# Misrepresentations of Turks in Early Modern Drama and Motivations Underlying This Denigration

**M. Fatih Esen**
International Burch University
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
fesen@ibu.edu.ba

**Melih Karakuzu**
Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey
mkarakuzu@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** There is no uncertainty about the popularity of the Ottoman Turk in Early Modern Drama. This study will discuss the biased representations of and allusions made to the Ottoman Turk in several early modern plays, the whole of which exceeds 40 in number, and a distinct focus will be drawn on the playwrights' exploitative attitudes and the reasons motivating such attitudes towards the Turkish material, together with their impacts on the playgoers of the time, consequently, the society in general.

**Key words:** Early Modern Drama, misrepresentation, denigration, Ottoman, Turks

## Introduction

Early modern Europe definitely was well aware of the existence of the Turk or Ottoman. Early modern representations of the Ottoman, its sultans and Turks in general were presented in such a manner especially through drama that it made it felt as if it was being newly introduced to the European public. The implication was assumedly due to the fact that the extensive number of plays that focused on the Turkish material and the playwright's consecutive productions on the theme. In fact, it is well known that the European acquaintance of the "Turk" dates further back, if not earlier, to the times of crusades. However, little was known about the Ottoman. The concurrence of the flowering of the drama during Elizabeth's reign and the Ottoman Turks being the dominant power of the time helped the representations of this relation and acknowledgement become intensified. But these representations, having no objective foundations, were mostly allusions misrepresenting and demeaning the Ottomans.

## Historical context

The Ottoman Turks were the dominant power in the Eastern Mediterranean and much of Eastern Europe in the early modern period. By the seventeenth century, the lands that they possessed consisted of Istanbul, Greece, the Balkans, Hungary, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North African shore. Their passage to Thrace and Balkans was before the conquest of Constantinople. Adrianople was made capital by Murad I in 1369 after taking parts of Thrace. He overcame the Serbs in 1389 in Kosovo. In 1444 ottoman were victorious in Varna which was followed by another victory at the second battle of Kosovo Ottoman powers prevailed again at Varna in 1444 and at the second battle at Kosovo in 1448. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmet II annexed Serbia (1454–1455) and took Morea from Venice (1458–1460). As Bernard Lewis remarked, the loss of Constantinople was, for most Europeans, a great historical disaster. It was a defeat of Christendom which has never been repaired (Lewis, 1953). Suleyman besieged Vienna in 1529 (without success), but his military and diplomatic strategies achieved a standoff with the Hapsburgs until Hungary, too, was annexed in 1541. The Turks took Cyprus in 1570, and a Christian fleet enjoyed a rare victory at Lepanto in 1571, but from 1575–1590, the sultans were chiefly engaged in the east, notably in a prolonged and bitter war with Persia. The empire experienced the first assassination of a reigning sultan in the early seventeenth century, followed by a brief revival under Murad IV (reigned 1623–1640). But after Mehmed IV's unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683 and the defeat at Zenta, the treaty of Karlowitz (1699) effectively provided for the Ottoman withdrawal from Europe. The traces of Ottoman system ended only with the revolution of Kemal Ataturk in 1923 and the abolition of the Sultanate. However, early modern period ottoman reputation was much more different than it was in its declining period. Early modern Europe viewed ottoman as masters of a sophisticated and well administered empire. As Barbara and Charles Jelavich (1974) remarks:

> The negative opinion often held of Ottoman civilization is usually based on judgments made in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the state was in a period of

> obvious decline. In the 15th and 16th centuries, however, Ottoman institutions may have offered the Balkan Christian a better life than he had led previously.

This remark is undoubtedly one of the rare views which don't show a negative attitude towards the ottoman civilization. Much of the attributions used by the early modern people to refer to the ottoman as Vitkus (2000) puts it, included, "aggression, lust, suspicion, murderous conspiracy, sudden cruelty masquerading as justice, merciless violence rather than 'Christian charity,' wrathful vengeance instead of turning the other cheek".

According to Linda McJannet (2006) "Pejorative epithets associated with the Ottomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included "bloody," "cruel," and "barbarous." The Turks were compared to forces of nature (whirlwinds or floods) or beasts (wolves, vipers, boars) and depicted in bestial terms such as "unbridled" or "swarming." Their rule was described as "tyranny" or a "yoke."" Certainly these derogatory epithets are only a portion of the depictions that early modern discourse used to describe the Ottoman Turks.

