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Encounters between Islam and Early Modern England

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Abstract: *Islam maintained a sound relationship with early modern England, while the former shared political, diplomatic, commercial, cultural, and religious affairs with the latter. This paper aims at investigating the commercial, cultural and religious affairs encountered by Islam and Elizabethan England. This paper also focuses on the contribution of the Muslim world in building 16th century England. The findings reveal that early modern Britons enjoyed complete freedom to travel to Islamic countries and got business access. The findings also reveal that in the 16th-century Muslim world, people of different religions, including Christianity and Jews, lived harmoniously in a common geographical boundary. In conclusion, Islam played a vital role in building early modern England. Overall, the present Muslim leaders should come forward to redeeming the sweet relationship, once enjoyed by Islam with England, and contributing significantly in re-building the relationship with the West, especially Britain.*

Keywords: Islam; England; Elizabethan; politics; commerce; cultural; religious

INTRODUCTION

In 1600, Muhammad al-Annuri, the Ambassador of Morocco, was sent to London by the Moroccan Sultan Ahmed al- Mansur to meet with Queen Elizabeth with a proposal of forming a military alliance against Catholic Spain. It is fascinating that William Shakespeare attempted to write one of his masterpieces *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, just some months

after the arrival of the Moroccan Ambassador al-Mansur in London, which was toward the end of 1601. *Othello* is set in the Mediterranean, which was controlled by the then Muslim Ottoman Empire. After Muhammad al-Annuri, 'although no other ambassador visited London, another Moor appeared though 'not at London's royal court, but on its stage' (Brotton, 2016). However, the encounter between Islam and early modern England—the era of Queen Elizabeth precisely—is longstanding, covering predominantly England's diplomatic, commercial, cultural, and religious affairs. In early modern England, the Islamic world enjoyed vast captivating geographical borders covering, from the mighty Mediterranean Ottoman Empire to the Moroccan empire, from Safavid Persia to the south-east Asian Mughal Empire. Britons during this time routinely sojourned this immense Muslim territory: sometimes for establishing a diplomatic relationship between Elizabethan England and the Islamic world and very often for mercantile purposes.

This article, however, attempts to delineate how early modern England built the divine political and commercial relationship with the then superpower Islamic world, especially the mighty Ottoman Empire, and how they maintained it. This paper also shows how brilliantly Islam contributed to the making of early modern England. Finally, this paper aims at portraying the cultural diversity and religious tolerance of the Muslim world, where people of different religions, including Christianity and Jews, lived harmoniously in a common geographical boundary.

As Nabil Matar demonstrates in his seminal book *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (1999), Islam was in a favourable position during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who managed to maintain a heavenly association with the Muslims of the time. This was precisely true during the reign of the Ottoman Empire and the Moroccan Muslim World during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. From the Elizabethan period forward, the Islamic civilisation was evident to the British throughout the seventeenth century "by means of literature, culture, and languages, chiefly Arabic and Turkish," (N. Matar, 1999, p. ix). Matar goes on to claim that, despite the restrictions of Islam's visibility, the Arab-Islamic heritage had a profound impact on Renaissance England and was incorporated into English discourse and ideas. This is a reference to his own article, "Islam in Britain, 1558-1685," in which he recognises this heritage and scrutinises it, revealing that the harmonious relationship between Britain and Islamic world finally ended (N. Matar, 1998). Matthew Dimmock's *New Turks: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (2005) gives a unique depiction of the Muslim world in the Elizabethan England. This book discloses a lot of historically contextualised, thoroughly negotiated elements from the Britain-Islam point of view. Dimmock has knowledgeably written his book, which embeds studies of Islam and the European world in the early modern period and shows the picture of Islam's significant role in establishing Renaissance England.*Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (2003) by Daniel Vitkas concentrates on the mutual relationship between Elizabethan and Jacobean Britain with other cultures in the early modern Mediterranean and examines that very experiences on London stage. Vitkas in this book ably shows how the emergent British national identity envisioning an empire was inspired by the theatrical representations. Vitkas also shows that multicultural Mediterranean participating in 'religious conversion' and 'foreign trade'

played crucial roles in forming English identity (Vitkus, 2003, p. xiiv). In addition, Islam-Englan relationship in 16th century is captured captivatingly and vigorously by a plethora of recent scholars (McJannet, 2006; Hutchings, 2007; Degenhardt, 2010; Andrea & McJannet, 2011; Abu Baker, 1997).

