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THE ORIENTAL OTHER: SOLIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT IN KYD'S *SOLIMAN AND PERSEDA*

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Abstract. The image of Sultan Soliman I, the Magnificent (1520–1566) is curious in Elizabethan Age as an image of the Oriental Other. Sultan Soliman is represented in Thomas Kyd's *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* (1588) for entertainment. The thematic impact of Soliman's personality and his life is portrayed in this drama. It is a distinctive portrait of an Oriental sultan in the Elizabethan eyes. Although historians envisage Soliman with admiration for his Oriental personage, Kyd personifies an Elizabethan stereotyped depiction of a Turkish sultan rather than the historical image of Soliman. Kyd's Soliman is an immodest king with blood on his hands who cares only for his lust. Soliman tried several times to seduce Perseda, a Byzantine girl. His lust and injustice caused her death but Perseda the heroine put an end to his tyranny by poisoning him. Although Kyd describes his fear of the Turkish presence in Europe, he expresses his fascination with the Turkish Sultan. The characters of Soliman and Perseda represent the Oriental and the Occidental.

Keywords: Thomas Kyd, Soliman, Perseda, Erastus, Rhodes, love, lips, fortune, murder, Turkey.

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1. Introduction

The essay tries to show that Soliman the Magnificent in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* is a dramatic representation of the Oriental Other. The idea that the 'other' is noteworthy first and foremost as a threat to cherished values and interests, was firmly established in relations between European and Ottoman cultures. Prior to the Ottoman expansion in the Renaissance age, Elizabethan dramatists lacked elaborate notions of an Oriental Other, and indeed took little interest in their Ottoman neighbours. Where initial Elizabethan ideas about the

Ottomans were shaped by insecurity in the face of a theological and political challenge, early European ideas about Ottoman neighbours developed within a context of political dynamism and cultural self-confidence. *Soliman and Perseda* represents the Elizabethan response to Soliman and Turkey as stereotyped by anti-Oriental prejudices. Said remarks that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said 2003:2)**.**

The Elizabethan library contains many sourcebooks for authors about Turkey: *Danad's da Lezz's Historie Turchesca* (1513), *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597), Peter Aston's *A Short Treatise upon the Turks Chronicles* (1564), and Hugh Gough's *The Offspring of the House of Ottomans* (1553). In the Renaissance cultural artefacts, Sultans are depicted deep in dalliance with European ladies and are praised for their magnanimity (Chew 1965:483). In *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* (1588), Thomas Kyd has stereotyped Soliman with an ungrounded love story in history. The historical image of Soliman's devotion to Hurrem (i.e. known in Europe as Rossa, Rosselana, or Roxolana), his beloved wife and mother of his sons has no reference in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*. Roxolana is considered to be of Russian descendant. From her status in the Ottoman court, her character as a royal concubine took a rather curious turn in English literature.

Turkey is a geo-cultural interface between the Orient and the Occident, thus a strategic locus in the world map. Europe views Turkey as a country which has steadfastly preserved its Oriental-Islamic cultural heritage. The Turks are a tribal nation and their original land is in the desert of Turkestan in Central Asia. In the Middle Ages, they emigrated, settled in Mesopotamia, Syria and Egypt, and embraced Islam. Among the Turkish tribes, the most active and war-like was the one led by Othman or Osman I (1258–1326). The Turks who followed him were called Ottomans. Osman I and his supporters occupied central Asia in 1300, and he assumed the title of Amir. Sultan Mohammed II's (1451–1481) capture of Constantinople in 1453 made Westerners acutely conscious of the Ottoman threat, a threat Europe had previously only vaguely considered. The literary response to this new threat, especially by humanists, was slanted against the Turks. This followed a tradition stemming from Europe's first encounters with Islam in the seventh century when Islam was portrayed as a religion founded on bellicosity and barbarity, a perception that continued into the Middle Ages (Bisaha 2004:15).

2. Elizabethan Soliman the Magnificent

The impact of Sultan I (or Suleyman) on the Western imagination is comparable only to that of Saladin. In his famous *Generall Historie of the Turks* (1603), the venerated English historian Richard Knolles describes him as "the magnificent emperor of the East" as well as a "law maker". Soliman I succeeded his father Selim I in 1520. His reign represents the most glorious period in the history of Ottoman Empire. The Elizabethan audience was keen on the affair of the Turkish

Other. Soliman was civilized enough to attract Englishmen. He was a rationalized character within the Oriental tradition, customs, and religion.

Elizabethan playwrights incorporated such Turkish figures in their works as the Turkish sultans – Bajazeth I (1389–1403), Soliman I (1520–1566), Selim II (1566–1574), Amurath III (1574–1595), and Turkish Muhammad II (1451–1481). Their Turkish material had considerable influence on English literature, becoming a classic collection of the whole Orient. As a sign of the Elizabethan fascination with the Orient, many great Elizabethan plays carry the titles of Turkish names and are set in Constantinople such as Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1588), George Peele's *Turkish Mahomet* (1595), an unknown author's *The Tragical Reign of Selimus* (1594), Thomas Goffe's *The Couragious Turk, or Amurath the First* (1631), Lodowick Carlell's *The Famous Tragedy of Osmond the Great Turk* (1637), Thomas Mason's *The Turk* (1610) *The Courageous Amurath I* (1632), Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1606), and *Alaham* (written c. 1600). Louis Wann categorizes Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* as an Oriental play. As noted by Wann, at least forty-seven Oriental plays were performed on the Elizabethan stage. More significant is the reason which accounts for such a keen interest in the Orient: 'Two-thirds of these Oriental plays were tragedies because the Elizabethans considered the East as the domain of war, conquest, fratricide, lust and treachery' (Wann 1915:168–69).

