from the 'Viceroyes loose embraces' who, by force or flattery, will compel her

To yeeld her fayre name vp to his foule lust,

And after turne *Apostata* to the faith

That she was breed in. (1.1.137-9)

Once again Francisco plays anchor to Vitelli's passion. He tells him that such childish fury will be counterproductive, and adds that 'a wise man neuer / Attempts impossibilities' (1.1.141-2). Furthermore, he advises Vitelli, who wants to kill Grimaldi, to leave his 'reuenge to heauen' (1.1.146). Unlike the Muslim Mufti, Francisco is not prepared to allow a mere mortal to play God on earth, exacting justice whenever he sees fit. God's justice, as Francisco sees it, rests with God Himself. It is therefore Francisco's calming influence that prevents the play from degenerating into a tragedy of blood, like the other plays we have examined which take Islam and Muslims as their subject.

Francisco goes on to reassure Vitelli that Paulina will neither renounce her religion under force nor lose her chastity. 'I oft haue told you,' he says,

> Of a Relique that I gaue her, which has power
> (If we may credit holy mens traditions)
> To keepe the owner free from violence:
> This on her breast she weares, and does preserue
> The vertue of it by her daily prayers. (1.1.146-51)

Again, this is a very Catholic notion: Paulina will be safe as long as she keeps that talisman round her neck and keeps praying. The reference, by Vitelli, to Asambeg's 'loose embraces' and 'foul lust' counterbalanced by Paulina's virtue sets the stage for the powerful contrast between Islam and Christianity as religions of sensuality and chastity respectively.

III. Throughout, the play seems to equate chastity with the Christian way of life and sensuality with the Muslim. However, when Donusa first appears, we find her complaining to Carazie, her English-born eunuch, about her lack of

sexual freedom. She laments the fact that 'Christian ladies liue with much more freedome / Then such as are borne heere' (1.2.17-18). She obviously yearns for a liberty of life denied to her, as a Turkish Princess, by Turkish men, who

> Neuer permit their faire wiues to be seene
>
> But at the publique *Bannias*, or the Mosques
>
> And euen then vaylde, and garded. (1.2.19-21)

She seems more enchanted by the liberties accorded to English women, who, as Carazie relates it, live like queens. He says that the country ladies at home in England

> Haue liberty to hauke, to hunt, to feast:
>
> To giue free entertainement to all commers,
>
> To talk, to kisse, there's no such thing knowne there
>
> As an Italian girdle. (1.2.29-32)

A city lady, he satirically adds, enjoys still more freedom, for she

> Without leaue weares the breeches, has her husband
>
> At as much command as her Prentice, and if need be
>
> Can make him Cuckold by her Fathers Coppie. (1.2.33-5)

As for the lady at court, Carazie acidly remarks:

> She, I assure you Madame,
>
> Knowes nothing but her will, must be allow'd
>
> Her Foot-men, her Caroch, her Vshers, her Pages
>
> Her Doctor, Chaplines. (1.2.36-9)

He then adds that, presently, a new law will be passed allowing court ladies to keep private friends to ease their husbands' labours (1.2.43-8).

Carazie's comments, taken at face value, are not very complimentary to Christianity as opposed to Islam. However, their satire seems to be directed

specifically at what Massinger takes to be the comparative social freedom of English women. In a reference to the same issue, Thomas Dekker in *The Honest Whore*, Part II (1609), states, through Matheo, Bellafront's husband, that 'England (they say) is the onely hell for horses, and onely Paradise for women' (4.1.168-9).[13] In 1609, when Dekker finished his play, the argument was current that if women were treated in England as they were in Turkey they would be more dutiful to their husbands than many of them actually were.[14] Massinger seems to be taking part in the same anti-feminist debate, promoting more restraint and poking satirical fun at the Englishwomen of his time.[15] Donusa's comment following Carazie's statement sums up the association between Islam as a religion of indulgence and the personal freedom enjoyed by women in England:

> Wee enioy no more
>
> That are of the Othoman race, though our Religion
>
> Allowes all pleasures. (1.2.48-50)

So here Islam is superimposed on Christianity as a warning against Muslim-like sensuality on the one hand and as a mockery of the uninhibited sexual behaviour of Englishwomen on the other. As far as Donusa is concerned, it is jealous men, not religious law, who deny her the fulfilment of her pleasure-seeking liberty. Islam, as could be deduced from Donusa's comment, not only permits sinful acts but equates religion with illicit pleasure.[16]

Christianity on the other hand teaches its followers to nurture austerity and asceticism. It commands them to repress their desires and submit to the discipline of their religious ideals. For Massinger, Christianity, and more specifically Catholicism, praises celibacy and glorifies marriage as the

sacrament of holy matrimony, the most eminently desirable sexual status and the foundation of an ordered society.[17] However, in the case of Vitelli in *The Renegado* the task of repressing and controlling desires is fraught with danger. Francisco forewarns him of that danger even before he meets Donusa in the market place:

> You are young
> And may be tempted, and these Turkish Dames
> Like English Mastiues that increase their fiercenes
> By being chained vp, from the restraint of freedome,
> If lust once fire their bloud from a faire obiect
> Will runne a course the fiends themselues would shake at
> To enioy their wanton endes. (1.3.8-14)

Vitelli certainly needs Francisco's advice despite his protestation:

> Sir, you mistake mee.
> I am too full of woe, to entertaine
> One thought of pleasure. (1.3.14-16)

For all his confidence in his own virtue, he finds it impossible to resist Donusa's temptations under the duress of his desire.[18] When Donusa summons him to her palace and reveals her riches and beauty he can only exclaim with amazement, in an interesting fusion of Islamic sensuality with classical tradition:

> Is not this Tempe, or the blessed shades,
> Where innocent Spirits reside? Or doe I dreame,
> And this a heauenly vision? Howsoeuer
> It is a sight too glorious to behold
> For such a wretch as I am. (2.4.5-9)

In the face of such pagan pleasures, when Donusa next offers him herself he can put up little resistance. His desire threatens to overwhelm his reason:

> How I shake
> In my constant resolution! and my flesh
> Rebellious to my better part now tells me,
> As if it were a strong defence of frailtie,
> A Hermit in a desert trenched with prayers,
> Could not resist this batterie. (2.4.108-13)

Conscious of his moral lapse Vitelli seems to offer a justification for it. His reasoning is that 'under similar circumstances, the most ascetic of men would succumb.'[19] The only comfort this tame justification provides is the recognition that his failure to resist is in itself a confirmation of his humanity, not a rejection of it. When Donusa invites him into her private quarters, he not only accepts but declares that

> Though the Diuell
> Stood by, and rorde, I follow: now I finde
> That Vertue's but a word, and no sure garde
> If set vpon by beauty, and reward. (2.4.134-7)

At this point Vitelli's fall is complete and his loss of innocence is quite spectacular in view of Francisco's coaching and advice.

