

**Writing Islam: Representations of Muhammad, the *Qur'ān*
and Islamic Belief and the Construction of Muslim Identity in
Early Modern Britain**

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A Thesis Submitted in Candidature for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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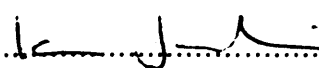
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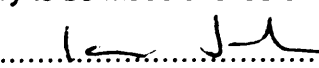
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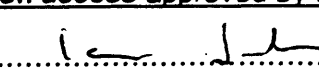
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Summary

Writing Islam: Representations of Muhammad, the *Qur'ān* and Islamic Belief and the Construction of Muslim Identity in Early Modern Britain

This thesis investigates the representations of Islam and of Muslims in English writing during the early modern period, with particular focus on the influence of the contents of the sub-genre of the polemic biography of Muhammad as a template for the construction of these representations. I will argue that the distorted representations of the figure of Muhammad contained in these biographies functioned as a prototype for the production of a series of essentialising views of Muslim identity which were then replicated throughout the textual production on Islam during the period. The study identifies the recurring themes of deception, gender and sexuality, and violence in the representations of Muhammad contained in the polemic biographies and then seeks to trace the recurrence of these thematic areas in the wider body of textual production on Islam during the period, with the aim of identifying the contents of the polemic biographies as a hermeneutical tool in the interpretation of Islam and Muslims.

In examining the influence of the polemic biographies of Muhammad in the construction of Muslim identities in early modern English writing the thesis analyses examples of these biographies which occur in texts from in a wide variety of generic backgrounds over hundreds of years, including religious tracts, histories and travelers' accounts of the 'Islamic world' and will then examine the echoes of these thematic areas of representation contained in the polemic biographies in other areas of literary production, and in particular within the series of 'Turk plays' produced on the early modern stage. The thesis also examines the availability of materials on Islam in Britain during the early modern period and investigates the series of ideological and theological positions which informed the approaches to the subject of Islam in English texts.

There are also six appendices which deal in more detail with issues important to the overall thesis, a discussion of which, in the main body of the work, would have interrupted the argument. The reader is referred to these when relevant.

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Introduction: Constructing Islam in Early Modern Britain and the place of the Polemic Biography

The representations of Islam and of Muslims in early modern England, whether delivered from the stage or the pulpit, or expounded in religious tracts, included in the descriptions of travellers or found as an integral part of the works of historians or political analysts, were the product of a larger and more complex system of antecedent representations. Through centuries of repetition religious commentaries, the descriptions of travelers (particularly within the medieval ‘itineraries’ of the Holy Land, as imitated in the enduringly popular *Mandeville’s Travels*), the narratives of chronicles and histories, and communal performance art such as the miracle plays, had produced a series of representations of the prophet Muhammad, the contents of the *Qur’ān* and of the nature of Islamic belief which, this thesis will argue, were so entrenched as to be practically unassailable.

Was Mahomet inspirèd with a dove?

Thou with an eagle art inspirèd then.

King Henry VI, Part I (I (iii), ll.119-120).¹

These words of the Dauphin Charles to Joan *la Pucelle*, although at first glance seeming only to constitute a fleeting, casual and indirect allusion, have an important function in understanding the nature of representations of Muhammad

¹ Quotation taken from: *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare, Volume I: Histories*, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (eds), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

in early modern England and in mapping the prominent place occupied by the prophet of Islam in the theology, popular imagination and folkloric traditions of Britain, and indeed other European Christian cultures. On one level it could be argued that the context of this indirect allusion, as an analogy for the divine inspiration of the virgin warrior of France, places Muhammad immediately in the context of martial action occasioned by militant religion. Such a reading would fit well with the representations of Muhammad as a militaristic and violent figure in the enormous corpus of material referring to his life during this period, a phenomenon which I will discuss in detail later. Another plausible explanation of this allusion, given that the fable about Muhammad and the dove focuses on the deceptive nature of the prophet (or pseudo-prophet, as he was perceived in the West), could be to argue that this image stands to indicate some measure of deception in Joan, the enemy of England claiming direct inspiration from God in her fight, consequently offending the sensibilities of an Elizabethan audience who belonged to a nation which was very much coming to see itself and its newly reinstated state religion in providential terms as the defenders of true religion in a world full of religious groupings and sects