As for Europe, particularly England, Elizabeth's reign marked the beginnings towards becoming an imperial power and its prestige varied from place to place. When Elizabeth I ascended the throne, Soliman the magnificent was storming towards the heart of Europe raising fear of invasion by the Turks. The ottomans were expanding rapidly throughout Europe. They posed a continuous threat to Christian monarchs in Europe between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Christian monarchs were establishing their permanent colonies in the new world while, concurrently, they were facing the threat at home of being colonized.(Vitkus, 2000) Military aggression and cultural competition between Christians and Muslims experienced at the time have been the basis for the prevailing conception of Islamic culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An English writer Richard Knolles, in his *History of the Turks*, refers to the ottoman Turks as "the scourge of God and the present terror of the world." (Hakluyt, 1905)

The fear of Turkish expansion was strongly felt at the time, and any news of a Christian victory against Islam was a cause for rejoicing. In 1565, when Ottoman forces abandoned their long siege of Malta, a "form of thanksgiving" was issued by the archbishop of Canterbury that was to be read in all English churches every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. The service, used in celebration, closed with this prayer: "Almightye and everlyving God … we thy disobedient and rebellious children, nowe by the juste judgemente sore afflicted and in great daunger to be oppressed, by thine and our sworne and most deadlye enemyes the Turkes, Infidels, and Miscreantes, doe make humble sute to the throne of thy grace for thy mercye." The prayer characterizes the Turks as "impure, wicked, and abhominable lyfe." The Turk "goeth aboute to set up, to extol, and to magnify that wicked monster and damned soule Mahumet."(Dimmock, 2005). But the defeat of the Turkish fleet at Lepanto proved to be only a temporary setback to Ottoman expansion.

During the Renaissance, learned opinion was divided on how Christendom should respond to its Islamic rivals in the east, particularly with respect to the morality of war against them. As Timothy Hampton observes, "Opinion varied . . . from the claim that the Turks must be wiped out through a new crusade, to the notion that they were a scourge sent by God to teach Christian Europe about its own sins."(Hampton, 1993).

## Criticism on Some of the Representative Plays

According to anti-Islamic tales told in the West, the violence and cruelty of Turks and Moors was enacted in both public and private—on the field of battle and within the palace walls. Shakespeare's tragic hero is a Moorish warrior whose public militarism becomes, in the privacy of his bedroom, a version of the sultan's overprotective absolutism in his imperial harem. By the time Othello murders Desdemona, he has converted to erotic, Islamic evil and conformed to the European stereotype of the irascible, libidinous Muslim. He becomes a representative of the Venetians' greatest foe, the "malignant Turk" (5.2.351), and his suicide is a final effort to punish himself for his reversion to such an identity.

In *Othello* (1604), Turkish cruelty and violence are threatened and then displaced, but it wasn't the only play performed in the Elizabethan and Early Stuart theater that brought Turkish villains to center stage, representing Islamic culture in the form of Moorish or Turkish characters. The best known of these plays are Marlowe's *Tamburlaine, Parts I & II* (1587- 88) and his *Jew of Malta* {1589). Examples of Islamic might, murderousness, and wealth are also found in George Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* (1588) and *Soliman and Perseda* (1590), Robert Greene's *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1588) and *Orlando Furioso* (1589), *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (1596), Thomas Dekker's *Lusts Dominion* (1600), Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West, Part I (1602), Thomas Goffe's The Courageous Turk (1618) and The Raging Turk (1618),* John Fletcher

and Philip Massinger*'s The Knight of Malta (1618),* Thomas Middleton and William Rowley*'s All's Lost by Lust (1620),* as well as the three plays that Vitkus has covered in his book Three Turk Plays bookwhich are *Selimus*, *A Christian turned Turk* and *The Renegado*. These theatrical representations of Islamic power took the stage during a time when the Turkish Empire was at its highest posing a continuous threat to Christian Europe. For London theatergoers, the Turk was not an imaginary bogey, and the Turk plays are not simply fantasies about fictional demons lurking at the edges of the civilized world. These plays and other early modem writings dealing with the Turks express an anxious interest in Islamic power that is both complicated and overdetermined.