The long reign of Soliman I the Magnificent, was the Ottoman golden age and was a pragmatic statesman as well as a respectable general. The legend of the Turkish siege of Malta for its defiance of paying an annual tribute is briefly referred to in Marlowe's *Faustus*. This image has the historical background from the time of Sultan Soliman I (1520–1566) ruling Turkey. The Turkish fleet besieged Malta in 1565 to conquer it or to force it to pay an annual tribute to the Ottoman Empire. Later on, the siege failed and no payment was given to the Turks. Soliman is eager to learn the latest about the siege. When the characters of Soliman and two Pashas appear on the stage, Soliman says to Mephistopheles:

> Welcome Mephistopheles from the siege of Malta,
> Rebellions town, that refus'd payment of our
> Yearly tribute…
> Mirth and to increase our joys the more, Caliph
> You let us here the story of Malta's siege. (App. *Faustus* III, 862–866)[1]

Some historians claim that in his youth, Soliman had an admiration for Alexander the Great as Soliman desired to find out how the great ruler had succeeded in uniting the nations of the East and the West (Lamb 1951:14). He was inspired by Alexander's vision of building a world empire that would include the East and the West. To fulfil his promises, he made a great drive for his successive military operations in Asia, Africa and Europe. His military campaigns in the East extended from Algiers to Bagdad and from Hejaz to Aden in Arabia. In Europe he

[1]See the appendix of *The Works of Marlowe* ed. by Brooke in 1910.

took over Belgrade, Budapest, Temesvar, Rhodes, and Tabriz. Though European states were in a constant fear of Ottoman occupation, they admired the prosperity of Turkey. Renaissance England was engaged in a socio-economic relation with Turkey.

Edmund Spenser, who lived in the time of Sultan Soliman, declares that 'the scourge of Turks and plague of infidels', 'great both in name and great in power and might', is 'matchable with the greatest heroes of antiquity' (Spenser 2001:608). In the voyage of Faustus and Mephistopheles, they are hosted by Sultan Soliman, and they admire the Turkish court and cities. Faustus and Mephistopheles attend a great feast in honour of Soliman's recent victory over the knights of Malta. Mephistopheles says:

> …our next shall be
> To see the Sultans Court and what
> Delight great Babylon affords. This day
> The Solden with his Bashawes holds a
> Solemne Feast for his late Victory,
> Obtain'd against the Christians: wee'l be
> His guests… (*Faustus* III, 825–821)

In 1536, diplomats of Sultan Soliman I concluded a treaty with Francis I of France, the Habsburgs' European rival, a treaty that granted the French commercial concessions in the Ottoman Empire in return for an informal alliance against their common enemy. The so-called capitulations also allowed French consuls legal jurisdiction over French subjects in Ottoman domains and recognized the French king as the protector of the Christian holy places in Palestine, concessions that would have long-term effects on Ottoman relations with other foreign powers.

The feast-celebration in the Sultan's Court is a portrait of a channel of contact between the West and the East. The Emperor of Germany, a Western personage, is invited to the feast of the Sultan. The Emperor expresses his friendship and partnership towards the Turkish Emperor. The Emperor of Germany is pro-Turk and wishes victory to Soliman:

> Great Solomaine,
> The glory of Ottoman
> My dear and honour'd Lord. (App. *Faustus* III, 929–931)

The European hegemony over Turkey began at the end of the second half of the sixteenth century. The available knowledge of the Orient intensified the hegemonic nature of Elizabethan understanding. The production of Turkish material on London stage was based more or less entirely upon Elizabethan consciousness. There emerged a complex Turkish colour in the Elizabethan taste which has a prototype of fear and fascination in the Ottoman Empire. With the imperial theme of the collapse of Sultan Soliman, Kyd's *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* (1598) seems to mix up history and fiction.

3. Kyd's Soliman

Lukas Erne investigates the authorship of Kyd's *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* to conclude that Thomas Kyd was the author of one extraordinarily generative play (2001:1). Whereas earlier commentators have 'reduced' Kyd to this 'most famous' of his plays, in Beyond the *Spanish Tragedy*: Lukas Erne sets out to prove that the dramatist "can be identified with some confidence as the author of at least five plays: *The Spanish Tragedy, Soliman and Perseda, Corelia, Don Horatio* ... and the lost *Hamlet*" (2001:xi). Kyd's *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* (1598) depicts the force and the roles of various cultural and political representations in the ever-changing discourse about the Ottoman court. Kyd tries to conjure up a vision of the Ottoman royal culture and lifestyle. The production of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, *The Spanish Tragedy* (1584) and William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), refer to the event of the occupation of Rhodes by Turkey which horrifies Christendom. In both of Kyd's tragedies, Soliman occupies a central role with Ibrahim Eraste (Lorenzo and Erastus in Kyd's plays, and Alphonso in Davenant's) and Perseda, a fictional character. In history, when the young Soliman was administrating Magnesia, Ibrahim Eraste was a Christian child slave. Eraste was brought up as a Muslim and became his regular aide when Soliman became a Sultan. Yet in the midst of a brilliant career as a general, administrator, and diplomat, Eraste was put to death by Soliman's decree in 1536 (Rogers and Ward, 1988:9–10). Eraste was accused of hiding his love for the European Christians.

The historical Sultan Soliman I (1520–1566) remained the most popular character among all sultans in both the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. For Kyd, Soliman I was one of the preeminent rulers since under Soliman's leadership the Ottoman Empire became the world's foremost power. Haleb, Soliman's brother, describes the reputation of Soliman in saying: "Ah Soliman, whose name hath shaked thy foes, \ As withered leaves with autumn thrown down" (I.V, 29–30). Brusor Commander-in-Chief, also praises Sultan Soliman:

> We come with mighty Soliman's command,
> Monarch and mighty Emperor of the world,
> From East to West, from South to Septentrion' (III.4, 3–5).