Nevertheless, Vitelli's falling in love with an infidel and his failure to resist the temptations of the flesh do not mean that he is beyond redemption. The ever present and powerful Father Francisco helps him to confess his sins and repent. Vitelli's admission of failure is accompanied by a sense of blame directed towards Francisco for failing to recognise the extent of his charge's

weakness. 'Let it suffice, you haue made me see my follies,' says Vitelli to Francisco (2.2.4); but he adds:

> But when you impose
> A penance on me, beyond flesh, and blood
> To vndergoe, you must instruct me how
> To put off the condition of a man:
> Or if not pardon, at the least, excuse
> My disobedience. (3.2.6-11)

The strict discipline imposed by his religion are not easy for Vitelli to adhere to, and without Father Francisco (or possibly the Catholic Church) exhorting and prompting him, he would surely have succumbed to the seduction of Donusa and the temptation of the flesh. Of his own will he turns to the friar to teach him how to resist further temptation, and better yet, to instruct him on how to improve his performance as an exemplary Christian. Once he repents, Vitelli embarks on a new mission. In addition to the rescue of Paulina he now aspires to martyrdom for the sake of Christianity. His response to Donusa, though acknowledging her arresting beauty, is tempered by his new-found religious resolve. Donusa no longer exerts over him the effeminating influence she once wielded. His language in her presence is no longer submissive. He chides Donusa for her lust and her lost purity:

> The sword with which you euer fought, and conquer'd,
> Is rauished from you by vnchaste desires. (3.5.7-8)

This reference to the purity Donusa once had suggests that she had an earlier history of chastity which might yet work to redeem her once given the chance. He then assures her that her beauty is still seductive and that human laws are utterly inadequate in the face of such beauty:

You are too strong for flesh and blood to treat with,

Though iron gates were interpos'd between vs,

To warrant me from treason. (3.5.9-11)

When she asks him, 'whom doe you feare?' he replies in a way which demonstrates that part of him; at least, is still not fully immune to her seductive charm:

That humane frailety I took from my mother,

That, as my youth increas'd, grew stronger on me,

That still pursues me, and though once recouer'd,

In scorne of reason, and what's more, religion,

Again seekes to betray me. (3.5.12-16)

It would seem that for Massinger it is the female aspects of human nature - the frailty inherited 'from my mother' - which induce it to sensuality: and moreover, it seems that Islam allows this female frailty, in both men and women, freer rein than is customary in European culture. Nevertheless, Vitelli is adamant in his determination to resist Donusa's charm which is so seductive that it would force the wise traveller Ulysses, were he alive,

To leape into the Sea [...]

Although destruction with outstretch'd armes,

Stood ready to receaue him. (3.5.26-8)

Consequently, he decides to ignore her pleas for reconciliation and returns the gifts she earlier gave him to rid himself of the trappings of her charm and lust (3.5.45-56). Once again, then, in this play, material wealth is associated with Islam, as if the luxury goods imported from the East have coloured Massinger's perception of Muslim culture: and Vitelli's rejection of Donusa's

offerings might be read as acquiescence with papal interdictions on trade with the Muslim nations.

When Asambeg catches Vitelli with Donusa and orders him imprisoned, Vitelli emphatically responds: 'what punishment/ So ere I vndergoe, I am still a Christian' (3.5.95-6). In Vitelli's response there is also a strong note of defiance against Asambeg personally, who in his indignation described Vitelli as no more than a 'dog' possessing no human traits at all. Vitelli's response proves that he has finally begun to master the art of controlling his passions, as he himself tells Francisco:

> But these are (father) but beginnings, not
> The endes of my high aimes. I grant to haue master'd
> The rebell appetite of flesh and blood
> Was far abouc my strength; and still owe for it
> To that great power that lent it. (4.3.25-9)

He steadfastly continues to express his firm religious convictions and his burning desire for martyrdom, insisting that:

> the grimme lookes of death
> Affright me not, and that I can put off
> The fonde desire of life (that like a garment
> Couers, and clothes our frailty) hastening to
> My Martirdome, as to a heauenly banquet,
> To which I was a choyce inuited guest. (4.3.30-35)

Interestingly enough, Vitelli here seems to have transformed sexual desire for Donusa into an even stronger desire for martyrdom as a luxurious feast for the spiritual, as opposed to the carnal, appetite. Then in grateful recognition of

Francisco's exhortation, and expressing a proud sense of his own achievements, Vitelli, addressing Francisco, adds:

> Then you may boldly say, you did not plough
> Or trust the barren, and vngratefull sands
> With the fruitfull graine of your religious counsels. (4.3.36-8)

Vitelli's remarkable transformation into the mould of a born-again Christian so impresses his religious guide, Francisco, that he comments: 'you doe instruct your teacher' (4.3.39). However, there is still room for one more piece of advice from Francisco, to which Vitelli responds by reiterating his conviction that the exaltation of his religious experience is so close to fruition that he will not dare to fail at this point (4.3.43-4). As he sees it, his faith in himself, his religion and God is stronger now than ever. So when Donusa attempts to convert him, in order to save their lives, offering him all the earthly delights sanctioned by Islam, including of course herself, he becomes incensed and heaps his scorn on Islam and on Muhammad:

> Dare you bring
> Your iugling Prophet in comparison with
> That most inscrutable, and infinite essence
> That made this all, and comprehends his worke?
> The place is too prophane to mention him
> Whose onely name is sacred. (4.3.114-19)

Despite his indignation, Vitelli informs Donusa that it pains him to see her ignorant of the true faith, his own (4.3.120-24). He adds emphatically:

> I will not foule my mouth to speake the Sorceries
> Of your seducer, his base birth, his whoredomes,
> His strange impostures; nor deliuer how

He taught a Pigeon to feede in his eare,

Then made his credulous followers beleeue

It was an Angell that teaches him

In the framing of his Alcoran. (4.3.125-31)

In this speech Vitelli manages to include almost the entire tradition of Christian polemical criticism intent on discrediting Islam by discrediting the character of its Prophet, Muhammad. The Prophet, as Vitelli and the Christian polemicists affirm, is a sorcerer, an impostor, a womaniser, a master deceiver, of low-birth and, above all, the incarnate form of the anti-Christ. To Vitelli the Muslims, and Donusa, are no more than the victims of Muhammad's impostures. It is therefore the duty of every devout and compassionate Christian, like himself, to suffer for them and to help them see the light (4.3.119), by exposing the falsity and weakness of their faith. Hence Vitelli's ridicule for Donusa's attempt to convert him as a way of saving her life:

Can there be strength in that

Religion, that suffers vs to tremble

At that which euery day, nay hower wee hast to? (4.3.135-37)

In place of a religion that promotes fear of death and indulgence in sensual earthly living as its ultimate ends, Vitelli offers Donusa the chance to join him in a religion that inspires the soul to look forward to a heavenly afterlife. Having noticed that Donusa is inclined to embrace Christianity Vitelli exhorts her:

Oh Donusa,

Dye in my faith like me, and tis a marriage

At which celestiall Angels shall be waiters,

And such as haue beene Sainted welcome vs. (4.3.150-53)

Donusa finally succumbs, not sensually but spiritually, giving herself to marriage instead of lust, and in the process Vitelli's own religious transformation nears completion. He initially came to Tunis to rescue his sister Paulina, but he ends by converting Donusa. He not only succeeds in guarding his faith, albeit after a lapse, but proves that, protected by the true faith, he is able to disarm the dangerous enemy, Islam, of its most lethal weapon, sensuality, and supplant it with the sacrament of matrimony. Furthermore, he proves that it is possible to deny Islam the potential for posing a threat to future generations by baptising Donusa (5.3.114-15). His steadfastness and conviction elicit the admiration of the fiercest of his enemies, the Aga, who observes:

> This Christian
> Feares not, it seemes, the neere approaching Sun
> Whose second rise he neuer must salute. (5.6.10-11)

What the Aga admires most is Vitelli's indifference to the prospect of death, which, as he believes, is a step closer to his ultimate goal, martyrdom. Vitelli has come full circle. He lost control over his passion and succumbed to Donusa's seduction only to repent and regain his faith and his reason, and to triumph in his repentance.

Unlike Vitelli's though, Donusa's religion does not offer the prospect of redemption, nor does it attempt to curtail the passions. It is a religion based, as Donusa states, on permissiveness and the quest for sexual freedom (1.2.48-50). The only restraint on Donusa stems from the extreme jealousy of Turkish men who prevent their women even from being seen in public (1.2.18-21) and subjugate them to the status of the harem. The character in the play who

encapsulates these attitudes is Donusa's would-be betrothed, Mustapha, the Muslim Basha.

After the failure of her attempt to seduce Vitelli, Donusa continues to exercise her seductive power on Mustapha. In the meantime, he is patiently seeking a matrimonial relationship with Donusa which she ultimately rejects. She is willing to offer Vitelli 'bounties/ Which all our Eastern Kings haue kneeld in vaine for' (2.4.48-9). Yet she rejects Mustapha's lawful desire for marriage, thereby suggesting that the law of Islam regarding marriage is no more than a pretext for sexual activities. She even ridicules the very same qualities that should have made him attractive as a suitor and a husband, namely, his attributes as a warrior, his gallantry, and his service to her uncle the Turkish Emperor. She concludes that Mustapha is too uncivilised for her taste:

> You are too rough for me, purge and take physicke,
> Purchase perfumers, get me some French taylor,
> To new create you; the first shape you were made with
> Is quite worne out. Let your barbar wash your face too,
> You looke yet like a bugbeare to fright children. (3.1.56-60)

When he discovers that Donusa has rejected him because of a Christian lover, the spurned Mustapha becomes furious and informs Asambeg. He bitterly accuses Donusa of deception since she claimed she had no desire for marriage. The pain he feels is not merely on his own account; he considers Donusa to have affronted all Muslim males. Speaking to Asambeg, he rages that:

> the pride, and the glory of the empire,
> That hath disdain'd you, sleighted me, and boasted
> A frozen coldnesse which no appetite,
> Or height of blood could thaw, should now so far

Be hurried with the violence of her lust,

As in it burrying her high birth and fame,

Basely descend to fill a Christians armes.

And to him yeeld her Virgin honour vp. (3.3.67-74)

Mustapha's indignation seems to be directed against Donusa's relation with a Christian of low birth rather than against her commission of a moral crime. His abhorrence of her infidelity springs from the fact that Vitelli is but 'a poor Mechanicke-Pedler' (3.3.80), a man who is without status, and that in wooing him she has made the palace a brothel where she may 'wallow in her foule and lothsome pleasures' (3.3.83). Mustapha's jealousy has obscured the immorality of Donusa's behaviour and made him concentrate instead on the social circumstances that surround it. He therefore typifies the loose moral standards the audience have come to expect from the followers of Islam in the play.