Here forward I will try to illustrate a few of the period's plays and the way they represent the Ottoman sultans of course where the sultan represents the whole ottomans and in broader terms the Muslim world since the word "Turk" over time came to represent and become a connotation for "Muslim/Islam". The motivations underlying the adaptations and decorative additions made to the text will be discussed further in the text.

One of these plays where the Ottoman Sultan was negatively portrayed is *The Couragious Turk, or Amurath the First* (1615-23) by Thomas Goffe. The play is about the conquest of Serbia and Bulgaria in general. However, the first two acts are depictions of how the sultan Murad, first, fell in love with a concubine named Eumorphe, then how he murdered her. And it also includes the sultan's murder by a wounded Christian captain, Cobelitz. Its implication is on the sensuality and volatile love affairs of the sultans.

Another play which is the pioneering play of the period which can be characterized as the Turkish plays is Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great part I(1587) (Steane, 1969). Marlowe was the first professional dramatist to portray an Ottoman sultan on the public stage even though there are few others written before Tamburlaine but were not performed on the stage. In Tamburlaine the Great the representation is of Bayazid I. it is based on the war of Ancora and the captivation of Bayazid with his wife Zabina. Once Bayazid's army was defeated and the couple was captured, they were publicly ridiculed. Bayazid was kept in a cage and was chained. He was fed with leftovers and he was used as Tamburlaine's foot stool as he ascended his horse. Zabina was made a servant. And according to the play, Bayazid, not being able to stand these debasements he smashed his head on the iron cage's bars and thus committed a suicide. It is true that Bayazid I was defeated and captured by Tamburlaine but historically he was never used as a foot stool or he would hardly have considered committing a suicide since suicide is strictly banned in Islam.

Bayazid II was also hosted in Thomas Goffrey's (1963) *The Raging Turk, or, Bayazeth the Second*. The play presents a series of plots involving intrigues and treacheries between Bayazid II, his three sons, bashas and generals.

Sultan Selim, who was known as Selim the Grim, was also a character which inspired a play as well. He ascended the throne of the Ottoman Empire by forcing the abdication of his father, Bayazid II, and by killing his brothers. He also defeated the Mamluks in Syria and Egypt, and thus assumed the title of 'Caliph', a religious title equivalent to the vicegerent of the Prophet. With this title, he became the recognized religious head of forty million of his 'subjects' and the spiritual and temporal head of the empire. In this respect, he gained control over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Selim I appears in the anonymous play *Selimus, Emperor of the Turkes* (1588)(Vitkus, 2000) The play presents the cruel and violent actions of Selimus, the Ottoman prince who kills his brothers Acomat and Corkut, and dethrones and poisons his father Bayazid on his way to attain sole rulership of the Ottoman Empire. The play lacks historical accuracy with regards to the events that took place in the history. It is historically not true, for example, that Selimus murdered his father or that Bayazid was poisoned. These appear to have been inserted by the author to emphasize the point of Turkish "cruelty." The first scene of the play opens with the lamenting of Bayazid about his late situation concerning the greed of Selimus and the future of the Ottoman Empire. In the same scene, through the words of Bayazid, the audience is prepared for an unmatched "tyrant," Selimus, whose "hands do itch to have the crown,/ And he will have it—or else pull [Bayazid]down./ Is he a prince? Ah no, he is a sea,/ Into which run nought but ambitious reaches,/ Seditious complots, murther, fraud, and hate." (1.77-80). In fact, these characteristics, attributed to Selimus here, were part of the dominant religious and political discourse in which the stereotypical features of the Turks were represented in early modern England. Hence, in the second scene, Selimus does not prove his father wrong in the judgement of his son as he reveals his true intentions to Sinam Bassa. If Bayazid does not hand over the crown to Selimus, his "right hand is resolved/ To end the period with a fatal stab" (2. 166-167). From the very beginning, we learn that he is a Machiavellian, ready to commit patricide. When Sinam Bassa reminds him of the "revenging God" who would punish him for his sins after his death (2.185-186), Selimus defies both God and religion, concluding that "An empire, Sinam, is so sweet a thing,/ As I could be a devil to be a king" (2.203-204). It was a commonplace in the early modern popular fiction and drama to represent Turks as unjust, tyrannical and lusty pagans associated with Satanism. The Ottoman Sultan Selimus, with his greedy lust for power, then, becomes "a typical example of this kind of oriental despotism"(Vitkus, 2000).