The allusion to the historical crime of Soliman in killing his son Prince Mustapha in 1553 is intentionally represented in Soliman's murder of his brother Amurath in *Soliman and Perseda* to introduce his violence which has brought a lot of sympathy to Mustapha in Elizabethan Europe. In *Soliman and Perseda,* Mustapha is replaced by Amurath as Soliman's brother. Kyd refers to history as a source of the death episode as the spirit of death promises in making this tragedy: "Mark well what follows, for the history / Proves me chief actor in this tragedy" (III.1, 49–50). The scene ends up with heavy Ottoman royal bloodshed. Kyd excessively highlights the Turkish violence. Amurath is killed by Soliman because Amurath was accused of killing his brother Haleb. Soliman, nevertheless,

expresses his sorrow and grief over the issue. Though Amurath claims his love to Soliman, Soliman denies: "No, Amurath, for murdering him thou diest" (I.V, 81). Soliman mourns his wrongdoing:

> Yet, Amurath, thou wert my brother too,
> … … … … … … …
> Aye, aye, and thou as virtuous as Haleb,
> And I as dear to thee as unto Haleb,'
> … … … … … … …
> Withhold thy hand from heaping blood on blood? (I.5, 95–105)

Soliman thinks that the Turkish preparation debate between brothers to invade Rhodes is the reason for their death. Soliman is very arrogant as he holds life and death in his hand. Soliman becomes the angel of death. He plans to take revenge from the people of Rhodes. The plan to kill Rhodians might have created a great dislike among the audience. Soliman says:

> Then farewell, sorrow; and now, revenge, draw near
> In controversy touching the Isle of Rhodes
> My brothers died; on Rhodes I'll be revenged.
> Now tell me, Brusor, what's the news at Rhodes? (III.1, 8–11)

Kyd's political subtext is epitomized in the play-let, which represents on one level his symbolic recapitulation of Turkish/Christian warfare in the Mediterranean, beginning with the Turkish conquest of Rhodes in 1522. The image of the character of Sultan Soliman is echoed again, briefly with reference to Rhodes, for entertainment by Balthazar in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Balthazar also remarks on the blessings of Islam and appreciates Soliman for his war campaigns:

> Bashaw, that Rhodes is ours, yield heavens the honour,
> And holy Mahomet, our sacred prophet; …
> But thy desert in conquering Rhodes is less
> Than in reserving this fair Christian nymph,
> Perseda, blissful lamp of excellence
> Whose eyes compel, like powerful adamant
> The warlike heart of Soliman to wait. (*Span*. 4.4, 11–19)

Elizabethan audiences were reminded of the historical fact that forty-four years ago the island was occupied by Soliman. In 1522, Sultan Soliman besieged Rhodes for six months and finally conquered the island with the support of some Christian agents. Various Elizabethan writings talk about many imperial Ottoman court stories. The written material about Soliman in Elizabethan period refers to his expansion in Europe while he has been the Sultan. Kyd refers to the Turkish threat in the words of Brusor, Soliman's aide, in saying:

> Now Rhodes is yoked, and stoops to Soliman.
> There lies the Governor, and there his son;
> Now let their souls
> Tell sorry tidings to their ancestors,

> What millions of men, oppressed with ruin and scathe,
> The Turkish armies did [o'er-throw] in Christendom' (III.5, 1–4).

The name of Rhodes is repeated thirty-two times. It has a key significance to the textual politics of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*. The Turkish commander, Brusor, informs Soliman of the fall of Rhodes: "My gracious Lord, rejoice in happiness;\ All Rhodes is yoked, and stoops to Soliman" (IV.1, 59–60). Kyd describes the fall of Rhodes at the hand of Soliman in the fourth act. Soliman is happy and depicts the scene in saying: "Rhodes is taken, and all the men are slain,/Except some few that turn to Mahomet" (IV.1, 42). Basilisco, a Rhodian knight, displays sorrow over the capture of Rhodes by Turkish troops. He blames his Christian fellows because they are not united. He promises himself to bring back friends in arms by money. The national unity of Rhodian fighters lost their unity when they ceased to be corrupt. Basilisco notes:

> Since the expugnation of the Rhodian Isle,
> Methinks a thousand years are over-past,
> … … … … … … …
> … for the loss of Rhodes, that paltry Isle,
> Or for my friends that there were murthered.
> My valor everywhere shall purchase friends,
> And where a man lives well, there is his country.
> Alas, the Christians are but very shallow
> In giving judgment of a man-at-arms,
> A man of my desert and excellence; ... (IV.2, 11–10)

In history, the Christian Knights put up a fierce fight with the Turkish invaders before they surrendered Rhodes to the Turks. The historian Dominique Bouhours states: "the Order of St. John to lose Rhodes, after they [Knights] had held and maintain'd it with so much constancy, so much Expense of treasure, and loss of blood, was against the whole power of the Barbarous Mahometans, for the space of two hundred and thirty years" (506). The semantic subtext of Kyd's story is a European dream to overthrow the Turkish regime from Rhodes and other European lands. Indeed, locating Perseda in the occupied island of Rhodes exaggerates the threat of a Turkish incursion.

Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* is also a portrait of Elizabethan England. The play includes many references to Queen Elizabeth. For Elizabethans, Queen Elizabeth rivals the Virgin Mary: "In earth the first, in heaven the second Maid" (Haigh, 2000:13). Kyd's Perseda is associated with England's lifestyle and Queen as powerful, gentle, chaste and resolute. The Christian character of Perseda shows enthusiasm for Queen Elizabeth I. It is evident in Perseda's costume, which recalls a mythic imagery often linked with Queen Elizabeth. Herionimo describes Perseda in the *Spanish Tragedy* saying: "madam, you must attire yourself / Like Phoebe, Flora, or the Huntress" (4.1.147–148), which looks like Queen Elizabeth's. Alma finds that the play-within-a-play of *Soliman and Perseda* introduces a secondary threat, not as urgent as the former was to England or as the Ottomans to Europe.

England, like Europe, did not feel exempt from the lurking wrath of the Turks. It is within the Soliman and Perseda play, through the character of Perseda who again resembles Elizabeth that the secondary Ottoman threat is played out (2009:17–18). Though Perseda is Greek and obviously Catholic, with her English royal costume, she becomes the national and religious symbol for the Elizabethan Protestant audience. The Elizabethan audience would have simply perceived her as a Christian woman chased by a lustful Turkish Emperor, and hence they would have felt sorry for her. The stories of the sultan's love for girls and taking them to concubinage seem to have appealed to the English (Kahf, 1999:6).