Commercial relationships with the Ottoman Empire

The first interchange of letters amid Queen Elizabeth and Ottoman sultan Murad ll revealed the attraction of England with the Muslim world. In the middle of the sixteenth century, British traders started business in Syria and Morocco. Attired in velvet and silk and wearing a scimitar and a turban—a Turkey fashion—Henry Vlll, father of the Queen, very often attended parties. The merchandisers of the king brought in exotic eastern commodities, rich silks, and delicate textiles like sweet wines, rhubarb and currants, and sugar from Morocco, which his daughter Elizabeth took in such large amounts that her teeth turned black (Hall, 1809, p. 513). The Queen accelerated the pace of communication and launched a new outreaching strategy to the Muslim world. Even she offered precious gifts to the sultan of the Ottoman, for her subjects were permitted for trading and continuing diplomatic relationships with the empire. As Dimmock puts it:

For Elizabeth had indeed entered into a tributary relationship - although primarily symbolic - with the Ottoman Empire in which luxurious gifts, including ‘a very fair clock’, cloth, plate and ‘a silver gilt parrot’ with ‘a silver gilt hawk’ whose worth totaled £914 in 1583, and an ornate organ in 1599, were offered in thanks for the ‘favour’ extended to English ambassadors and trading interests by the Sultan. (Dimmock, 2016, pp. 3–4)

As the business heightened, thousands of Elizabeth's citizens were found in the Muslim world by the end of her monarchy, some forced to embrace Islam, others working in diplomacy and trade, and many as explorers or pirates. Raqqa, Aleppo, Baghdad, Fallujah, Algiers, and Tripoli were among the cities they visited and lived in. The British traders and travellers who departed their homeland with a view to travelling the eastern countries came back home with new goods and concepts that greatly affected the English society and culture. (Brotton, 2016, p. 3)

Rulers of the Islamic world, likewise, were interested in engaging Londoners in commerce and learning about their culture and society. The Great Mughal, the Ottoman Sultan, the Safavid Shah, the Beys and the Deys of North African provinces, and the ruler of Morocco, all agreed to discuss diplomatic and even the trading matters with the Britons and learned insofar as they could concerning their territories and kings.

The friendly relationship with the Persian rulers resulted in a number of interchanges of ambassadors, while the emissary of Persia who arrived in Chinapatan in the latter decades of the seventeenth-century discovered plenty to appreciate in English government, describing the fort and the city which the ‘English have built themselves’ (Muhammad Rabi‘ ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, 1972, p. 33).

The territory of the Levant offices of Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, and Algeria is one that British merchants confronted on every voyage to the Ottoman empire, as their naval vessels had to evade northern seas governed and controlled by extremely hostile Catholic authority and power. However, MacLean and Matar, in their seminal book *Britain and The Islamic World, 1558–1713,* narrate that a century after Elizabeth's reign, the region's naval importance declined, and even saltpetre from Morocco, which was in high demand, was superseded by Indian imported goods (G. M. and N. Matar, 2011, pp. 6–7). This territory was not governed by a centrally controlled company like the East India or the Ottoman Companies in terms of longevity and power: the Secretary of State was informed by consuls and factors straightforwardly without the benefit of investors' board to help organize their tasks, and received just restricted noble interference; the number of letters sent by the monarchs to regency rulers became negligible after Queen Elizabeth. Furthermore, despite the fact that the Iberians had multiple territories in Northern Africa, the British traveled to the eastern Mediterranean to ransack and trade, not to settle and conquer: Tangier, for example, was indeed a dowry present in 1661, not a military conquest. Despite this, since it was here that 'Barbary' pirates imprisoned a significant number of English traders, this peninsula was crucial in superimposing an antagonistic and indelible picture of Muslims. While rejecting Islam and Muslims, prisoners who came back home started telling and writing about the cruelty they had witnessed. The lasting image of condemning Muslims started in the 16th and 17th centuries: the image of the Northern African detainer, Muslim, grasping to kidnap or compelling to convert the defenceless British male or often female captive. Compared to those sixteenth-century England's relations with the Mughal Empires, Ottoman and Safavid, documentations about ransom, captivity, naval battles, and apostasy to Islam have not been given proper academic surveillance.