He also appears in Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* first performed in 1589-90. Although the play centers around the Jewish character Barabas, Selim 'Calymath' comes to Malta to collect the ten years tribute and the plot revolves around getting rid of this problem. (Steane, 1969)

Another sultan portrayed in early modern plays is Mahomet (the Conqueror). Some borrowings are made and used in the play from the legend of Mahomet and Irene. According to this legend Mahomet (Mehmet II) falls in love with Irene, an enslaved Christian, and does not care for his responsibilities as a sultan, but later kills her to prove that his obligations are far more important and this way reattain authority over janissaries. This legendary subject was first portrayed by George Peele in the *Turkish Mahomet and Hyrin the Fair Greek* (1594) which has been lost (Chew, 1965). Also Gilbert Swinhoe's *Unhappy Fair Irene* (written 1640; printed 1658). The play is set in Adrianople. Irene, a Christian captive rescued from the hands of a common soldier, is presented to Mahomet by a captain. The sultan falls in love with her and summons a Mufti to marry them. Irene asks him to delay it for a week and is granted this request, but in fact, she has secretly arranged for her lover, a Greek nobleman named Paeologus, to meet her at the city gate and escape. In the meanwhile, Irene puts off the Sultan with fair promises, who becomes more and more infatuated with her. As a result, he neglects his responsibilities and the Janissaries beat upon the palace door. Mahomet, in order to restore their trust in him kills Irene. Paeologus, returning to meet her and escape, finds her corpse and commits suicide.

Soliman the Lawmaker also known as "Soliman the Magnificent" was maybe the most distinguished of the Ottoman sultans either because the Ottoman boundaries were at their nearest to the heart of Europe, the thought of which had been haunting the Europeans for a while then, or because the Ottoman power was at its highest, which again brought about the ambiguous feelings of fear and envy to the European senses. Soliman first appeared as 'Solyman' in the Latin play *Solymannidea Tragodia* (1581) of unknown authorship. The play opens with a prologue by the ghost of Selymus (Selim), the father of Soliman, in which he foretells the ruin of his house through the crime of Rhode, against her stepson. Soliman is disturbed by his son Mustapha's popularity. Rhode, Selymus' mother, after consulting a wicked official named Roxanes, tries to direct events in order to win Selymus the throne, by creating hatred for Mustapha in Soliman's heart, instead of imprisoning him. Then Rhode and Roxanes bring accusations against Mustapha, he is deprived of his offices; but an old vow made by the Sultan is his supposed safeguard against capital punishment. However, he is poisoned without Soliman's knowledge. Mustapha has a dream where Mahomet tells him that he will be with him in Paradise in three days, which Mustapha interprets to mean that he will ascend the throne in the promised time. An interview follows between Soliman and his son, and the Sultan convinced of Mustapha's loyalty and innocence, countermands an order he has given for his execution. However, a messenger arrives, telling Soliman that twelve eunuchs have strangled Mustapha (Chew, 1965).

There is also a separate play about Soliman's son Mustapha, named *Mustapha* (1608) by Fulke Greville. It is a closet drama- a play intended to be read not to be performed- about the final years of Soliman's reign and the murder of his son. Although it was under the influence of evil counselors and his wife Khourrem, Soliman caused the death of his son Mustapha. This was an act that exemplified 'Turkish cruelty'.

For late sixteenth-century western Christians, the *locus classicus* of the raging Turk might have been Soliman the Magnificent's execution of his son Mustapha in 1553. Historians writing before Mustapha's death acknowledged Soliman's greatness, while often portraying him as an exception to the Ottoman rule. In executing Mustapha, however, Soliman seemed to revert from "magnificence" to the alleged norm of "Ottoman cruelty", thus, doubly reinforcing the stereotype.

Two more tragedies where Soliman appears are Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1589-1599) and William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656). After an unsuccessful siege in 1480, the Ottomans captured the island of Rhodes in 1523 and ruled it until 191214. This event which took place in the reign of Sultan Soliman horrified Christendom. In both tragedies, Soliman occupies a central role with Ibrahim Pasha (Erastus in Kyd's play, and Alphonso in Davenant's). Soliman and Ibrahim grew together as a child and Ibrahim rose to become a constant companion and vizier when Soliman became a Sultan. However, in the midst of a brilliant career as general, administrator, and diplomat, Ibrahim Pasha was said to be killed by Soliman's command in 1536 which again gives way to ill repute because the incident might set connections to much discussed notion of fratricide in Ottoman dynasty due to Ibrahim pasha and Soliman's closeness in their youths.