The theme of Sultan Soliman in love with the Rhodian Christian young lady Perseda is historically doubtful. The Grand Signior Soliman has taken to himself as his Empress a slave woman from Russia, called Roxolana, and there has been a great feasting wedding. Kyd's Soliman seems greedy enough to have anything he thinks is beautiful. He wants to add Perseda to his possession. It is probably the Turkish threat to occupy England. Kyd has personified England in the personality of Perseda. Kyd successfully draws in the mind of the Elizabethan audience the connection between Perseda and the Turkish threat. Soliman and Perseda represent a symbolic threat to each other, but Soliman is not an imminent threat to England, just like Perseda is not to Turkey. England, like Europe, did not feel let off from the waiting wrath of the Turks. Soliman's desire to have Perseda for himself is displayed as an imminent invasion of a Christian country. Through a sexual contact, Soliman thinks that he will triumph over her body to fulfil his imperial conquest. He frankly convinced himself of having her body as "She is my vassal, and I will command" (IV.1, 102). Therefore, he approaches her to have her as queen. He calls her "Coy virgin, knowest thou what offense it is \ To thwart the will and pleasure of a king? \ Why, thy life is done, if I but say the word" (IV.1, 103–105). Soliman is represented as a sexual predator and a manipulative and ruthless tyrant.

The episodes of *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* focus on the beautiful Perseda who is relentlessly pursued by the Turkish Sultan Soliman. Perseda, a young maiden of Rhodes is described by Lucnia as one "Whom women love for virtue, men for beauty, \ All the world loves, none hates but envy" (II.1, 28–29). Basilisco, a one-sided lover, says "Perseda's beauteous excellence, \ Shame to love's queen, and empress of my thoughts" (II.1, 32–33). Perseda is particularly beautiful, graceful and modest. She loves Erastus, a Rhodian knight. However, Perseda's irresistible charm and playfulness, or perhaps her white skin and soft lips, may have stood out among other Rhodian ladies. It may have also been her ability to attract others.

Erastus loses Perseda's gift, a valuable necklace, which has caused a misunderstanding. Perseda accuses Erastus of unfaithfulness and jealously and calls him 'false Erastus, full of treachery,' because she witnesses Lucina carrying the chain which she gave to Erastus. In fact, Erastus has lost the chain which is found by Lucina's lover. Subsequently, Perseda accuses Erastus of disloyalty. By deploying invading Turkish troops, Erastus is arrested by the Turks. In Sultan Soliman's

court, Erastus demonstrates his fearlessness and honour and is befriended by the bad-tempered Soliman.

Ottoman wars in Europe brought many thousands of Christians under the Ottoman sultan's direct control. Simultaneously in *Soliman and Perseda,* the Turkish galleys corsairs brought Erastus and Perseda as captives to Constantinople. These young slaves are the most pleasing to the Grand Turk, and must be the best looking, most intelligent, and possess military skills. These janissaries are Christian boys who are destined to serve as the future Grand Viziers and highest pashas in the Sultan's court. They are taken from their services and placed in the higher levels of administration, at which time they are the most important men in the court. For instance, the Christian Erastus is appointed by Soliman as the governor of Rhodes. Kyd, who displays the continuing presence of Christians in Turkish life, does not mention the functioning of a pluralistic society specifically. Kyd shows Erastus serving in a high capacity. He becomes the most preferred Christian slave.

As the play shifts and manipulates the religious into the secular administration of the empire, it becomes easy for Erastus to pursue a fruitful relationship with Soliman. The diversity of ethnicity in Turkey has led Kyd to depict the capture of Erastus, Perseda, Lucina and Basilisco as an example of many Christian men and women in the slavery of the Turkish Sultan. They become Ottoman army regulars. Kyd recognizes that his own lamentations are worthless, as it is too late for the Christendom to undo the suffering of their brethren. To be truly devoted to the Sultan, it is not necessary for Erastus to be a Muslim, so as to fully understand the mentality and actions of his master. Loyalty, however, depends on the position one was destined to occupy in the service of the Grand Turk. Serving the Grand Turk is not merely a duty, but a privilege and an honour. Therefore, Erastus's approach to serve in the Turkish army is welcomed by Soliman. Erastus says:

> Employ me elsewhere in thy foreign wars,
> Against the Persians, or the barbarous Moor,
> Erastus will be foremost in the battle. (III.1, 128–130)

Soliman welcomes Erastus's petition. Erastus will serve Soliman but not against his Italian countrymen though their wrath and cruelty pushed him into exile. Soliman symbolically fights Erastus in which Erastus overcomes Soliman by strength. Soliman acknowledges Erastus's professional skills of knighthood to select him as a captain of Turkish Janissaries and to be his close friend:

> Aye, that, or anything thou shalt desire;
> Thou shalt be Captain of our Janissaries,
> And in our Council shalt thou sit with us,
> And be great Soliman's adopted friend. ... (III.1, 96–100)

The presentation of Europeans and Turks in the Ottoman court is a portrait of the Ottoman ethnic diversity. It shows how the West views the East. Like other writers about East, Kyd errs in believing that Turks provide the best world portal

for Non-Turks into the Turkish society. The Turkish Commander-in-Chief Brusor is himself a clandestine Christian. He states: 'As if that we and they had been one sect' (III.1, 38). Soliman politically introduces the Turkish point of view about the holy wars in Europe for the sake of virtue promotion:

> Whate'er he be, even for his virtue's sake,
> I wish that fortune of our holy wars
> Would yield him prisoner unto Soliman;
> That, for retaining one so virtuous,
> We may ourselves be famed for virtues.
> But let him pass; and, Brusor, tell me now,
> How did the Christians use our knights? (III.1, 37)

Soliman realises the misunderstanding of the West. He says to the Rhodian knight Erastus:

> Speak; for, though you Christians
> Account our Turkish race but barbarous,
> Yet have we ears to hear a just complaint. (III.1, 58–60)