The status of the English monarch as *fidei defensor*, originally granted in 1521 to Henry VIII by Leo X, in acknowledgement of his efforts to refute the ideas of Martin Luther on behalf of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, had undergone a mutation in meaning as English heads of state now came to perceive themselves as the defenders of Protestant religion against 'wrong' belief. Indeed, one of the most noteworthy developments in the writings of the post-Marian Reformation is the

extent to which the representations of Islam and Catholicism overlap and parallel each other, as the texts produced in Protestant Britain sought to find a means of representing the position and identity of their cultures in a radically changed and religiously realigned world.

Whatever interpretation is placed on Shakespeare's allusion to 'Mahomet', it is the fact of the casual inclusion of the reference to the figure *per se*, without further elucidation or explanation, which demonstrates the prominent, even iconic, status of the figure of Muhammad in early modern Britain. What this allusion assumes, as with all allusions if they are to function successfully, is the potential for at least some, and hopefully most, of the play's audience to recognize and consequently interpret the reference and, in this case, successfully apply the reference as an analogy. This allusion to Muhammad seems to assume not only that the audience would specifically recognize the figure of Muhammad (as the prophet of Islam as opposed to a Turkish Sultan or some other oriental figure, for instance), but that it would also be familiar with the story of the dove referred to by Charles. Indeed, I would argue that it is through this reference to the dove that a large proportion of the audience at the time of the play's first performances would have known precisely which figure was being alluded to. In choosing to employ this reference to Muhammad Shakespeare was citing a fable regarding the prophet which had been repeated for at least two hundred years in English, and for far longer in other languages in the West, from the pulpit and the page, and which was repeated endlessly across genres during the early modern period.

This fable, along with other erroneous details and narratives relating to Muhammad's life, constituted part of a sub-genre which Norman Daniel in *Islam in the West* called the 'polemic biography,'² a form of anti-hagiography, which represented the prophet of Islam as a deceptive, violent and sexually aberrant figure. The polemic biographies of Muhammad, within early modern writings on the Islamic world, remained an essential component in the refutation of the beliefs of Muslims and in the depiction of the behaviours of Muslims through the representation of Muhammad as the root of their many perceived vices. The polemic biography and the form found in the *chanson de geste*, medieval romances and miracle plays, which represented him as a pagan deity, constitute the two major tropes of representing Muhammad in medieval and early modern texts. Throughout the period that this thesis examines, these two approaches to Muhammad paradoxically coexisted, although it was the sub-genre of the polemic biography, included as it was in a multitude of texts across genres, which would eventually constitute the dominant discourse in relation to Muhammad during the early modern period and which will form the focus of this investigation.

I will argue that the mythologies contained in the polemic biographies, regarding the perceived nature of Muhammad's life, personality, behaviours, teachings and cultural and religious background, function in the history of Western representations of Islam and in anti-Islamic polemic as the roots of all Islamic belief, and to great extent as the foundational matter for constructing the 'nature' of Muslims. During the medieval and early modern periods the attempt to discredit Muhammad, through the production of the

² Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000) p.100.

scurrilous legends contained in the polemic biographies, constituted a central technique in the critique of the religion of Islam, its cultures and believers.

Ironically, this system of reading the beliefs of Islam through the details of the polemic biography, and the application of these ideas about Muhammad to often second-hand matter from the *Qur'ān*, produced a parodic version of the Muslim system of belief, where details of Muhammad's life found in the *sira* (biographies of the prophet) and of his words and actions found in the *hadiths* (traditions/actions of the prophet), referred to collectively as the *sunnah*, are employed in Islamic law (*shariah*) as hermeneutical tools in the jurisprudential interpretation of the *Qur'an* (*fiqh*). The Muhammad found in these Western traditions is, however, almost entirely unrecognizable in the prophet as detailed in Islamic traditions, forming rather a parallel entity, the details of which still have power in some discursive formulations to the present day.