The zone encompassing Persia, India, and Southeast Asia, along with *The Arabian Seas*, as described by R. J. Barendse (Barendse, 2002), is geographically important for the Britons. This region had been embellished as the most commercially substantial ally with England of all the Muslim territories by the last decade of the 17th century: the American colonies were intertwined with the 'Indian Ocean World' by trade. This region started in Aleppo because it was the very place from where letters and information concerning inter-European matters had been sent to Basra, Isfahan, Surat, and Lahore, all the way to Ache, Bantam, and Madras, after having been accumulated in Izmir or Istanbul. The East India Company oversaw this region, which engaged the greatest number of men—many of whom brought their wives and children with them. Representatives and other corporate agents in this region exchanged information by writing to one another and forwarding their messages to Britain. The East India Company's records divulge a large network of English merchants on ships and in forts, in the harbours and hinterlands, often in vying, but quite often writing for naval support and business communication to one another 'as well as for casks of English beer, ink, paper, and Shiraz wine' (MacLean and Matar, 2011, p.7). This area was affluent and proposed the most likely profit and trade, both in exchange for goods transported by British people back to England or from one area to the next and in respect of monetary coordination with the rich local rulers, who widened assets to British businessmen(Fawcett, 1955, p. 206). Since the size of the capital was significant, the East India Company's London agencies had a strong monitoring system to

ensure that business goals and strategies of action were followed by consuls, factors, and eventually soldiers.

Islamic world in the making of England

The first time the English met Muslim people since the Crusades was during the 16th century and a half, which marked the beginning of re-checking their comprehending Muslim world, which had seen slight modification since the 13th century (Tolan, 2002, p. xviii). Significant shifts were happening in how the English perceived themselves and performed on the world stage. These transformations were provoked by commercial, trading, and cultural competition, as well as an enchantment with exotic and foreign commodities and lifestyles. As a result, there was a greater demand for export industries as well as for importing "natural resources from countries as near as Morocco—gold and saltpeter—and as far as Bengal" (G. M. and N. Matar, 2011, p. 2). From Izmir to Surat and Madras, from Safi to Mocha, the British traders purchased gold and sugar, horses and coffee, carpets and manuscripts, silk and spices, indigo, calico, and ivory, all of which transformed the direction of their history and culture. It is claimed by Donald F. Lach, that if Asia played a part in the formation of Europe (Lach, 1965), it is arguably affirmed that the Islamic world played a distinctive and significant role in the formation of England. Also Dimmock perceives, Islam occupied "a central position in so many aspects of English life in the sixteenth century" (Dimmock, 2016, p.16).

Various social classes and groups in England evolved diverse thoughts and attitudes regarding the Muslim world, including its history, peoples, and geography. Not only the British merchants came across a number of different non-Muslims throughout their travels across the Muslim regions, but also they discovered fresh resources and ideas that they were proud to bring back—mentioned earlier— to their homelands. In the 1580s, English doctors went to Egypt for learning antidotes to poison. Britons had a zeal for learning from the Muslims the way they learned from their next-door Europeans. George Manwaring was impressed at agricultural techniques, magnificent displays of fireworks, and firearms, and the production of guns in Persia with the Shirley brothers (Manwaring, 1933, p. 220,221,222); Samuell Sharpe and Richard Wilton, both of whom were Londoners, on 15 July 1620, obtained an intellectual property right for the 'making of grogram... and sundrie other sortes of silke and other stuffes after the Turkie manner of chamletting' (Woodcroft, 1855, p. 9), Englishmen working at the Surat factory in India stopped relying on medications shipped from London and instead sought the "help of local Mughal doctors," and were afterward accused of being lured to "swap religions and cultures" with the Islamic people in the same decade (Dalrymple, 2002, pp. 14–15).

Islam's historical and innate accessibility to the Christians and the Jews inspired British travellers to sojourn Persia, Egypt, India, and Anatolia to pursue trade, markets, and profits. Though they went to areas where no prior Englishmen had been, they did not really explore new routes but followed trade paths that the Safavids, Ottomans, Mughals, and other Muslim people used for ages (Games, 2008, pp. 74–79). They adjusted to local habits, including attire and food habit (Foster, 1933, pp. 32–38).