Soliman tries to explain to Erastus that the Turkish logistic actions and wars in Europe aim to apply justice and reduce poverty:

> And justice to defend the innocent,
> And pity to such as are in poverty,
> And liberal hands to such as merit bounty. (III.1, 64–6)

In entering into the grand sultan's service, Erastus and later, Perseda were stripped of their own liberty, and suddenly became totally dependent on the Sultan. Erastus and Perseda experienced Turkish life. Therefore, Erastus and Perseda learned to approach the Ottoman life from a different perspective. From their first time in the palace, they learned that Islamic virtual life is the foundation of the Turkish society. How they did so would not merely define their tenure in captivity, but also, for those able to permanently emancipate themselves, how it would be reflected later in their lives. Erastus says: "I must confess that Soliman is kind" (IV.1, 7). Erastus as a slave serves as a soldier in the Turkish army and is selected as a ruler of his own county. Erastus takes a high view of Soliman. He describes him as a man of 'virtuous fame' (III.1, 57). He has the deepest devotion and admiration for Soliman. The historical Sultan Soliman was famous as a fair ruler and as a corruption fighter. As well as being a talented goldsmith and eminent poet, Soliman was also a great patron of artists and philosophers, managing the golden age of the Ottoman Empire's cultural development (Atıl 1998:24). For instance, this is how Andrew Borde (c. 1490–1549), the English traveller, physician and writer, describes Turkey under the rule of Soliman:

> In Turkey be many regions & provinces, for the great Turk, which is an Emperor, has, beside his own possessions, conquered the Saracens land, and has obtained the Sophy's land, and the island of the Rhodes, with many other provinces, having it in pesable possession, he doth conquered and subdue, as

> well by police and gentleness, as by his fettes of ware, in Turkey is cheap of vittles, and plenty of wine Turkey was a cheap and plentiful country, under the law of Mahomet (Borde 1981:215).

Along the scenes of *Soliman and Perseda*, Perseda remains suspicious about the virtue of Soliman. Perseda is an icon, and despite Erastus's assertion to convert her to be in close presence and service of Sultan Soliman, she will not later let Erastus leave Rhodes again to meet his death in Constantinople.

Erastus deeply loves Perseda. He describes her as "Matchless Perseda, she that gave me strength \ To win late conquest from many victors' hands"(II.1, 105–6). Besides Perseda's love for Erastus giving her extra power to think of him with good intention, Erastus has done his best to find the chain. Since love and jealousy mislead Perseda in blindness, Erastus says:

> Shall I let Perseda understand
> How jealousy had armed her tongue with malice.
> Perseda is upset with herself over the suspicion. (II.1, 138)

Perseda chooses to follow Erastus, but she is captured by marine Turks and is presented to Soliman. Perseda finally accepts that Erastus's thoughts are true. Perseda admits that she will 'soar' in 'the Turkish land,' (II.2, 40). Perseda's deep love for Erastus makes her challenge the danger of the Turks which might lead her to slavery. She insists on following Erastus and joining him at any cost:

> Until I meet Erastus, my sweet friend;
> And then and there fall down amid his arms,
> And in his bosom there power forth my soul,
> For satisfaction of my trespass past. (II.2, 44)

On laying eyes on her in Constantinople, Sultan Soliman falls in love with her at first sight. Soliman is astonished by her beauty. When Brusor hides her with a veil, Soliman sexually admires Perseda's lips. He describes that moment:

> For there sits Venus with Cupid on her knee,
> And all the Graces smiling round about her,
> So craving pardon that I cannot strike' (IV.1, 119).

In fact, Soliman is overwhelmed by her beauty. He describes his feeling about her neck: "Her milk-white neck, that alabaster tower?" (IV.1, 122). When Soliman heard her 'sound', he metaphorically describes it as "honey, but the sense is gall; \ Then, sweeting, bless me with a cheerful look". Therefore, Soliman physically describes the European lady, Perseda, in a way as he does not find a very beautiful woman in the Orient like Perseda. Soliman's language in describing Perseda is replete with images that make his imagination appear more Occidental than Oriental. He admiringly describes Perseda:

> Fair locks, resembling Phoebus' radiant beams;
> Smooth forehead, like the table of high Jove,
> Small penciled eyebrows, like two glorious rainbows;
> Quick lamp-like eyes, like heaven's two brightest orbs;

> Lips of pure coral, breathing ambrosia;
> Cheeks, where the rose and lily are in combat;
> Neck, whiter than the snowy Appenines;
> Breasts, like two over-flowing fountains,
> Twixt which a vale leads to the Elysian shades,
> Where under covert lies the fount of pleasure
> Which thoughts may guess, but tongue must not profane.
> A sweeter creature nature never made;
> Love never tainted Soliman till now. (IV.1, 77–89)

Soliman's passion for Perseda has an enervating effect on the monarch in him. He believes that his private affection for Perseda is greater than the Ottoman crown and Empire. Soliman's passion portrays the huge loss for monarchy in exchange with love:

> My word is past, and I recall my passions;
> What should he do with crown and Emperie
> That cannot govern private fond affections? (IV.1, 145–147)

Soliman metaphorically describes himself in need to be cured of this love 'malady' (IV.1, 50). When he tries to crown Perseda as empress of the Turkish Empire, she rejects Soliman's seduction (IV.1, 187). She requests him to let her live as "a Christian virgin still, \ Unless my state shall alter by my will" (IV.1, 142–3). Soliman continues his advances, and promises Perseda the crown and life as his empress. On the other hand, Perseda threatens to commit suicide admitting that her 'thoughts are like pillars of adamant, \ Too hard to take a new impression' (IV.1.100).