In this sense the *imitatio muhammadi* which Western Christians saw as being at the very roots of Islamic culture, law, society and behaviours was based on an illusion, but an illusion which retained remarkable power throughout centuries of Western commentary on Islam. Many of the beliefs regarding Muhammad and Islam in the West were pure fabrication, but frequently the ideas produced echoed or parodied the truth and in many cases, as an analysis of the polemic biographies will show, were the product of reading factual details of Muhammad's life and of Islamic belief, but from radically different and irreconcilable theological positions. However, these interpretations were connected intimately with the apocalyptic and exegetic traditions of Western Christians and, as I hope to

demonstrate, ensured that in approaching Islam and its cultures there were limits imposed as to what could be said about the religion and its believers, so restricting the possibility of any positive representations within very limited discursive fields. Other representations, those regarding the fundamental nature of Muslims and Islam, would be created through the prism of centuries of polemic and religious opposition which formed, and for many still form, the foundations for any attempt to write on Islam and its cultures.

As this thesis will aim to demonstrate, the majority of the most important early modern ideas regarding Muhammad, the *Qur'ān* and Muslim belief and identity were transferred from earlier periods with very little alteration or emendation, even given the new opportunities presented by trade, embassy and travel to gather more accurate empirical information about the nature of Islamic belief and the nature of the discrete cultures which formed the 'Islamic world.' The power of these essentially medieval ideas, gathered through centuries of repetition, within the cultures of the West, including Britain, meant that they rather became part of the baggage which was taken into encounters with the Islamic world by both Catholic and Protestant Christians; indeed, the traces of many are still evident in the beliefs of some groupings within Western political and theological, or more relevantly theopolitical, discourse today.

The idea of a simplistic perception in the West of a monolithic 'Islamic world' is one which is difficult to sustain, and there will be no attempt to argue the existence of such an

essentially Manichaean view here. Yet the ideas regarding Muhammad and the nature of the Islamic faith which had developed over the centuries in the polemic biographies would still, even within the differentiated approaches to the various cultures of Islam which had also developed over time, exert a powerful influence on the ways in which medieval and early modern Western commentators approached these cultures and constructed their identities and attributes. This thesis will particularly focus on the Ottoman Turks, whose name had become a synonym for Islam in Western discourse. Indeed, the Turks, in many senses, inherited the features of the earlier synecdochic representatives of Islam, the Arabs or ‘Saracens’ – this ‘translation’ forming a key feature of the a-historical representation of Islam and of the character of Muslim peoples.

Certainly there were variations in the way in which the separate cultures of Islam were represented. Turks, Moors, Arabs and Persians, the four principal cultures of Islam in the Western Christian gaze (Tartars could also be included in this list), were generally clearly differentiated culturally, phenotypically and politically in early modern texts, and indeed in the foreign policies of European states, which were as capable, then, as in more recent history, of playing one grouping against another; particularly along the lines of the Sunni/Shi’ia divide which marked the foundation of hostility between the Ottoman Turks and the empire of the Persian ‘Sophy’. In this thesis, however, I will not deal in any significant detail with the concept of race in relation to Islam *per se*. Instead of focusing on the representations of discrete cultural and racial groups within the ‘Islamic world’ I will, instead, attempt an analysis of some of the base-line concepts of Islam which constructed Muslim identities on a supra-national and supra-racial basis. The possibility of conversion to Islam, of ‘turning Turk’, with all that such an action entailed for the

destabilization of cultural, religious and racial categories, will be discussed at several stages; but the very fact that a Christian could *become* a Turk and assume all of the cultural signifiers which flowed from the base-line concepts of Islam derived from the polemic biographies of Muhammad, and the (mis)representations of Islamic identity they created, suggests that the expected features of identity which flowed from Islamic identity transcended the concept of race, at least as constituted by phenotypical difference or even culture of origin.