In the play, Soliman and Perseda a young maiden of Rhodes, laments the absence of her lover Erastus, a Rhodian knight. She sees Lucina wearing the chain which she had given Erastus and unaware that Erastus lost it and the chain was found by Lucina's lover, Perseda accuses Erastus of unfaithfulness. Erastus, on his attempt to regain the chain, causes the death of Lucina's lover and flees to Constantinople. Perseda decides to follow Erastus but is captured by the Turks, and is presented to Soliman. On laying eyes on her, the Sultan falls in love with her, but she rejects him

threatening to commit suicide. At that moment Erastus arrives on the premises and the long lost lovers are reunited. Soliman promises their marriage and the couple leave for Rhodes. Soliman, still devoured by passion, and mortified at having allowed Perseda to leave, listens to Brusor, his counsellor, who suggests that he should get rid of Erastus by charging him with a crime. Erastus is called back by Soliman for a visit and, on his arrival, is accused of treachery and is beheaded. Perseda, to avenge his death, disguises herself as a man and puts up a brave resistance against the Turks. As the Turks advance to the walls of Rhodes, Perseda appears and defies them. She then falls but, before dying, she kills Soliman by kissing him with poisoned lips. The play, as in most "Turkish plays" implicitly embroiders the stereotyped opinions onto the image of Turks and blames all the negative epithets on the Turkish sultans.

## Motivations Underlying Denigrations

A natural feeling of curiosity arises from within after seeing considerable number of plays making references to Turks or the Ottoman Sultans most of which are denigrating and demeaning the image of Turk. One, then, feels obliged to ask, "Why would there be so many plays about it? Why is the Turk always portrayed negatively? Is it just because of enmity? Is it just the fear of the possibility of having to confront the most mighty and powerful enemy at the battlefield? Or is it the religious difference? There could be many other questions aiming to figure out what the European concern which produced this genre of drama was. I will focus on a few of the significant motivations underlying this kind of unfair, prejudiced, undeserved libel which actually drew considerable scholarship onto the field.

The major factor behind the origination of the denigration of Turks, according to the general opinion, is the fear that, especially after the fall of Constantinople, the Turks would attack Europe and enslave or, in their understanding, colonize the European territories. There have been instances that brought bishops to organize gathering of prayers to ask from God that they be protected from Turkish invasion, or they would ask the release of Christian lands under Turkish rule. Robert Schwoebel in his book *The Shadow of the Crescent* mentions that the bishop of Agar Athos monastery in Greece, upon the fall of Constantinople, commented that this incident was the most unfortunate event that ever happened to them and he prayed for the liberation of the people and the city under Ottoman rule (Schwoebel, 1967). However, along with this commonly held opinion which underlies the fear factor that yields such works of deflection and diversion of historical facts, there are some other factors which are presented as less important, though, when supported by evidence, makes stronger sense to readers which do not become parts with the early modern European opinion. The notion that the denigration we speak of is very much related with the religious rivalry of Christendom and Islam has also been prevalent in scholarly contexts. As Englishmen were becoming more involved with international trade and interacting more with the Ottoman and Muslim peoples, they were losing more people to Islam. People were converting to the religion of Turks and the term "Turning Turk" became widely used as a connotation to conversion to Islam. As Vitkus (2000) mentions in his book:

> … despite more extensive contact between Englishmen and Muslims, English representations of Islamic society written at this time continue to paint an inaccurate picture. In scripts for the stage and in other accounts, the facts about Islamic or Ottoman culture and its power are often imbedded within or distorted by demonizing fantasies. Furthermore, the historical reality of the Ottoman threat and real anxieties about the Turks were rarely represented or expressed without the accompaniment of anti-Islamic polemic.