In the Turkish court, the long-lost lovers Erastus and Perseda are reunited. Soliman has earlier accepted his fate of losing Perseda to Erastus. Therefore, he expresses his love for both. Soliman guarantees their marriage and the couple leaves for Rhodes. He appoints "Erastus, the Governor of Rhodes" (IV.1, 181). Soliman is Nevertheless compelled to view the two young Christians not as friends and spouses, but as embarrassing enemies. Perseda and Erastus appreciate Soliman's gracious attitude: "But still solicit God for Soliman,\ Whose mind hath proved so good and gracious" (IV.1, 201–202). Perseda thanks gracious heavens that brought Soliman from worse to better. Erastus and Perseda are ideal lovers who are doomed to die in an age of war and struggle. The farewell has broken Soliman's heart. He mournfully expresses his sadness:

> Heavens, Love, and Fortune, all three have decreed
> That I shall love her still, and lack her still,
> Like ever-thirsting, wretched Tantalus;
> Foolish Soliman, why did I strive
> To do him kindness, and undo myself? ...
> Well-governed friends do first regard themselves. (IV.1, 216–221)

Soliman still swayed by passion and embarrassed at having allowed Perseda to leave. Brusor advised Soliman to get rid of Erastus by accusing him of an offense.

In actual fact, Brusor is unhappy about the grant of Rhodes to Erastus. He does not want Erastus to enjoy and obtain the fruit of the victory over Rhodes which indeed is made by Brusor. However, Brusor becomes hostile and envious of Erastus. He decides to spoil Erastus's enjoyment in ruling Rhodes which Brusor claims to be his right (IV.1, 185).

4. The tragic plot

The plot of Soliman to kill the young lovers is woeful. It produces a bloody play with a deceitful episode to inject real horror into a tragedy. The plotter Brusor has convinced Soliman to kill Erastus. They will ask Erastus to come. Soliman wants Erastus murdered as a rival for Perseda's love. The plot is intertwined with two witnesses "ready to accuse him \ Of treason done against your mightiness,\ And then he shall be doomed by marshal law" (IV.1, 247–249). Although Soliman permits the young lovers to live safely in Rhodes, he cannot overcome his jealousy, for which Erastus is eventually put to death.

The Sultan's love affairs produce the impression that law and order in the Turkish Empire do not really matter. Soliman accepts Brusor's plan and approves it. He says,

> Oh fine devise; Brusor, get thee gone; ...
> Come thou again; but let the lady stay
> To win Perseda to my will; meanwhile
> Will I prepare the judge and witnesses. (IV.1, 249–253)

When Erastus is arrested in the name of Soliman for a 'treachery' (V.2, 18), Erastus realizes that he has been entrapped in a conspiracy. Unfortunately, Soliman has permitted the killing of Erastus in cold blood. In this episode, Kyd has figured out a mandate from the Islamic jurisdiction to approve the death sentence in murdering Erastus with reference to the Quran. Therefore, the aggressive Marshal asks the two witnesses to swear with "hands upon the Al-Koran" (V.2, 72). The Marshal does not ask for any evidence of Erastus's treachery. The scene shows that Turkey runs its laws unjustly. Then they strangle Erastus. In the earlier scenes, Sultan Soliman shows the qualities of magnanimity and courteousness as it is known in Europe. However, Soliman later disposes his mandate when he has betrayed his friendship in murdering his Christian friend, Erastus. Soliman's actions create the impression that Soliman is defiant and acts out of any obsessive loyalty to Islam.

The same image of killing his close ally Erastus is inspired by the story of Ibrahim Eraste Pasha who was killed on secret charges. By 1535, Ibrahim Eraste had reached the zenith of power and amassed enormous wealth. He built for himself a splendid palace on the Hippodrome, surrounded by beautiful gardens. He also donated numerous charitable and state structures including mosques, *imarets* (public soup kitchens), bridges, and aqueducts (Brill 1993:441). His sudden execu-

tion on March 15, 1536 was conducted secretly and without any apparent reason. Unlike his magnificent career, his end was undignified: his body, stripped of clothes, was thrown outside the harem gate and then clandestinely buried in an unmarked grave. Moreover, all of his estates, foundations, and possessions were confiscated. Even his name eventually disappeared from history books (Rogers and Ward 1988:11).

In another moving elegy, Soliman frankly addresses himself as an unjust and unlawful ruler. Sultan Soliman was not distraught at seeing so much Turkish bloodshed. Soliman is consciously unsatisfied with his dishonest murdering for his friend Erastus. Soliman calls himself 'unjust' and 'wicked'; Soliman also admits to his 'filthy lust' as it has murdered the 'honest love' in his heart (V.2, 90). The play represents the foundations of Ottoman Sultan's super power above law, though the historical figure of Sultan Soliman is known as a lawgiver. Kyd shows to the Elizabethan audience the state of lawlessness and tyranny in Soliman's Turkey which is not in England.

The image of Sultan Soliman is portrayed as having a violent temper, and is labelled as the unwise lustful Sultan of Turkey. This role fits Soliman's actions, because he agrees to murdering Erastus in order to eliminate him as a rival lover. However, Erastus is a foreigner at the court of Turkey, who was captured in battle, befriended by his enemy, and then plotted against by Soliman, unfortunately, days after his wedding to Perseda. While Soliman is watching the cruel bloody scene, he goes on killing the two Janissaries who have killed Erastus. The Marshal takes the two Janissaries to the top of a tower. In self-revenge to his atrocious sins, Soliman has killed the Marshal Judge and the two witnesses. Soliman's hands are soaked in blood. The language of Soliman is also established to enhance his stereotyped Turkish brutality. He is arrogant and unsympathetic about the killed characters in the scene.

The representation of the Turks is stereotypical. For instance, Kyd represents the Turkish magistrates as corrupt, unjust, evil, and ugly. Brusor, the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, is portrayed as ruthless, tyrannical, and is aggressive with Christians. As a fanatic Elizabethan nationalist, Kyd tries to embody the image of the Other – Turks and their Sultan, with this dominant portrayal. There is enough cruelty in the Turkish law system of *Soliman and Perseda* which detracts Soliman's history from his reputed ingenuity, practicality, and simplicity. Through this Turkish law tradition, Kyd's Soliman has constantly breached the system of justice with which Soliman violates sincere friendship and kills innocent people.