This thesis will also seek to show that even with the multiple contacts between the Christian 'West' and Muslim 'East' during the early modern period, with all that such contacts offered in terms of experiencing and interpreting Islamic cultures first hand, and even the possibility of access to Islamic texts, including translations of the *Qur'ān*, the power of those antecedent texts retained an essential, and indeed essentializing, role in the representation of Islam and its cultures in English texts across genres in the early modern period and beyond. In a sense the project which I will pursue partially works against the idea put forward by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* where, in a discussion of the project and methodology of history he states that:

The problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of divisions, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations.³

³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.9.

The examination of the representations of Islam carried out in this thesis will in fact seek to trace traditions and foundations in Western views, utilizing a *longue durée* which will at times stretch from texts produced in the seventh and eighth centuries through to the mid-seventeenth century, but with particular concentration on material produced during the reigns of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James I (1603-1625).

This thesis is ultimately a history of ideas, an assessment of the development of British views on Islam during a vital period in the construction of English and, later, of British identity, which would form the basis for the dominant concepts of the subsequent imperial episode. Yet, although there will be an outlining of the changes and reorientations of concepts during this period, through new political and religious re-alignments and the exigencies of trade, what will emerge ultimately is the degree to which the core concepts relating to Islam and its cultures remained static during the early modern era.

Whatever the exigencies of government policy in England during the early modern period, the argument of this thesis will be that many of the concepts marking the representations of Islam and its adherents grew out of the established Christian⁴ traditions of representing Muhammad and the early history of the religion, and that these approaches to Islam and its cultures actually underwent very little fundamental change over the centuries, retaining their basis in polemic

⁴ I deliberately do not use the adjective 'Western' here, as many of these traditions had their roots in the reactions of Byzantine and Eastern Christians to the rise of Islam (See Appendix I, p.456).

biographies of Muhammad and in exegetic and apocalyptic traditions regarding Islam.

The thesis will also aim to demonstrate the way in which these hostile traditions were able to accommodate themselves to the decline of the 'Saracen' Arab states, dominant both politically and in the mind of Christian commentators during the medieval period, and transfer themselves to the Ottoman Turkish Empire which was the pre-eminent Islamic power, again both politically and conceptually, by the early modern period. Where there will be shown to be 'transformation' is in the reorientation of these ideas on Islam in English writings, through the schism of the Reformation, to allow the accommodation of the Catholic 'Other' (and indeed of the Protestant 'Other' for the Catholic commentator) into a rhetorical and interpretive framework which also included Islam (and indeed other creedal and cultural groups such as Judaism), and in which Islam was not always the most terrible term, but in which it was almost always constructed in opposition to Christian values.

Indeed, it is the sheer degree to which the core concepts regarding Islam, its prophet and its cultures were repeated during the early modern period which argues strongly for seeing the production of representations of Islam in early modern period as a pre-colonial example of what Homi Bhabha terms the 'concept of fixity' within the ideological construction of the 'Other' and of the operation of Bhabha's concept of the stereotype as being:

[...] a form of knowledge and identification which vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.⁵

What can be observed in writings on Islam in early modern Britain is a perfect example of this anxious repetition (what Bahbha terms 'demonic repetition'), as the Muslim other (and indeed the Catholic, Jewish and various other non-British, non-Protestant 'Others') has to be constantly defined and attacked in comparison to the rectitude, civility and religious and cultural superiority of the home culture; indeed both duplicity and sexual licence were common accusations against Islam and Muslims.

There can also be observed in this process of repetition an example of Stephen Greenblatt's concept of 'repetition as self-fashioning'⁶, as the newly re-Protestantized England sought to construct a national self-image. Greenblatt sees this form of repetition as 'a warning or memorial, as an instrument of civility'; in the case of representations of Islam this observation certainly applies, as depictions of Muslims during the period almost invariably carried with them the purpose of instilling in the English Christian an appreciation of their fortunate position and warning against the dangers presented by Islam, particularly to those travelling into Muslim areas. In this sense the representations of Islam in this period also

⁵ Homi K. Bahbha, 'The Other Question', in *the Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.95.

⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self- Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.201.

constitute examples of what Greenblatt calls the 'recurrent patterns' which 'exist in the history of individuals and nations' and which serve to 'inculcate crucial moral values, passing them from generation to generation'; the central matter of these repeated concepts were not, after all, the invention of the early modern period, but were rather the product of centuries of texts on Islam and their reiteration and continuation in the discourse of early modern commentators marked the atemporal nature of these recurrent images within Western discourse on Islam and its cultures. Greenblatt also draws attention to the providentialist concept of the 'idea of the "notable spectacle," the "theatre of God's judgements,"' of which the relation of the history, cultures and beliefs of the Islamic world formed an important part, and notes that this concept:

[...] extended quite naturally to the drama itself, and, indeed, to all of the literature which thus takes its rightful place as part of a vast, interlocking system of repetitions, embracing homilies and hangings, royal progresses and rote learning.

The representations of Islam, which found expression across genres, from the pulpit to the stage and from the descriptions of travellers in the east to the providentialist accounts of Muslim history and interactions with the West, created a complex and powerful network of concepts within this providentialist framework identified by Greenblatt.

In the first part of the thesis I will outline my own methodology in organizing the material I have examined during my research and will seek to explain my decision to select the thematic areas under representations of Islam and Islamic identity are discussed in the second part. I will also examine the approaches towards Eastern texts and knowledge of Arabic which existed in early modern England in an age before the 'Orientalist academy' proper, including a brief discussion of just what material regarding Islam was available to the early modern English commentators, with particular reference to editions of the *Qur'ān*. I will also outline the polemic and apotropaic underpinnings of approaches to analyses and expositions of Islam in writing in English at this time, particularly in regard to the representations of Muhammad in the polemic biographies and their transference to, and utilisation in, the production of representations of the Islamic world and its peoples in general.

The second part of the thesis will seek to investigate the provenance and occurrences of the polemic biographies of Muhammad in texts of the medieval period, and will seek to trace their survival and development in English texts of the early modern period, where they continued to function as a foundational hermeneutical tool in the construction of representations of Islam, Muslim figures and Islamic cultures. In examining this hermeneutical use of these constructions of the figure of Muhammad I will be paying particular attention to the echoes of the narratives and character traits accorded to him in the polemic biographies which can be observed in the construction of Muslim characters on the London stage, and also the ways in which the figure of Muhammad served more generally

as the 'prototype' for the production of representations of Muslims. In this sense this thesis will argue that Muhammad has within Western representations of Islam, in a phrase coined by Daniel Vitkus in an analysis of the traces of Islamic traits in the figure of Othello, the status of 'ur-Moor,'⁷ with perceptions of the prophet of Islam constituting a prototype or template for the readings and representations of Muslim figures and behaviours produced in other texts of the period.

In the second part of the thesis the representations of Muhammad and Islam have been analysed under three thematic categories: firstly, the repeated image of Muhammad as 'seducer', 'deceiver' and religious syncretist, which is connected to the representation of Muslims as deceivers and liars; secondly, the sexuality of Muhammad, views of the Muslim heaven and the place of sexuality and gender in Western polemic and constructions of Islam; and, finally, the representations in early modern texts of Islam as a religion of violence, including the relevance of ideas of Holy War in an early modern British context, particularly focusing on the concept of divine providence.

Under these thematic areas there is an investigation of the production of representations of Islam and Muslims in other texts from a variety of generic areas, including stage plays, travel writing and also the comments of political and theological commentators. In examining the roots of these ideas which were constitutive of the representations of the nature of Muslim behaviours and beliefs,

⁷ Daniel Vitkus, 'Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol.48, No.2 (Summer, 1997), p.155.

and of their political, moral and juridical formations across the boundaries of race and culture, there will also be an attempt, when relevant to do so, to point out the way in which representations of other religious identities (particularly Catholicism and Judaism) and their cultural and political formations were worked into these structures of representations, providing parallels and analogues for the construction of Muslim identity through theological, exegetic and eschatological bases.

In examining perceived Islamic traits which had their roots in representations of Muhammad special attention will be paid to the characters of Islamic leaders on the stage and elsewhere in the literary production of Islam during this period; in particular, the figure of the Ottoman sultan (who through the designation as ‘Great Turk’, or even simply as ‘the Turk’, came to stand as a synecdochic representation of his people, and so by extension of Islam as a religion) will be examined to show how these men, who were literally the *khalifas* after Selim I conquered the Mameluke Sultanate of Egypt in 1517, came to be the literary and typological ‘successors’ to Muhammad in early modern writing in English.