In her appeal against the death sentence imposed on her by the Emperor, Donusa accuses Muslim men of applying double standards when it comes to women. She has already observed that Islam permits women freedoms in theory that their men never allow them in practice. But here she strongly criticises the privileges enjoyed by Muslim males in general. She denounces the tyranny of the Emperor, who indulges in all kinds of pleasure but 'denies a moderate lawfull vse / Of all delight to others' (4.2.121-22). She decries the discriminatory religious laws which make the weaker sex subservient to the stronger (4.2.126-27). Furthermore, she argues that such absurd laws are antagonistic to the natural disposition of women who have the same inclinations towards sex as men do (4.2.130-37). In conclusion, she confronts Asambeg and challenges him to put himself on trial as well, since he has

committed the same crime as her by having a Christian virgin in his Harem (4.2.137-43). However, the Muslim authorities rule that her death sentence may only be revoked if she succeeds in converting Vitelli to Islam.

In her bid to convert Vitelli Donusa uses all the seductive means available to her. She pleads with him to forsake Christianity 'whose service does exact perpetuall cares, / Watchings, and troubles' (4.3.80-1), and urges him to

> giue entertainement
> To one that courts you, whose least fauours are
> Variety, and choyce of all delights
> Mankind is capable of. (4.3.81-4)

Her reasoning rests on a comparison between the laws of Christianity and Islam. She even asks Vitelli to be open-minded and observe how prosperous and flourishing the Turkish Empire is. In contrast, Christianity is divided and poor, which is proof enough in itself of the superiority of Islam (4.3.95-103). This emphasis on the material prosperity of the Muslims and the divisions among Christians lends itself to the perception that the strength of Islam stems not from the merits of its message or the force of its argument but from the unity and solidarity of its adherents.

Vitelli, however, quickly retorts that his religion promises not worldly pleasures but a heavenly spiritual satisfaction from which, he tells Donusa, you shall

> with scorn looke downe vpon
> All engines tyranny can aduance to batter
> Your constant resolution. Then you shall
> Looke truly fayre, when your minds purenesse answers
> Your outward beauties. (4.3.143-47)

Vitelli's convincing argument prompts Donusa to declare: 'then thus I spit at Mahomet' (4.3.158). Instead of turning Vitelli Turk, Donusa converts to Christianity. Her conversion represents the triumph of chastity over sensuality, of reason over passion, and at the same time, demonstrates the inherent weakness of Islam, despite its apparent strength and unity, in comparison to the real power of a divided Christianity. Her conversion also follows the established tradition of the Middle Ages whereby Muslims are always ready to renounce Islam as a result of their lack of conviction (5.3.121-32). Donusa recognises the superior virtue of Christianity and Vitelli, as opposed to Islam and Mustapha, and submits to the former. In spite of all her protests against the subservient status of women in Islam Donusa willingly accepts the domination of the Christian male as represented by Vitelli (5.3.84-6). In so doing, she proves that Vitelli has succeeded in disarming his enemies and in establishing his power, as a dominant male, to father children on their women. Ultimately, in a reversal of Pierre Dubois's plan already mentioned, Vitelli proves that the political, cultural and religious conquest of Islam can be achieved in other ways than through military victories,[20] because Christianity has superior virtues which are 'seen in the conversion of Donusa; and the force of conscience in the reclaiming of Vitelli and the Renegado.'[21]

The superiority of Christianity is most visible in the character of Paulina, Vitelli's sister and Asambeg's captive. As a foil to the sensual Donusa, Paulina represents Christian female chastity untainted. Despite her captivity and the lascivious advances of Asambeg, Paulina succeeds in preserving her chastity. Much of her power 'derives from the esteem she has for her

virginity', and so does her integrity.[22] That conviction is solely based on her Catholic religion which glorifies celibacy. Unlike Donusa, Paulina shows no sexual desires and consequently she is idealised 'beyond the realm of the physical'.[23] In contrast, Donusa, who shows little interest in repressing her sexual desires, is represented as degraded and sinful as well as dangerous.[24]

When Asambeg, struck by Paulina's beauty, heaps praise on her, she finds it detestable and retorts:

> I despise thy flatteries,
> Thus spit at 'em, and scorne 'em, and being arm'd
> In the assurance of my innocent vertue
> I stampe vpon all doubts, all feares, all tortures
> Thy barbarous cruelty, or what's worse, thy dotage
> (The worthy parent of thy iealousie)
> Can showre vpon me. (2.5.124-30)

She is obviously secure enough in her virtue that Asambeg's seductive flattery will prove ineffectual against her resolve. She informs him that:

> Thou art false,
> Falser than thy religion. Doe but thinke me
> Something aboue a beast. (2.5.135-37)

She adds that he is only driven by his lustful desires to use her, then consign her to the Harem where the eunuchs are the only source of pleasure.[25] As for the question of marrying Asambeg, she declares that she would rather be hanged than commit such a despicable act (2.5.157). Despite all Asambeg's threats and attempts at flattery Paulina remains steadfast in preserving her virtue, which prompts him to promise that he will not force her to do anything against her will (4.2.1-8). His argument is that women, by nature, are creatures

of their desires; a position at which he has arrived from his study of Muslim women, as Massinger sees them. Such women cannot be restrained by high birth, punishment or honour. Sooner or later, then, Paulina will succumb to his advances (4.2.10-15).

In response, Paulina observes that not all women are such creatures:

> why sir I durst produce
> My selfe in our defence, and from you challenge
> A testimony not to be deni'd,
> All fall not vnder this vnequall censure. (4.2.17-20)

As a spokesperson for virtuous women she cites herself as an example of superior moral strength and perseverance:

> I that haue stood your flatteries, your threats,
> Bore vp against your fierce temptations; scorn'd
> The cruell means you practis'd to supplant me,
> Hauing no means to help me, to hold out,
> But loue of piety, and constant goodnesse. (4.2.21-5)

Her love of piety and goodness, she contends, is the source of her strength. She even challenges Asambeg to try to dissuade her from her superior convictions which are deeply rooted in her religious beliefs:

> If you are vnconfirm'd, dare againe bouldly
> Enter into the lists and combat with
> All opposites mans malice can bring forth
> To shake me in my chastitie built vpon
> The rock of my religion. (4.2.26-30)

Nevertheless, Asambeg still insists that women in general are false and untrustworthy. Donusa provides what he sees as irrefutable proof of his viewpoint. By yielding to her baser instincts, argues Asambeg, Donusa has

fallen 'into a gulfe of shame, and blacke despayre' (4.2.38): a depiction which seems to fuse her female weakness with a seventeenth-century European's prejudices about oriental 'blackness'.