To the Christian West the Ottoman Turks were the renewal and the reinforcement of Islamic power the first phase of which was at the time of Early Caliphate. Early modern Europe culture produced images of Islam as imaginary resolutions of real anxieties about Islamic wealth and might. For this reason, the rise of Islam under Turkish safeguard was seen as a force which put a weak and divided Christendom to shame. The prospect of conversion to Islam was a sensational subject. It inspired anxious fascination. Therefore, during the seventeenth century English readers and theatre-goers were offered large amount of descriptions and portrayals of the image of the Turk and the printed material on the Ottoman culture and religion increased. While Muslims or "Mahometans" as they were often called were inaccurately depicted as pagans who had made an idol of their prophet, there was also a tendency to ignore their religious identity in favor of a label that signified a barbaric ethnicity. As Bernard Lewis (1993) mentions,

> Europeans in various parts of the continent showed a curious reluctance to call the Muslims by any name with a religious connotation, preferring to call them by ethnic names, the obvious purpose of which was to diminish their stature and significance and to reduce them to something local or even tribal. At various

> times and in various places, Europeans called the Muslims Saracens, Moors, Turks, or Tatars, according to which of the Muslim peoples they have encountered.

Thus far mentioned attitudes of Early modern European society which showed an eager stance to denigrate the "every other" that did not conform to its general opinion resulted in producing works which often times did not see any harm in manipulating the history and adapting it in a way which would fit the public taste.

I will further claim in this paper that the early modern European society did not produce distinguished literary figures whose sole purpose was to educate the public devotedly on their cause. As we can derive from the literary works of the period that this cause was to establish a uniform opinion regarding the Turks as the general enemy and Islam as the false religion. Instead, these figures exploited the interest of the public in the genre of Turk plays in which the "terror of the world" was being used as a "foot stool" creating in the theatergoers a feeling of exaltation and satisfaction that the enemy is a base being and the European is noble and superior. As such a reward would cling the theatre-goers to the theatre and to these theatrical works that would function as an ecstasy that would fire the public with enthusiasm to form a public unity against the "general enemy" and a counter stance towards Islam reinforcing the commitment to Christendom. However, parallel to these intentions we come to notice that the theatre companies of the early modern period had other material concerns. The genre of Turk plays had a significant value for acting companies in terms of art, ideology and more importantly commerce. When the operations of the playhouses of the time are taken into account, there becomes a collective enterprise spirit visible among acting companies. Jeffrey Masten (1997) argues that "all" plays, whether composed by one or more than one dramatist, are forms of collaboration. Kyd and Marlowe were influential in promoting a new playhouse culture that would flourish throughout 1590s. However, Turk narrative contributed to the material implications of this influence which makes the case for a company and inter-company approach to drama in this period. It is remarkable to note here that even in the case of Shakespeare until he wrote Othello for the King's Men Company, he didn't turn to the Ottoman material to write a Turk play; however, in 1590s he referred to the theme in at least 13 of his plays. We can conclude here that the demand from the public and the acting companies was probably so high that the

distinguished playwrights of the period such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Dekker, Greene, and Peele felt pressure to write plays dealing with the Ottoman Turks and Islam. Louis Wann (1915) claims that:

> With the plays of the period distributed thus widely among the important playwrights of the time, we are justified in the assertion that the production of oriental plays was not due to the fancy of any one author or group of authors, but that the interest of the Elizabethans was so considerable as to induce a majority of the main playwrights to write at least one play dealing with oriental matter.

The staging of Ottoman was sustained by artistic cross-fertilization that was, for dramatists, actors, and playgoers collectively, collaborative and competitive. As Mark Hutchings (2007) states;

> Indeed, in one sense the notion of a play "market" currently in vogue is perhaps particularly appropriate, for if the Turkish material metaphorically (and, in the form of reusable stage properties and transferable costumes, literally) operated as part of the playhouse economy, it was both a component and a by-product of England's controversial trading partnership with the Ottoman Empire.

A visual illustration of the influence of the genre in tabular form is available below. The table involves a list of plays, dates of performances and publication, the acting company and the dramatist concerned. Some plays in the list are not primarily concerned with the staging of the Ottoman. In some cases a play incidentally refers to the Turks. A distinction has been made to distinguish a text in which the Turk plays a significant role (indicated thus *) and those in which an allusion is made in passing (indicated thus#). It is worth mentioning here that allusion in text and allusion in act could be two very different and very important aspects. Representations in act could very well be used to manipulate, to convey the intended meanings. Mark Hutchings (2007) underlines this notion thus,

> All of these plays were part of a narrative that operated collectively, and the point is that even where a reference in a play is brief and apparently nondescript, such a "quotation" nonetheless participated in both calling up an established narrative and importing various resonances the narrative had into that play in performance; indeed, there must have been many acts of physical quotation, where a character,

play, or actor was evoked or "remembered" on stage, *that have simply left no textual trace*

This is so important a tool for the drama which makes distortion and falsifying possible if one intends to exploit an ideology.