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This thesis is not intended to be a work of Islamic scholarship – indeed, it is declaredly written by a secular non-specialist, with no vested religious interest or knowledge of Arabic. The work will comment more on the relationship between the cultures of early modern Britain, particularly England, and Islam than on

Islam *per se*, with an intention to highlight the worst distortions present in British representations of Muhammad as a figure, and specifically the role of these distortions in constructing representations of Muslim cultures and figures in the literature of early modern Britain – and even in the present.⁸ In this sense the techniques and scope of this work are far more in the line of cultural criticism or a history of ideas than of a theological investigation, although theological questions are central to many of its arguments.

As such, my employment of material from the *sīra* or from carefully selected modern biographies of the prophet will be used only occasionally as basic comparators to the mythology contained in the polemic and exegetic constructions of the early modern commentators, which will be the main focus of the thesis.⁹ In

⁸ Of course, there is a general difficulty inherent in identifying an image of the ‘real’, historical Muhammad, as multiple images exist of the prophet, produced through centuries of interpretation of the *hadith* across the many schools of Islamic exegesis. This absence of ready access to the source texts of Islam, and particularly to those dealing with the life of Muhammad, caused a reliance on this almost hermetically sealed Western tradition of representations, becoming almost total, resulting in these polemic views of the prophet and his followers achieving the status of unchallengeable truth; and even when translations of the Qur’ān became available through print the approach to the text was to a large extent determined by the established traditions contained in the polemic biographies and in long-established, seemingly unassailable, exegetic methods in relation to Muhammad and Islam.

⁹ Where it seems relevant to do so, I will provide an extract from the *Qur’ān* or from *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* of Ibn Ishaq, one of the earliest and most respected of the Muslim biographies of Muhammad, to provide a sense of the material available through the Muslim tradition on Muhammad’s life in order to establish a contrast to the material contained in the polemic biographies, or to highlight when their contents or conclusion are particularly exaggerated and absurd. I will also make reference to *The Messenger*, the recent work by Tariq Ramadan on the life of Muhammad and its meaning within Islam, which provides a distillation of many works from the *sunnah*, along with Qur’anic material which relates to the history of the prophet and the emergence of Islam and modern biographies such as Maxime Rodinson’s *Muhammad* (London: Tauris Parke, 2002) and Karen Armstrong’s *Muhammad: a Biography of the Prophet* (London: Phoenix Press, 1991), which have attempted a similar process. In dealing with this material from the *sīra* I will also aim to demonstrate the way in which the Western biographies frequently parallel, mutate and parody material from the Muslim biography and at other times simply invent material to achieve their polemic purpose. I have chosen to use *The Qur’an: A Modern English Translation* by Majid Fakhry (Reading: Garnet, 1997), instead of earlier versions such as those by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall or Arthur Arberry, as, although this version has not garnered a universally positive response, Fakhry’s version, as well as being clear, does include some very

the outlining of my own arguments I have hopefully handled this material as respectfully as possible.

useful footnotes relating to *tafsir* (interpretation) of certain passages. Ultimately I am aware that in the opinion of most Muslim authorities all translations fall short by definition.

Part One

The Polemic Biography and Approaches to Islam in Early Modern Britain

Polemic Biographies of Muhammad: Organising Texts and Themes

At the inception of any attempt to examine the tradition of polemic biographies of Muhammad in English texts, the question of selecting and organising the material is one which causes no little difficulty; whether to attempt the analysis chronologically, by author, or by the generic context of the material is a decision which has a vital effect on the possible outcomes of the project. The sheer abundance of material is also problematic, as polemic biographies find their way into a huge number of medieval and early modern texts, making their content one of the most powerful underlying factors in the construction of perceptions of Islam and its adherents. The task of selecting the texts which represent the tradition in the early modern period, and those antecedent texts which inform and create the bases for these representations, is one which necessitates ruthless selectivity. The difficulty lies in choosing from among the plethoric occurrences of the sub-genre of the polemic biography those texts which will best illustrate its central importance and influence, while resisting covering too many examples in the interests of maintaining focus. As such, the list of texts analysed here is far from exhaustive and many more examples of similar polemic biographies can be found in numerous texts of the medieval and early modern period.