By means of this contrast between Donusa's sensuality and Paulina's chastity, *The Renegado* suggests that virtue and chastity can only be attained through Christianity. Paulina clearly never falters, whereas Donusa only regains her self-esteem by renouncing Islam and embracing Christianity. Moreover, Paulina not only shows no sexual desires but, even when she pretends to accept Asambeg's advances, enlists them in the service of her religious ideals. Thus, before she embarks on her pretence, she informs Father Francisco

> What outward pride so ere I counterfeite, [...]
> I am not in my disposition alter'd,
> But still your humble daughter, and share with you
> In my poore brothers sufferings, all hells torments. (5.2.71-5)

In an elaborate scheme Paulina pretends to convert to Islam and offers herself to Asambeg on condition that she be allowed to use Donusa as her slave (5.3.166-70). To the delight of the amorous Asambeg and the horror of Vitelli she declares that she will engross herself in all the pleasures of life denied her by Christianity (5.3.145-7). She even surprises Asambeg when she says:

> I now will runn as fiercely to your armes
> As euer longing woman did, borne high
> On the swift wings of appetite. (5.3.148-50)

Such capitulation is music to Asambeg's ears and demonstrates to him the complete transformation of Paulina from an ascetic Christian to an indulgent

and sensual Muslim. But to Paulina the whole experience is a disguise behind which she carries out Francisco's plot to rescue her, Vitelli and the new convert, Donusa. She thus fulfils her duty to herself, her religion and co-religionists. They all successfully escape in Grimaldi's ship. It seems that Massinger is making use of a tradition which sees Catholics as devious manipulators and conspirators against their enemies as exemplified by Philip II in *The Battle of Alcazar*. But in this instance the deviousness is fully justified, so that Massinger tends to celebrate what was seen as a Catholic trait and to hold it up as one of the most powerful weapons in the Christian's armoury. Catholics are quite simply cleverer, he claims, than their religious opponents; and are therefore the most efficient of the underminers of Islam. Grimaldi, on the other hand, genuinely converts to Islam and then reconverts to Christianity with the help of the ever present and dependable Francisco. As a character, Grimaldi represents a phenomenon that preoccupied the thinking of late sixteenth-and seventeenth-century England, namely, the threat of what is considered by the English as Islamic 'piracy' and the problem of renegadism, especially in the Mediterranean. As early as 1583, an English ship, named the *Jesus*, was seized in Tripoli (modern-day Libya), and its passengers enslaved. However, Queen Elizabeth, sending letters to the Port, secured the release of the ship and crew through the efforts of Sir Edward Osborn, the head of the Levant Company.[26] The threat of voluntary apostasy was considered more serious than that of forced conversion. The renegades, while often presented in texts as having some good qualities, were traitors to Christianity and constituted a disturbing reminder of the triumph of Islam. They were traitors to

both country and religion. In his article, '"Turning Turk": Conversion to Islam in English Renaissance Thought,' N. I. Matar observes that nearly all English writers of the Renaissance 'vilified, ridiculed and denounced the renegades: to them, every renegade was a potential soldier in the armies of Islam; every renegade represented a defeat of Christianity.'[27]

So far as piracy is concerned, England herself had a long history of sending out pirate ships to engage in illegal enterprises from ports like Plymouth and Bristol.[28] Lois Potter observes that 'by the time James I came to the throne, the English already had a reputation as the fiercest pirates in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic oceans.'[29] The main sufferers from the raids of these pirates were, of course, the Spanish.[30] Queen Elizabeth even contacted Amurath III, the Turkish Emperor, in 1589, proposing a joint sea attack against Spain in the Mediterranean. On his part, Amurath promised to undertake that task after concluding his wars in Persia.[31] It should be noted that 'the privateers whom Elizabeth encouraged to attack Spanish shipping had a bond of sympathy with the Moors [Muslims] and renegades of Africa.'[32] Nevertheless, among Elizabethan Englishmen these Moors and renegades were for the most part dreaded and detested.[33] These sentiments were expressed in the drama of the age such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, in which Tamburlaine describes them as

> the cruel pirates of Argier,
> That damned train, the scum of Africa,
> Inhabited with struggling runagates,
> That make quick havoc of the Christian blood.
>
> (*Tamburlaine I*, 3.3.55-8)[34]

These renegades detested by Elizabethan Englishmen included their own countrymen. In 1617, for example, an English ship, the *Dolphin*, was attacked by six Moorish ships of which three were captained by Englishmen.[35] These renegades were generally held to have converted to Islam because of its allurements and the unlimited opportunities it afforded in the quest for riches. Strikingly enough, the term 'pirates' was applied for the most part to renegades and Muslims. The English seafaring thieves, for example, were invariably called privateers, and were national heroes.[36] The Barbary states in their turn regarded piracy as privateering and an important source of income, since every privateer gave the country which harboured him one fifth of his bounty.[37] For this reason, those states 'became notorious in their day, and Christian wives and mothers learned to tremble at the very names of Algiers and Tunis'.[38]

Against this background, Grimaldi presents a reminder, to the audience, of the dreaded and detested renegades who not only deserted their religion but preyed on and betrayed their former co-religionists. For in *The Renegado*, it is Grimaldi who sells Paulina into captivity and makes Tunis his base from which to harry Christian shipping. English pirates are also frequent visitors to Tunis (1.1.50). As Grimaldi describes it, the pirate's life in Tunis typically revolves around roaming the seas taking 'a Merchants shippe for prize' (1.3.46), then touching 'the shore to wallow in / All sensual pleasures' (1.3.52-3). The sea, as he observes, is their mother, which yields every day a crop for them to reap (1.3.60-65). Pillage and rapine are their trade, as he explains:

> The sighes of vndone widowes, paying for
> The musique bought to cheer vs, rauish'de Virgins
> To slauerie sold for Coyne to feede our riots. (1.3.73-5)

Their heaven is clearly made of other people's misery, and while not at sea, they spend their days drinking in the company of whores (1.3.83-6). Grimaldi, in a moment of anger against Asambeg, refers to the symbiotic, though not equal, relationship between the pirate renegades and the North African (Barbary) states. These states offer the pirates sanctuary and, in return, the pirates go out to sea every week to bring them riches (2.5.11-16).