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Religious tolerance and cultural diversity encountered by the Briton

The Muslim kingdoms were notable since they housed a large number of non-Muslims within their boundaries. Many European travellers were incredibly impressed and surprised by the customary mixing of Muslims, Jews and Christians, and the presence of presumably amicable multicultural and multi-ethnic societies.

The work of Fernand Braudel offers an interesting recent historical outline of this transactional, global framework (Braudel, 1973). The hybridity of Mediterranean civilization is emphasised in Braudel's study:

> the extent and immensity of the intermingling of Mediterranean cultures, all the more rich in consequences since in this zone of exchanges cultural groups were so numerous from the start. In one region they might remain distinctive, exchanging and borrowing from other groups from time to time. Elsewhere they merged to produce the extraordinary charivari suggestive of eastern ports as described by romantic poets: a rendezvous for every race, every religion, every kind of man, for everything in the way of hairstyles, fashions, foods and manners to be found in the Mediterranean (quoted in Vitkus, 2003, p. 14).

Despite the fact that the depiction of Braudel recollects facets of Said's *Orientalism* ("eastern ports as described by romantic poets"), he excels in depicting the Mediterranean as a culturally flexible climate to the extent that surprised British onlookers. Braudel continues that in this "Mediterranean world" British travellers encountered a kind of environment characterized by exchange, hybridity, and mingling, and they were often taken aback and mesmerized by the multiculturalism they witnessed in highly regarded Mediterranean cities such as Constantinople, Venice, Jerusalem and Cairo. In his *The Total! Discourse of the Rare Adventures* (1632), William Lithgow, a Scot, chronicled his immense travels (Lithgow, 1632). On Palm Sunday, 1612, Lithgow arrived in Jerusalem just to discover it was invaded by a faction of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, of different cultural ideologies. While observing the three-day Easter celebration, Lithgow disdains "all the Oriental people" (266) and remarks on their conduct from the topmost gallery of the Holy Sepulcher' church. The "seven kinds of Nations, different in religion and language" who split and populate the church on this festival are a chaotic Babel—for Lithgow—a demonstration of its potentiality and heresy to split and win but the one truth. When his ill-tempered Protestantism—on other occasions—was not on edge, Lithgow was able to admire the enormous diversity he experienced. "This incorporate World of Grand Cairo is the most admirable and greatest City, seene upon the earth," Lithgow says, for example, about Cairo while narrating his Egypt-journey (269).

The diversity of overseas nations is lauded rather than condemned. Lithgow has the ability to distinguish the cosmopolitanism of Cairo from that of Jerusalem for he connects it with commerce rather than with apostasy or the myriads of mistakes: that he notices throughout Cairo "a great commerce... with exceeding many nations... wonder-fully peopled with infinite numbers" (271) and presenting a diverse array of affluent goods for sale. Unlike the steadiness, insularity, and social cohesion of Britain itself, this culturally diverse mingling and migration

of different nations, boosted by economic powers, rendered the culture of Mediterranean country drastically divergent (and thus so intriguing) for travelling Britons.

Unlike most British travellers to the countries of the Mediterranean Sea, William Lithgow was a spy whose rudimentary goal was to collect facts and information and send them back to Britain. British merchants were more likely to appreciate and accept Mediterranean cosmopolitanism than other Europeans. The comments on Aleppo made in 1583 by John Eldred is noteworthy:

> This is the greatest place of traffike for a dry towne that is in all these parts: for hither resort Jewes, Tartarians, Persians, Armenians, Egyptians, Indians, and many sorts of Christians, and injoy freedome of their consciences, and bring hither many kindes of rich merchandizers (Hakluyt, 1903).

Conversion to Islam and the meaning of Turkishness

In the early 16th century, the terms turn Turk and trafficking initially emerged in the English dialect, coinciding with an increase in the number of Englishmen leaving Christian England to seek their fortunes in the Muslim world. 'Turning Turk' was the epithet for the converted Muslims, while the term Turk represented any type of Muslim, not merely "a subject of the Ottoman sultan" (Burton, 2005, p. 16). Conversion to Islam was viewed as subversion and a betrayal from the Christian perspective. As a result, the then scholars metaphorically used the term, as in Hamlet's voice, to denote any type of deception or betrayal. In Renaissance plays, Shakespeare's and Marlowe's, for example, Turkishness mirrored negatively to the essence of Christianity. Likewise, Shakespeare, in his historical play 2 Henry lV, writes: "This is the English, not the Turkish court, / Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds, / But Harry Harry," (5.2.46–49). One European who travelled to the Mediterranean countries characterised the Turks as "all pagans and infidells, Sodomites, liars, and drunkards," (Sherley, 1936, p. 2). Turkish belief is based on "collusion and deceit" according to another description (Greville, 1966, p. 230). To put it another way, becoming a Turk meant abandoning Christian values.