The methodology or organisational principle which is pursued in this thesis is to analyse aspects of the polemic biographies by thematic areas, a course taken by Norman Daniel in his analysis of medieval representations of Muhammad in

Islam and the West. The contents of the polemic biographies will be analysed in terms of their descriptions and understandings (or misunderstandings) of the background and character of Muhammad, perceptions of the circumstances and nature of the revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the teachings of Muhammad, and the place of these in constructing Islamic identity as a supra-racial category. These aspects of the polemic biographies will form the keystones of sections dealing with deception, sexuality and violence, which will be shown to be key thematic areas in the production of representations of Muhammad and subsequently in more general representations of the Islamic world.

This method permits the analysis to cross-reference texts across temporal and generic boundaries, allowing a picture to emerge of the patterns of repetition and intertextuality which exist between them. This avoids the problem which might otherwise have been present - had the texts been separated and analysed within these boundaries of period and genre - of missing the diachronic and non-genre specific nature of the essential thematic and narrative content which defines their treatment of Muhammad and Islamic belief. The thematic content of these polemic biographies will then be employed as the basis for a thematic analysis of representations of Islam and of Muslims more generally during the early modern period in Britain. The intention of this method is to demonstrate that despite the often radical changes in the material relations between England and Muslim states, underlying and ahistoric views of Islam were in operation during the early modern period which remained, to a great degree, static, being grounded in the polemic biographies of Muhammad and in the traditions of biblical exegesis and

eschatological thought regarding Islam. This underlying conceptual framework relating to Islam included the place of the Muslim world and its states (particularly the Ottoman Turks in the early modern period) in the apocalyptic thinking of the period, and the importance of Islam within the Protestant providential framework of early modern Britain.

The medieval texts I have examined are chosen with a focus on texts which remained in circulation and which retained their popularity during the early modern period, and which had even been revived and given new avenues of dissemination through the medium of print. These texts include Jacob de Voraigne's *Golden Legend* (c.1260), Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* (c.1442-4), William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the anonymous *Mandeville's Travels* (both late fourteenth century), all of which were produced in at least one edition during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in the case of *Mandeville's Travels* generated a myriad of translations, redactions and reprints which made it one of the most widely disseminated and read medieval texts of the early modern period.¹⁰ In presenting material from these popular medieval texts I will seek to demonstrate the survival and continuity of ideas over time and also to highlight the prominent place of Muhammad and his 'law' in some of the keystone texts of medieval and early modern literature.¹¹ These references will serve only to demonstrate how in the case of early modern representations of Islam past images

¹⁰ For a detailed account of the editions of *Mandeville's Travels* in England, see: C. W. R. D. Moseley, 'The Availability of *Mandeville's Travels* in England, 1356-1750', *The Library* (1975) s5-XXX, pp.125-133.

¹¹ In Appendix I (p.457) there is also a brief treatment of John of Damascus and the Byzantine commentator Theophanes the Confessor, whose early medieval texts were important in generating some of the images of Islam and Muhammad which reoccur in medieval and early modern writings on Islam and its Prophet.

were still potent. The words of Karl Marx in the *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) are extremely apposite here, namely that:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.¹²

The ideas on Islam produced during the early modern period in Britain imported the ideas of the past, citing, redacting, paraphrasing and reorienting them (so to speak) as the need arose. As Marx suggested, this was not inherently a conscious process (though sometimes it was), but was rather the product of the overwhelming, indeed, to use Antonio Gramsci's term, hegemonic, power of these ideas within the Christian cultures of the West.