In the course of the heated argument between Grimaldi and Asambeg the play alludes to the confrontations between the Muslim Turks and the Christians of Malta. When Asambeg describes the Knights of St. John as 'those theeues of Malta,' Grimaldi responds by reminding him that

> those contemned theeues
> Your fellow Pirats Sir, the bold Malteze
> Whom with your lookes you think to quell, at Rhodes
> Laugh'de at great Solymans anger: and if treason
> Had not deliuerede them into his power,
> He had growne olde in glory as in yeeres
> At that so fatal siege. (2.5.53-9)

This is a reference to the fall of Rhodes to Solyman the Magnificent in 1522 (the episode on which events in *Soliman and Perseda* were largely based) when a mutiny by the inhabitants brought an end to the nine month defence by the Catholic fighting order of the Knights of St. John.[39] Grimaldi goes even further by taunting Asambeg with the reminder that those Knights, though few in number, withstood the awesome power of the Ottoman siege of 1565 and 'with their crosses / Strooke pale your horned moones' (2.5.66-7). Grimaldi's defence of the Knights suggests that despite his conversion he still harbours

feelings of admiration for what he perceives as the heroics of his former co-religionists. When finally Asambeg orders Grimaldi to be imprisoned and his property confiscated the renegade denounces his treachery saying:

> Is this the reward
> For all my seruice, and the rape I made
> Of fayre Paulina? (2.5.88-9)

This moment seems to be the turning point in Grimaldi's piratical life. The next time we meet him he is full of remorse and despair. He confesses to Francisco that he has no hope of salvation because his past sinful deeds were so monstrous that they would 'cracke' the 'pinions' of the 'glorious wings of grace' and 'sinke them to hell with me' (3.2.61-72). He adds that even the 'four elements' which compose his body would not find it easy to accept his devilish actions. And he concludes that the sea, the scene of his crimes, offers the only relief:

> In haste then to thee, let thy rauenous wombe
> Whom all things else denie, be now my tombe. (3.2.97-8)

Even the sea is spoken of in terms of the body, the body of Grimaldi that is in conflict with itself. This emphasis on the divided body recalls, and is tied to, the earlier emphasis by Donusa (4.3.95-103) on the division of Christianity as proof of the superiority of Islam.

However, the dependable Francisco offers Grimaldi solace and comfort. It is his task, he says, to 'teach the desperate to repent' and to 'confirme the innocent' (3.2.104-5). It is only a matter of time before Francisco succeeds in transforming Grimaldi into a new and devout Christian who promises to redeem all his past sins. He informs his followers that his life will be different:

come my Mates,

I hitherto haue liu'd an ill example,

And as your Captaine lead you to mischiefe,

But now will truly labour, that good men

May say hereafter of me to my glory,

Let but my power and meanes, hande with my will,

His good endeuours, did waigh downe his ill. (4.1.121-27)

In an episode which highlights Grimaldi's religious transformation he vehemently refuses to sail without Francisco even though, as the boatswain puts it, this might offer him his only chance to escape. 'I will neuer,' says Grimaldi, 'consent to waigh an Anchor vp, till hee / That onely must, Commands it' (5.2.17-19). Obviously, the ship and Grimaldi need the guidance of Francisco as the church needs the guidance of Christ and, therefore, it is not unreasonable to believe that by this stage Francisco has become the representation of Christ. Alternatively, one might read the ship as emblematic of a Christian state, which requires the guidance of the Catholic Church in order to voyage safely. Whatever reading one prefers, in the end all the Christians, including the newly converted Donusa, escape on Grimaldi's ship with the blessing and good planning of Francisco, leaving the Muslims counting their losses.

The successful exploits of the Jesuit Francisco clearly indicate the religious leanings of Massinger. Thomas A. Dunn, for example, observes that of Massinger's plays *The Renegado* is 'the play which deals most closely and most representatively with religious issues.'[40] He goes on to say that it presents 'the opposition, not of two Christian denominations, but of

Christianity and Islam.'[41] However, Dunn concedes that Catholicism, not Protestantism, is what Massinger promotes in opposition to Islam.[42] Similarly, Felix E. Schelling remarks that the atmosphere of *The Renegado* strongly suggests the sympathetic leanings of Massinger towards Roman Catholicism.[43] W. A. Ward adds that in view of the audience's hostility towards Catholicism Massinger has actually shown a great deal of 'strength and independence of mind to write and publish a drama' like *The Renegado*.[44] He concludes that 'it cannot be doubted that he [Massinger] repeatedly showed a marked predilection for the religious observances of the papal church.'[45]

IV. In the light of these remarks it could be concluded that *The Renegado*, in its representation of Islam and Muslims, is a didactic and polemical play. In electing to represent Islam in opposition to Catholicism to a Protestant audience Massinger clearly puts that audience in a situation in which the sheer vulgarity and repulsiveness of the Muslims, forces them into fraternal acceptance of the Catholics as their fellow Christians. Massinger seems, in fact, to be challenging the audience willingly to suspend their feelings of animosity towards Rome in order to recognise Islam as the common enemy. Against such a reprehensible foe even the divided Christians have to unite to beat back the corrupting influences of this decadent religion. More important to Massinger than the recognition of Islam as a common enemy is the representation of Catholicism as a heroic defender of Christianity and its unity. Moreover, Massinger, as is demonstrated by the episode referring satirically to the liberal sexual behaviour of English women (Act I, scene ii), seems critical

of Protestantism, which, he suggests, may be sexually as hypocritical as Islam. He seems to be using his satire as a stick to prod his fellow countrymen into proper Christian conduct as admirably demonstrated by Paulina. By suggesting that Muslims are more severe than Protestants with regard to the sexual conduct of women, despite the perceived permissiveness of Islamic law, he hopes to shock the audience into both combating illicit sexual practices and questioning the moral teachings of their own religious denominations. Meanwhile in order to placate the audience he intelligently uses Protestant women as a safe target for his satire, since the misogyny of Protestant men could be relied on in support of such a position.