The tragedy that must have tarnished Perseda's triumph during this period is the death of her lover. The young appointed ruler Erastus was a charming person and a capable governor of Rhodes. His death was a deeply felt loss for her, and she expressed her grief very publicly. Perseda, the young maiden of Rhodes, mourned the death of her lover Erastus, a Rhodian knight. Basilisco loves Perseda. But Perseda used his love to encourage Basilisco to kill Lucina unfairly. Perseda lost her mind when she lost her beloved Erastus. Perseda says: "… Lucina; if thou lovest me, kill her" (IV.3, 50). Basilisco takes a dagger and feels its sharp point.

He was reluctant to perform Perseda's request. Therefore, Perseda shouts at him saying: "What, darest thou not? Give me the dagger then – There's a reward for all thy treasons past". Then Perseda kills Lucina (IV.3, 53). Perseda thinks of Lucina as an agent to Soliman. By killing her own native lady, Perseda patriotically aims to combat Soliman and his Turksto free Rhodes. She strongly declares that Rhodes is now in the hands of the Rhodian Knights:

> Rhodes now shall be no longer Soliman's;
> We'll fortify our walls, and keep the town,
> In spite of proud, insulting Soliman. (IV.3, 57–59)

To punish the guilty, she disguises herself as a man and puts up a brave struggle against the Turks. As the Turks advance to the walls of Rhodes, Perseda emerges and confronts them. Perseda is stirred with a powerful hate for Soliman, but she appears to acquiesce to his desire for her, though not for long:

> In slaughtering him thy virtues are defamed;
> Did'st thou misdo him in hope to win Perseda?
> Ah, foolish man, therein thou art deceived;
> For, though she live, yet will she nere live thine;
> Which, to approve, I'll come to combat thee. (V.4, 54–53)

Perseda is a defiant Rhodian heroine against the Turkish aggression. She has taken the power over Rhodes which was a log dream for the Rhodian knights. At the beginning of the play, Perseda has lost her lover. Erastus is murdered at the hands of Soliman. Perseda's position as a heroine is not only provided her with a remarkable insight into Turkish injustice, it also allowed her an equally remarkable contact with the Ottoman sultan.

5. The killing kiss

Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* is the progenitor of the English revenge on Turkey, and audiences have tended to focus on Perseda as the main character and the principal revenger. Perseda swears revenge on Soliman and reminds him of his awful deeds in murdering her beloved husband. She sorrowfully defies:

> Aye, now I lay Perseda at thy feet,
> … … … … … … …
> But with thy hand first wounded to the death:
> Now shall the world report that Soliman
> Slew Erastus in hope to win Perseda,
> And murthered her for loving of her husband. (V.4, 60–64)

Soliman decides to reinvade Rhodes and capture Perseda, as he is still hopelessly in love with Perseda. Plotting the death of Erastus, Soliman causes his own eventual downfall. Perseda is now face to face with Soliman. She calls him: 'A Gentleman, and thy mortal enemy, \ And one that dares thee to the single combat'

(IV.4, 4–5). Soliman intends to kill Perseda, when he asks her, 'First tell me, doth Perseda live or no?' Perseda replies and wishes his destruction. She shouts, 'She lives to see the wrack of Soliman.' Then Soliman asks her to fight. Perseda reminds him of his crimes and inhuman slaughter of innocent people. She describes Soliman as an immoral dictator:

> And in Erastus' name I'll combat thee;
> And here I promise thee on my Christian faith, ...
> … … … … … … …
> First let my tongue utter my heart's despite;
> And thus my tale begins; thou wicked tyrant,
> Thou murtherer, accursed homicide,
> For whom hell gapes, and all the ugly fiends
> Do wait for to receive thee in their jaws;
> Ah, perjured and inhuman Soliman, ...
> … … … … … … …
> Ah, wicked tyrant, in that one man's death
> Thou hast betrayed the flower of Christendom.
> Died he because his worth obscured thine? (V.4, 29–40)

Soliman offers a reason for his killing. He says, "I'll not defend Erastus' innocence, \ But [die] maintaining of Perseda's beauty" (V.4, 58–9). Then they fight. Subsequently, he is unknowingly fighting the disguised Perseda. Soliman severely wounds the young woman, claiming a loving kiss before she dies. He has killed Perseda. Soliman mourns too much for his brutal killings. Perseda is a key role in the downfall of his life. Moreover, all of Soliman's estates, reputation, and mightiness collapse. He even thinks he has distorted his character.

Kyd's Soliman is upset about his bad deed in losing his love and killing his beloved: "What, my Perseda? Ah, what have I done? \ Yet kiss me, gentle love, before thou die" (V.4, 65–6). Before this catastrophic end, Soliman exhausts the conventional Oriental stereotype of a deadly tyrant smeared with the blood of his victims. In this moment, the audience is shocked at the murder of Perseda and disappointed by Soliman's escape of justice. Kyd depicts Perseda as a symbol of a paragon of Christendom. As Europe seems unable to restore Rhodes, Europeans are not united. However, the new governor of Rhodes, Perseda, pretends submission to Soliman by kissing him, only to exact her revenge on Soliman: she kills Soliman and then dies herself. Perseda verifies: "A kiss I grant thee, though I hate thee deadly". In return, Soliman thinks that he can triumph over her white body or at least get a kiss from her soft lips:

> I loved thee dearly, and accept thy kiss.
> Why did'st thou love Erastus more than me?
> Or why did'st not give Soliman a kiss. (V.4, 65–70)

Perseda then collapses but, before dying, she murders Soliman when he has kissed her poisoned lips. With that, she defends her chastity from a Turk and destroys the plans of an alliance between the two nations through her political

empowerment. Then Soliman finds a piece of paper with Perseda, and reads in it that he is poisoned and is never going to win Rhodes:

> "Tyrant, my lips were sew'st with deadly poison,
> To plague thy heart that is so full of poison."
> What, am I poisoned? Then, Janissaries,
> Let me see Rhodes recovered ere I die. ... (V.4, 117–120)