However, numerous English males and females, like the Moorish general of Shakespeare, were worried about the adverse consequences of interaction with the Turkish people. Anglo-Ottoman relations were criticised by European emissaries as an English treachery. Thomas More characterised it as "the common corps of Christendom"(Baumer, 1944, pp. 26–48). British missionaries became concerned with the fast growth of the Anglo-Ottoman contact: "Many hundreds are Musselmans in Turke, and Christians at home; doffing their religion as they doe their clothes, and keeping a conscience for every Harbor where they shall put in" (Edward Kellet [and Henry Byam], 1628, pp. 78, 74). In a similar fashion, when the renowned scholar John Deacon expressed his concern in 1616 about "our careless entercourse of trafficking with the contagious corruptions, and customes of forreine nations," his first evidence was "that so many of our Englishmens minds are thus terriblie Turkished with Mahometan trumperies." (Deacon, 1616, p. 55)

Britons altering attitudes towards Islamic empires

There are three aspects to what MacLean and Matar (2011) emphasizes when it comes to differentiating English perceptions toward various territories of the Islamic world in British writings. First of all, interpretations, responses, and reactions to Muslim empires were inextricably linked to the balance of power, as well as English progress in mapping and military tactics. The Levant Company never depended on military or naval force to achieve its objectives in the Ottoman Mediterranean. In order to intimidate or seek revenge, no English navy ever bombarded Iskenderun or Izmir. Howsoever, following the failed invasion on Algiers in 1621in the North African territory by Sir Robert Mansel, the English navy invaded in 1637 in Sale, which they kept doing until the last decade of the century, with deadly attacks on Algiers and Libyan Tripoli in 1669 and 1675 respectively. By this time, the British navy, accompanied by France, had destroyed Morocco's and all the regencies' naval capabilities.

Secondly, by the mid-1500s, a vast collection of British writings, which I will discuss a bit more elaborately in the following section, was available, from reports of travellers to books on eschatology to biblical documentaries, and even to plays, on the Ottoman Empire and its religions. The famous captivity stories were also available. There were fewer papers and writings on Indian and Persian Islam and Muslims in those areas with the same intensity of venomous concentration on religious affairs. Britons discovered new peoples, cultures, and societies in India and Persia, and yet they responded positively to Islam for Muslims were not as looming as they were found in the Mediterranean, “and because they often found the ‘Moors’ mixed with Hindus, ‘Gentiles’, and ‘Hindustanis’, which meant the encounter was much less defined in terms of religion” (G. M. and N. Matar, 2011, p. 19). Manuscripts concerning North Africa were highly critical and fixated on Muslims, for they were the leading religious society in that area, though British writings routinely denounced the tiny Jewish population as well. In India, Persia, and further east, however, the rhetoric was associated with commerce, problems with local ruling elites, the rage of invaders, not to underestimate conflict with the Portuguese and the Dutch, and to a lesser degree with Danes and Venetians. Unlike the Islamic Mediterranean, The Indian Ocean was unable to elicit religious discomfort and condescension, for it was the Portuguese Catholicism, which committed conversion of religion, not Islam. Presumably, if Aurengzebe had enforced the Jizya tax on the Britons, which he imposed on his own people in 1679, they could have been altered to Islam. However, he did not do it. Resultantly, unlike the 'Grand Turk' who represented a widely known character of violence and repressive tyranny, Safavid and Mughal leaders were hardly repudiated on stage or in sermons. 'Turk Gregory never did such deeds in arms as I have done this day,' Shakespeare's Falstaff brags in I Henry IV (5. 3. 45) recalling the audience that the sultan of the Ottoman empire was a chief opponent intertwined with the Pope, another all-embracing opponent of Protestant Britain. And very few captives, after they returned from North Africa with wrath, attempted to write negatively about Indian or Persian Muslims.