The audience may have felt ill at ease on seeing the glorification of Catholicism on the stage, but these feelings were mitigated, no doubt, by the triumphant exploits of Francisco in Tunis. He proves comprehensively that in a direct confrontation between Islam and Christianity, Islam will emerge as the inferior religion. He also proves that, contrary to their claims, the Muslims lack conviction; that they embrace Islam only because of their ignorance of true religion, as Donusa demonstrates; and that, even with its schismatic splits and its unalluring penchant for asceticism, Christianity remains the superior force. The conversion of Donusa, the play asserts, is a reminder that the hypocrisy of Islam - the split between its insistence that women obey marital laws and its encouragement of sexual profligacy among its followers - could be said to offer a more dangerous example of the kind of split that has divided Christianity against itself. In this respect, the split among Muslims is indicative of the inherent weakness of Islam and, by implication, the superiority of Christianity.

This superiority is evident in its ability not only to preserve the chastity of Paulina and redeem the innocence of Vitelli, but to convert the Muslim Donusa and restore the renegade Grimaldi to the path of righteousness. In effecting these things, *The Renegado* optimistically foresees a bright future for Christianity when the flowing tide of Islam will be forced to ebb.

Notes

[1] John Bossy, 'The English Catholic Community', in *The Reign of James VI and I*, ed. by Alan G. R. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp.91-105 (p.92).

[2] Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*, p.120.

[3] Ibid., p.120.

[4] Quoted in Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, p.167.

[5] *The Apology of Al Kindy*, pp.9-10.

[6] George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey*, p.42.

[7] Ibid., p.42.

[8] Ibid., p.46.

[9] Edward A. Freeman, *The History and Conquests of the Saracens* (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker, 1856), pp.44-5.

[10] Warner G. Rice, 'The Sources of Massinger's *The Renegado*,' *Philological Quarterly*, 11 (1932), 65-75 (p. 65).

[11] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.536.

[12] Philip Massinger, *The Renegado*, in *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, ed. by Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson, 5 vols (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1976), II, p.18. All subsequent references to the play are from this edition.

[13] Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore*, Part II, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 2 vols (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1955), II, p.186.

[14] Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson, ed. *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, V, p.142, [n.35].

[15] Thomas A. Dunn, *Philip Massinger: The Man and the Playwright* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD for the University College of Ghana, 1957), p.153.

[16] Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.180.

[17] Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp.2-6.

[18] Cyrus Hoy, 'Verbal Formulae in the Plays of Philip Massinger,' *Studies in Philology* 56 (1959), 600-18 (p.603).

[19] Ibid., p.602.

[20] Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face Maligned Race*, p.197.

[21] W. Clifford, ed., *The Plays of Philip Massinger*, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: G. and W. Nicol, 1813), II, p.233.

[22] Ira Clark, *The Moral Art of Philip Massinger* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1993), p.166.

[23] Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit*, p.4.

[24] Ibid., p.4.

[25] This reference to the duties of the eunuchs in the Harem is made even clearer by Gazet and Carazie, in Act III, scene iv. When Gazet asks what the duties of Carazie are, he answers:

> In the day I waite on my Lady when she eates,
> Carry her pantophles, beare vp her trayne,
> Sing her asleepe at night, and when she pleases
> I am her bedfellow. (3. 4. 45-8)

This is another example not only of the indulgent nature of the Muslims but of their moral corruption as well.

[26] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.381.

[27] N. I. Matar, '"Turning Turk": Conversion to Islam in the English Renaissance Thought,' *Durham University Journal*, 86, 1(1994) 33-41(p.34).

[28] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.341.

[29] Lois Potter, 'Pirates and "turning Turk" in Renaissance drama', in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michele Willems (Cambridge: Cambridge Uinversity Press, 1996), pp.124-140 (pp.125-26).

[30] Ibid., p.126.

[31] Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, pp.1006-7.

[32] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.341.

[33] Ibid., p.345.

[34] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part I, p.127.

[35] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p.362.

[36] Ibid., p.345.

[37] E. Hamilton Currey, *Sea-Wolves of the Mediterranean: The Grand Period of Muslim Corsairs* (London: John Murray, 1910), p.40.

[38] Ibid., p.2.

[39] Philip Edward and Colin Gibson, ed., *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, vol. V, p.145.

[40] Thomas A. Dunn, *Philip Massinger: The Man and the Playwright*, p.177.

[41] Ibid., p.177.

[42] Ibid., p.177.

[43] Felix E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama 1558-1642* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1908), pp.231-32.

[44] W. A. Ward and A. R. Waller, ed., *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. VI (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1910), p.150.

[45] Ibid., p.150.

CONCLUSION

Between 1579, the date of the first known play dealing with Islamic matters, *The Blacksmith's Daughter* and 1642, the date of the closing of the theatres, there appeared in England at least forty-seven plays representing Muslim characters, life, history, and customs. The representations of Islam and Muslims in these plays had less to do with the transmission of factual information than they had with representing an old religious enemy which had been threatening Christian Europe for almost a thousand years. They had their origins in the polemical tradition of the Middle Ages which vehemently sought to present Islam as the antithesis of Christianity and Muslims as the negative 'other' of Christians.

Christian authors, from the Middle Ages on, not only relied on scant and unreliable information, but invariably sacrificed accuracy for the sake of constructing the negative image of Islam that was relevant to the polemical purposes of their representations. Even the most enlightened authors were more interested in producing imaginative constructions against which they could judge and define their own culture than in presenting an authentic picture of Islam and Muslims. Edward Said remarked that from Dante to Shakespeare and from Peter the Venerable to Martin Luther Islam was held up as 'the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the Middle Ages on was founded.'[1] Nevertheless, some authors, like Marlowe, were imaginative enough to transcend the limitations of a crudely hostile representation of Islam and Muslims by using them as a means by which to

question the foundations of Christian culture, or to articulate their individual positions, or both. Other authors used representations of Muslims as analogues for the divisive conflicts within the body of Christendom and as instruments of propaganda in the continuing war between rival Christian sects.