Soliman's death is a triumph for the European justice in a posthumous vengeance of the dead Perseda whose lips "sawst [or sauced] with deadly poison". As Soliman is writhing about on the ground, it is a magnificent portrait of Soliman's destruction as a great warrior. The scene brings a painful end to the one-sided romantic love which emphasizes the Ottoman division between their romance and religious creed. Unlike his magnificent career as a law-maker Sultan, his end is undignified: his face is pale, his body is warped and taken outside the gate to be then clandestinely buried in an unmarked grave. Soliman's epitaph is a symbol of a testimony of guilt and his deep love for Perseda:

> Forgive me, dear Erastus, my unkindness.
> I have revenged thy death with many deaths;
> And, sweet Perseda, fly not Soliman,
> When as my gliding ghost shall follow thee,
> With eager mood, through eternal night. (V.4, 147–151)

Soliman has killed Perseda for his political life but he is too weak to suppress his personal lust. The scene shows Soliman's character as a merciless killer and a lustful lover. He thinks that he can satisfy his strong sexual desire on her corpse. Therefore, Perseda's anticipation of Soliman's mindset is the result of this collapse. Before she dies, she says:

> I know the lecher hopes to have my love,
> And first Perseda shall with this hand die
> Than yield to him, and live in infamy' (IV.3, 60–2).

Perseda emerges as a genuinely tragic heroine. She understands the Sultan's nature very well and skilfully uses that knowledge to her advantage. Her intention to take revenge has led her to fight Soliman although she knows that she might be defeated. Her revenge is in her lips. Perseda is aware of Soliman's lust for her beauty, so she has smeared her lips with a lethal poison. The poison is a simple weapon for the final victory. It would be erroneous to believe that Soliman could leave Perseda and Rhodes out of his power.

To sum up, Soliman's death is a defeat of the Ottoman Empire which is not a myth for Europeans. In history, even after a European fleet overwhelmed the Turks at the battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Turks seized all the countries north of Mediterranean, including the entire North Africa, Asia Minor, Greece, Yugoslavia, and much of Austria. In other words, the Turks were approaching the boundaries of Italy. During the scenes of *Soliman and Perseda*, Perseda's royal status and public image are strengthened through her numerous revolts against Turks. For

Soliman, his deadly sins are laws and commandments which direct and drive the general mentality of the Turkish Sultans who chose to be guided by power. Although Kyd enumerates the sins to describe the functioning of the daily Ottoman royal life, he does not attack the eccentricities of the Turkish Islamic doctrine – he does so to present a recognizable dissimilarity between Turkey and Europe.

6. Conclusion

Turkish Orientalism is a form of Elizabethan hegemony particularly with reference to Elizabethan desires, repressions, investments, and representations. It is useful in examining the Elizabethan fascination and fear of the Other, the Turks, in the mainstream of Elizabethan drama in which *Soliman and Perseda* is no exception. The stylistic influence of the Ottoman East on the literature and culture of Western Europe determines the artistic relationships between the two worlds. The European historians write of Soliman and admire his Oriental celebrity. Kyd's play truly represents a Renaissance humanist who rejects the violence of the Turkish super power. Nancy Bisaha has recently indicated the anachronicity of the trend:

> Renaissance humanists, however, present some important challenges to Said's model. Where Said focuses on colonialism as a key component in the formation of the West–East discourse, the bulk of humanist rhetoric on the Turks and Islam shows a highly developed sense of Europe as the cultural superior to the East – precisely at a time when Europe was fighting for its survival (Bisaha, 2004:104).

Thomas Kyd has developed his fascination with the historical character of Sultan Soliman as Soliman who is known in the West as the Magnificent and in the Islamic world as the Lawgiver (Merriman, 1974:96). Although Elizabethan playwrights had been admiring Soliman's personality for over two centuries, he was largely a creation of European imagination. It is this depiction that led Kyd to specify the reputation of Soliman as a fascinating figure in the historical European descriptions of the Turks. In contrast, European writers repeatedly showed the Sultan to be a symbol of Oriental violence. The fear of the Ottoman Empire made Kyd to undermine Soliman's real history in Europe by his ill deeds and inhumanity.

The distortion of the image of Sultan Soliman in the production of *Soliman and Perseda* is a typical tradition for Elizabethan dramatists. It is the result of the fear of the Ottoman Empire among Elizabethan Europeans. The Turkophobia was behind the revenge theme on the stages of Elizabethan London. Taking revenge of an Ottoman image was quite typical in Europe. In Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda,* the revenge theme shares enough common characteristics with the writings of Elizabethan drama. Revenge is included in Senecan and Kydian tragedies.

Hieronimoin *The Spanish Tragedy* delays in executing the revenge, whereas Kyd does not hesitate to include murder. Seneca dramatizes moral insights; the human soul and human behaviour under moral stress. Soliman caused his own destruction with his arrogant behaviour and extravagant lifestyle. Love of Perseda, power, and favouritism may have corrupted him to the point that Soliman forgets his place. Kyd brought disgrace to Soliman's image. Kyd, who was influenced by French experiments in Senecan drama, organized the first English-language dramatization of this event, *Soliman and Perseda* (composed c. 1604; published 1609 in a pirated edition). Kyd also distorts Ottoman history to make Mustapha the heir obvious to Sultan Soliman, and Perseda a cruel usurper.

Kyd explores the ways in which Perseda, as the fair maid of the West, represents the contrast between the strong beautiful Elizabethan Queen and the famous Turkish Sultan. Moreover, in another portrait, Perseda and Soliman represent the Orient and the Occident. It encourages the notion that amongst the clashes between the known and the unknown, the same and the other, the East and the West, continual contact and interaction provides the best basis for coexistence and comprehension. In contrast to chronicles and the English Senecan tragedies that demonized Soliman as an evil law-breaker, Perseda appears as a positive character here, as her sensible advice to the Sultan and her enthralling beauty are highly praised. Moreover, Seneca's prose style is essentially declamatory. Kyd used a passionate tone, figurative language, and indirect methods of expressing meaning and moral epigrams in the speeches of the characters. He is successful enough to bring everything alive in the eyes of the audience.

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