Thirdly, the English brought prejudiced and ambiguous recollections of the religious wars with them when they journeyed into the Mediterranean sea. They also carried a hateful mind-set bolstered by pictures of the ‘Turk's Head' adorning archery butts and public buildings and the

innumerable performances of the heroic English fighting Turks and Saracens, which were recalled in epics, plays, and ballads. Most likely, Elizabethan marines entering the Mediterranean and confronting the Muslim community for the very first time were troubled by "centuries-old images of confrontation and eschatological holy war" (G. M. and N. Matar, 2011, p. 10). While travelling through the western Mediterranean, the English came across a region that was boiling with animosity from the Moriscos, the former Spanish Muslim community. The Moriscos, who had been evacuated from their homes and stripped of their history, invaded Christian shipping, making no distinction amidst English Protestants and Spanish Catholics. The same period saw rulers in the Ottoman provinces recalling the 1541 and 1573 attacks on Algiers and Tunis respectively, while the governors of Morocco grudged the forts and settlements established from the late fifteenth century on their shores by the Christians from Europe.

Dramatic and textual works featuring the Islamic empire

The Britons composed over sixty dramatic works over the Islamic settings, themes, and characters in the midst of 1579 and 1624. The majority of them took place in London. Even though several new studies on this subject have recently been published, which has ended a lengthy era of negligence since *The Crescent and the Rose*—Samuel Chew's 1937 study—there is widespread agreement among scholars that "simplification and stereotyping were the rules by which Britons represented Muslims" (Burton, 2005, p. 11). Instead, *Traffic and Turning* (2005) asserts that British characterisations of Muslims were complicated and multifaceted, moving in response to a changeable connection of cultural, political, and economic forces over time (ibid).

In addition, Dimmock argues that Ottoman Empire was the focal point of early modern literature. He adds:

> In terms of English literature alone, the end of the sixteenth- and beginning of the seventeenth-century also marks a high point in the production of texts of all kinds relating to the Ottoman Empire and a point at which the portrayal of the 'turke' on the stage had achieved an articulacy and a variety that would perhaps be repeated, but would not be superseded (Dimmock, 2016, p.6).
> With religious division at its core, the rapid spread of printing press across northern

Europe was critical in the development and refinement of notions of the 'turke,' as printers galvanised by Ottoman incursions into Europe produced a vast amount of material in numerous languages – "some three thousand five hundred titles were printed in the sixteenth century," according to one estimate (Levy, 1992, p. 13). Each of the following chapters aims to place this developing encounter in its historical context, demonstrating how an ongoing engagement with the Ottoman Empire and Islam has occupied a central position in English cultural life from the very beginning of the country's history.

Numerous texts, as I mentioned in the preceding paragraph, were written throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italian, Latin, German, and French about cultural and

military clashes in the midst of the Ottoman Empire and western European countries, to which the English paid attention for collecting information about the 'Turks'. The works of these writers chronicled many different conflicts and dynasties, which were prefaced by descriptions of the emergence of 'Mahomet' and the origins of Islam. Britons were, of course, compelled to feel tremendous anxiety and antagonism toward the Turkish navies and troops, for they made their way towards Malta and Vienna in1566 and1529, respectively. However, the last few decades of the 17th century saw a fall in the military prowess of the Ottoman sultans and their people and observed that the English affairs in the eastern Mediterranean were free from the Ottoman naval threat, which influenced British publications tremendously: they expressed no more invectives of which *Generall Historie of the Turkes* by Richard Knolles (Knolles, 1603) is a notable example. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters, sent from Istanbul and Edirne, expressed ease and curiosity rather than anxiety in the early 1700s, show how things were different from what Richard Knolles depicted the—'present terrour of the worlde'in his book.

Jonathan Burton's Defence against Nabil Matar's complaints

Despite the numerous encounters between Muslims and Englishmen, Matar claims as Jonathan Burton underscores that "there was no allusion in either the characterisation or the dialogue in drama to specific aspects of Muslims that could be traced to actual meetings with them(Burton, 2005, p. 20). Furthermore, he claims that "without any uniquely distinguishing features", Britons represented Muslims on the stage (ibid). He asserts that "not a single play about the Muslim Levant and North Africa that appeared in the Elizabethan, Jacobean, or Caroline periods showed the Muslim in a morally heroic and favourable light," echoing the earlier evaluations of Anthony Barthelemy and Elliot Tokson. Rather, Matar observes the rise of stock actors "Eleazer and Othello become the defining literary representation of the 'Moor,' and Bajazeth, Ithamore, and Amure of the 'Turk'" (ibid).