It is not surprising therefore to discover that representations of Muslims in early modern English drama tend to endow these characters with certain traits which reinforce the Christians' perceptions of their own cultural and moral superiority. At the same time, these traits - cruelty, violence, treachery, and sensuality - served to confirm for the Christians their long-established preconceptions about Islam and Muslims. The fact that a 'man of an average education and intelligence' who found himself in the audience of these plays would have had in mind a variety of ideas about Islam drawn from contemporary accounts of the conquests of Tamburlaine the Great and his defeat of Bajazeth, the fall of Rhodes and the siege of Malta, to the growth of piracy in the Barbary states, as well as distant memories of the Islamic conquest of Spain and the Crusades,[2] helped to keep these preconceptions firmly entrenched in the theatrical productions of Renaissance England.

Early modern drama developed a number of different motifs in its representations of Islam and Muslims. One of the prevalent motifs was that of the Christian woman stolen by pirates or renegades (illustrative of Islam's reliance on treachery to accomplish its purpose); the woman being presented to the Muslim Sultan or Basha and refusing his sexual advances (thus pitting Christian virtue against Muslim lechery); and her escape to the West, having succeeded in converting a Muslim (thus anticipating the final triumph of

Christianity over its ancient enemy). Another motif is that of the Muslim Sultan who falls in love with a captive Christian lady - who resists his solicitations - which eventually brings about his destruction and demise. There is also the motif of the renegade or 'Christian turned Turk' who comes to recognise the error of his ways, as well as the motif of the Crusade or holy war, which justifies every act of aggression against the infidel.

But a few plays perform intriguing variations on these motifs which question the complacent assumptions on which they are based. Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, Parts I and II, is testimony to its author's imaginative resistance to cultural and political conventions. In it Marlowe exploits the representation of Islam and Muslims not only to challenge his audience's preconceptions about their enemy but to shake their perceptions of their own religious and political convictions. And by drawing analogies in which Muslims appear to hold the moral high ground in opposition to some Christians - Catholics - he seems to suggest that no one religion or religious denomination can sustain the claim to have a monopoly on truths pertaining to the human condition; that the human capacity for violence transcends religious and national barriers; and that his ability to stamp his authority on his environment operates quite independently of outside intervention.

George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* attempts to mount an equally daring challenge to its audience's assumptions by offering them a favourable representation of the character of Abdelmelec as a contrast to the demonic Catholic monarch, Philip II of Spain. But Peele's attempt seems to be motivated more by his patriotic and anti-Spanish sentiments than by his desire

to question the received wisdom concerning Muslims. His representation of the treacherous and bombastic Muly Mahamet is more in tune with the spirit of the time which viewed the Muslims as faithless as well as diabolical. Muly Mahamet says and does little to challenge an Elizabethan audience's preconceptions. His usurpation of the throne, the murder of his brothers and his uncle, and his duplicitous dealings with Sebastian, all combine to highlight the traits mentioned above. These traits become even more apparent in the characters of Soliman and Brusor in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda.* From the Christian West's point of view, Soliman's killing of his brother, his treachery against Erastus and his lust for Perseda serve as a reminder of the inherently corrupt nature of Islam and the danger it presents to those who come in contact with it. The moral transgressions of the Christian characters in the play are proof enough of Islam's contaminating nature. The play's most controversial element would seem to be its suggestion that despite their apparently different natures Islam and Christianity are not dissimilar in their capacity to destroy one another, as evident in the mutual destruction of Soliman and Perseda.

On his part, Fulke Greville deploys the Islamic setting and Muslim characters as instruments to raise his concerns about the moral and philosophical issues pertaining to the question of the relationship between tyrannical order and anarchy. In *Mustapha*, Greville deals with the effects a strong tyrant has on the state, while in *Alaham* it is the effects of a weak tyrant which are discussed. Through careful study of the two plays it is not unreasonable to conclude that both types of tyrants have a devastating effect on the stability and welfare of the state. As far as Greville is concerned Islam and

Muslims, having rejected the grace of God, epitomise the state of depravity into which humanity has fallen; a state where the hideous crimes of infanticide, fratricide, and patricide are committed in the service of political ambitions.

The emphasis on what Christians perceive as the sensuality inherent in the teachings of Islam provides the dominant theme of Massinger's *The Renegado*. This play, more than any other in this study, seems to represent Islam not only as a feared and detested enemy but as an alternative culture that could prove dangerously attractive to Christians. The success of Paulina in preserving her chastity against the persistent solicitations of Asambeg, together with the success of Vitelli and father Francisco in converting Donusa and reconverting Grimaldi, could not totally obscure the initial success of Islam in attracting the renegade to its ranks and in tempting Vitelli himself to abandon his Christian asceticism in favour of the material wealth and libertinism offered by Christianity's chief rival.

From the evidence of the plays examined in this thesis there would seem to be a general tendency in early modern English drama to represent Islam and Muslims in the inimical manner established by Christian polemicists during the Middle Ages. The hostility of these representations was however mitigated by the growing nationalistic competition and sectarian rivalries between different Christian European countries, especially Protestant England and Catholic Spain. One point emerges very clearly. The utilisation of an Islamic setting and characters developed into a stage convention which allowed the early modern dramatist the imaginative freedom to deal with the most controversial

political and religious issues from a distance, and with an incisiveness which would otherwise not have been possible for him.

Finally, through the course of this study it has become apparent that sixteenth-century travellers played an important part in constructing the overall picture of Islam and Muslims cultivated in early modern drama. Unlike other authors, travellers had the advantage of speaking with the authority of an eye-witness. But rather than tell the truths with which they had acquainted themselves most travellers tended to intersperse their accounts with lies and reiterated myths. This is certainly true of the picture presented of Islam and Muslims in the travel books of the sixteenth century; and the study of these texts and the agenda they serve remains an open field for further examination by enthusiasts of comparative literary studies.

Notes

[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.70.

[2] Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, pp.103-4.

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