The table below incorporates the information available on *Henslowe's Diary.* This diary is considered to be the single most important document of early modern English theatre history. It was owned by Philip Henslowe who was an Elizabethan theatrical entrepreneur. His diary is a valuable source of information on the theatre of the period. It is a collection of memoranda and notes that record payments to writers, box office takings, and lists of money lent. Also of interest are records of the purchase of expensive costumes and of stage properties. Therefore it is a valuable source which sheds light to modern day's interpretations of early modern theatre. It is not difficult to draw from the table how influential the Turkish genre was.

* denotes text lost
** denotes fragments only extant
*** denotes plot extant
# denotes reference to Turks/Ottoman Empire in text

**Table 1** The list of Turk plays taken from Mark Hutchings, 2007

| **Date of earliest likely Perf. (Pub.)** | **Title** | **Venue** | **Company** | **Author** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| c.1576-79 | *The Blacksmith's Daughter* | Theatre? | Leicester's | Anon* |
| 1580 | *The Soldan and the Duke of——* | Court 14 Feb. | Derby's | Anon* |
| c.1580-1603 (MS) | *Tomumbeius sive Sultanici in Aegypto Imperii Eversio* | | | Salterne |
| 1581 (1584) | *The Three Ladies of London* | Theatre? | Leicester's | Wilson |
| 1582 (MS) | *Solvmannidae* | | | Anon |
| 1587(1590) | *1 Tamburlaine* | Rose/Theatre | Admiral's | Marlowe |
| c.1587 (>1592) | *The Spanish Tragedy* | Rose? | Strange's | Kyd |
| 1587(1599) | *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* | Rose? | Queen's | Greene |
| 1588(1590) | *2 Tamburlaine* | Rose/Theatre | Admiral's | Marlowe |
| 1588 | *The Turkish Mahomet and Hiren the Fair Greek* | | (Admiral's in 1594?) | Peele* |
| c.1588 | *Doctor Faustus* | Rose? | Strange's | Marlowe |
| c.1588-92 | *1 Tamar Cham* | Rose | Strange's Admiral's | Anon* |
| 1589(1594) | *The Battle of Alcazar* | Rose | Admiral's | Peele |
| c.1589 (1632) | *The Jew of Malta* | Theatre? | Strange's Admiral's | Marlowe |
| c.1589 (1594) | *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* | Strange's | Greene | |
| 1590(1623) | *1 Henry VI* | Rose? | Admiral's Strange's? | Shakespeare # |
| 1591 (1594) | *Orlando Furioso* | Rose | Queen's Admiral's | Greene (& Rowley?) |
| 1591 (1594) | *The Taming of the Shrew* | Theatre? | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare# |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1591 (1623) | *The Comedy of Errors* | Theatre? | Chamberlain's? | Shakespeare # |
| 1591 | *Edward I* | | Queen's? | Peele # |
| 1591 | *Richard III* | Theatre | Pembroke's | Shakespeare |
| c.1591 (1594) | *The True Tragedy of Richard HI* | | Queen's | Anon# |
| c.1592? (1592) | *Soliman and Perseda* | | | Kyd? |
| 1592(1594) | *1 Selimus* | Theatre? | Queen's | Greene? |
| 1592 | *2 Tamar Cham* | | Strange's | Anon* |
| 1592 (MS) | *John of Bordeaux* | | Strange's? | Greene? |
| 1593(1661) | *The Tragical History of Guy of Warwick* | | | Anon |
| 1594 | *Gesta Grayorum* | Royal Entertainment | Gentlemen of Gray's Inn | Bacon?. Campion. Davison** |
| 1595 (1597) | *Richard II* | Theatre? | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| c.1595 | *A Midsummer Night's Dream* | Theatre | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1596(1605) | *Captain Thomas Stukeley* | Rose | Admiral's | Anon (Heywood in part?) |
| 1596(1609) | *Mustapha* | Closet | | Greville |
| 1596(1600) | *The Merchant of Venice* | Theatre | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1597 (MS) | *Frederick and Basilea* | Admiral's | Anon*; *** | |
| 1597(1598) | *1 Henry IV* | Theatre? | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1597(1600) | *2 Henry IV* | Theatre? | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1597(1602) | *The Merry Wives of Windsor* | Theatre? | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1598 | *Vayvode* | Rose? | Admiral's | Chettle?* |
| 1598(1600) | *Much Ado About Nothing* | Curtain | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1598 | *Every Man in His Humour* | Curtain? | Chamberlain's | Jonson # |
| 1599(1600) | *Old Fortunatus* | Rose /Fortune | Admiral's | Dekker |
| 1599(1600) | *Henry V* | Curtain Globe | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1599 | *The Love of a Grecian Lady (The Grecian Comedy* | | | Anon* (Poss same play as The Turkish Mahomet andHiren the FairGreek) |
| 1599 | *Mahomet* | | | Anon* (Poss same play as above) |
| 1599 | *Mully Molloco* | | | Anon* (Poss same play as The Battle of Alcazar) |
| 1599(1600) | *The Shoemaker's Holiday* | Rose | Admiral's | Dekker # |
| 1599(1623) | *As You Like It* | Globe | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1599(1600) | *1 Sir John Oldcastle* | Rose | Admiral's | Drayton. Hathway. Munday. and Wilson # |
| c.1600 (1615) | *The Four Prentices of London* | Rose? Red Bull | Admiral's? Queen Anne's | Heywood |
| 1600 (1633) | *Alaham* | Closet | | Greville |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1600(1655) | *Lust's Dominion* | Fortune? | Admiral's | Day, Dekker, Haughton? Marston? |
| 1600 (1601) | *Cynthia's Revels* | Black friars | Black friars Children | Jonson # |
| 1600 | *The Tartarian Cripple, Emperor of Constantinople* | | | Anon* |
| 1600 | *Grim the Collier of Croydon* | | Admiral's | Haughton |
| c.1600-01 (1604) | *Hamlet* | Globe | Chamberlain's | Shakespeare # |
| 1601 | *Arabia Sitiens, or a Dream of a Dry Year (Mahomet and his Heaven, or Epimethea, Grand Empress of the deserts of Arabia, Or a Dream Dry Summer Or The Weather-Woman)* | | | Percy |
| 1601 (1601) | *George Scanderbeg* | | Oxford's | Anon* |
| 1601 (1602) | *Satiromastix* | Paul's | Paul's Children | Dekker |
| 1602 | *The Capture of Stuhlweissenburg* | | | Anon* |
| 1603-4 (1622) | *Othello* | Globe | Chamberlain's King's | Shakespeare |
| 1603-4 (1623) | *All's Well That Ends Well* | Globe | Chamberlain's King's | Shakespeare # |