Burton questions Matar's stand in a number of ways (Burton, 2005). First of all, Burton asserts that it is debatable that Goffe's Amurath and Marlowe's Ithamore and Bajazeth represent a kind of character or stock character. Howsoever, to extend this kind to all of the Islamic characters of this era in the belief that nobody did appear in a positive light would be to erase the dignity of Peele's Abdelmelec, Greville's Camena and Mustapha, Wilson's unnamed judge, Heywood's Joffer, Marlowe's Selim Calymath and Orcanes from history. Tamburlaine and Bajazeth, both written by Marlowe, are so complex that it is impossible to see them as one-dimensional representations of Muslim figures in English literature (D'Amico, 1991). Furthermore, in order to combine Shakespeare's Othello and Dekker's Eleazer into one form, it is necessary to consider a bit more in these protagonists than merely the colour of their skin. Indeed, according to the novel *The Battle of Alcazar* written by George Peele, differentiation amid different "types" of Muslims might be possible through skin colour (Peele, 2001). However, the diabolical "Negro Moore" Muly Hamet and the "just and honourable" Abdelmelec of Peele are not the only examples of diversity between Islamic protagonists within just a single play; there are many others as well. Let us consider *The Jew of Malta* of Marlowe, wherein the noble Selim Calymath stands in stark contrast to the villainous Ithamore, even though both men are defined as Turks.

That there are no traces of "specific aspects of Muslims" in the play misrepresents a desire to find "specific aspects" at the expense of overlooking others in the play. Although no representations of "actual meetings" are made in the Turkish plays, traces of such meetings can be found in the very distortions of the plays themselves. The characterisation of Muslim figures in works such as Wilson's *Three Ladies of London*, Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk*, Massinger's *Renegado*, and Middleton's *Lord Mayor's Day* is intended to compensate for actual experiences.

According to previous research, the relationship between early modern Christianity and Islam was far more complicated than the simple prejudice and hostility depicted in some works of the period would lead one to believe. Emily Bartels has demonstrated in her research on Marlowe's "spectacles of strange-ness" that "the Renaissance vision of the East was markedly double-sided" (McJannet, 1996, pp. 9–34). Daniel Vitkus agrees with her assertion that attitudes toward the Turks were tempered by admiration for Ottoman order and discipline, and he goes on to elaborate on this point. Vitkus demonstrates that English interest in international commerce extended beyond admiration for Ottoman military prowess and into the realm of cross-cultural collaborations (Vitkus, 2003). As Ania Loomba points out, "we need to be aware of the ways in which both blacks and Turks can be glamorised while also being despised in contemporary representations" (Loomba, 2002). It is her contention that the two were intertwined "through the Spanish discourse on Moorishness, through medieval stereotypes of black Turks or Egyptians, as well as more recent developments in global relations" (206).

CONCLUSION

The encounter between the Islamic world and Elizabethan England was really a paradisiacal blessing for the Britons, through which they had been able to get acquainted with each other by exchanging their cultural, religious, and social values. It is Elizabeth's farsightedness that eventually made her able to establish a substantial and meaningful diplomatic relationship with the sixteenth-century Muslim world, precisely with the Ottoman Empire and the Moroccan Empire, both of whom offered her military help against catholic Spain, the inborn enemy for protestant England. In addition, it is precisely because of the Queen's seamless, majestic effort and her perceptiveness, Britons could build a prolific mercantile association with the Mediterranean and Southeast Asian—affluent and wealthy Muslim— countries who eagerly came forward to welcome them and gave them access to commerce and diplomatic assistance. Even the Muslim world offered the Britons diverse categories of jobs and residence in its periphery regardless of their Christian background. All of these accesses, as Dimmock observes, contributed significantly and magnificently to the making of early modern England not only by helping economically but by influencing her socially, culturally, and aesthetically (Dimmock, 2016, p.16; Lach 1965). However, after the demise of the Queen, this celestial relationship with the Islamic world declined noticeably.

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