## Conclusion

If we are to bring the case to a conclusion, the imbalance of the number of plays at different decades, distinguished playwright's inconsequential prolificacy, unnatural growth of drama, and theme-centered approaches of the dramatist and numerous other anomalies during the early modern period especially regarding the themes of Ottoman, Turks, and Islamic people raise the feeling of suspicion towards the literature on the specified theme. There is clear evidence that early modern playwrights mostly consulted earlier works on the field or on similar themes which were mostly histories whose reliability were in question. And there are innumerable instances that the dramatist version of an event and the historical fact often times conflicted. Moreover, it is evident now that the deflections in histories were also decorated providing them to serve biased purposes. Louis Wann (1915) clearly states:

> Needless to say, history was not then written in the scientific spirit. Each historian copied from his predecessor, with or without acknowledgement, and felt no compunction in coloring the narrative to increase its interest, or in mingling legend with fact, with the result that his successor honestly accepted the whole as fact and so transmitted it to his successor with his own embellishments.

In the same source Wann (1915) blames all these misrepresentations on the historians whose works these dramatists consulted but that is something a reasonable mind cannot agree. Then we draw the conclusion that the integrity, sincerity, incorruptibility and righteousness of early modern dramatist whose works included or aimed misrepresentations of certain peoples exclusive of a sense of conscience while making judgments should be in question.

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