In examining the interaction between the medieval and the early modern, Raymond Williams' idea of dominant, residual and emergent ideas in a culture is highly useful. Williams observed that:

In any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, emanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective [...] general and dominant elements of hegemony [...] the

¹² Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1984), p.10.

central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values, which are not merely abstract but which are organized and lived¹³

In this thesis it is those ideas, representations and beliefs which could be identified as constituting the ‘dominant system of meanings and values’ regarding Islam which I will seek to highlight and investigate. Of course, dominant ideas on Islam, as with any other field of thought, were not, as Williams points out, in any sense a ‘static system’ and can only be understood by examining ‘the real social process’ on which they depend and are adopted into the dominant ideology through the process of ‘incorporation.’¹⁴ In relation to early modern ideas on Islam this means taking into account the complex series of economic, political, strategic and theological variables which shaped ideas of Islam and its cultures during the period and the process of ‘selectivity’ described by Williams in which ‘from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis and others are neglected and excluded.’¹⁵

Williams’ concepts of ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ meanings and values are also useful in examining this era in the British relationship with Islam. Williams describes the residual as ‘experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified and cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture’ but which are ‘nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social formation.’

Williams observes that there is ‘a real case of this in certain religious values, by contrast with the very evident incorporation of most religious meanings and values into the

¹³ Raymond Williams, ‘Base and Superstructure’ (1973), in: John Higgins (ed.) *The Raymond Williams Reader*, (London: Blackwell, 2001), p.168.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.169.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.169.

dominant system.’¹⁶ In this sense residual ideas, derived from the textual production of the old Catholic order, can be seen to be expressed in British texts of the period, even while the reorientation of attitudes towards Islamic powers (particularly under Elizabeth I) produced an emergent series of ideas which answered the demands of realpolitik and trade.

In the writing on Islam in early modern Britain this often meant the persistence of concepts such as ‘Christendom’ in relation to the Islamic threat, even given the religio-political schism existing in post-Reformation Europe and the new threat posed by the Catholic nations, especially Spain. Of course, as in any other age, the early modern period was conceptually dynamic and Williams’ category of the ‘emergent’, which he describes as constituting ‘new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences’ which are ‘continually being created,’¹⁷ is also identifiable in the writings of the period, though I would argue to a lesser extent than those of the residual concepts which formed such a powerful set of bases for the dominant views of Islam and of Muslims. New contacts brought about through trade and embassy did bring about some reappraisals of the Islamic world, yet Williams’ observation that attempts are always made to incorporate these ideas into the dominant ideology ‘because they are part – and yet not a defined part – of effective contemporary practice’¹⁸ also holds true: any new or positive interpretations were almost always counterbalanced by providential or theological, explanations which allowed them to fit with the place of Islam and its cultures within the dominant *weltanschauung* of early modern Protestant Britain.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.170.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.171.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.171.

In *Traffic and Turning* (2005) Jonathan Burton seems to utilise elements of Williams' idea of the residual, dominant and emergent to create his own categories. Burton suggests that in constructing representations of Islam early modern British writers worked from an 'experiential inventory' which comprised 'three broad, associative inventories' which he identifies as the 'textual-historical', the 'experiential' and the 'domestic'. Burton describes the 'textual-historical' as being:

[...] comprised of late medieval and early renaissance ideas about Muslim historical figures and events involving Muslim peoples that through repeated, even redundant, oral and textual transmission became commonplaces.¹⁹

Burton associated these texts with conflictual relations between East and West, the 'cache of old crusaders' tales', which had been supplemented by the plethora of texts produced on Islam and the Turks during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Burton correctly identifies the contents of these texts as containing 'an inventory of inherited, even cherished, fictions in the guise of truth' which 'reached back at least as far as the seventh century to debunk the rise of Islam with ideas about the charlatany of the Prophet Muhammad'²⁰ – a trope which Norman Daniel had earlier identified as the tradition of polemic biography. Burton describes the content of these texts as being 'Tales of Muhammad's falseness, lechery, violence, and sordid lineage' which were

¹⁹ Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579-1624*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p.22.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23.

then ‘coroborated with specious biblical exegesis, and then projected forward onto the Ottomans’ - replicating the pattern of atemporal interpretation, in which the historical space between Muhammad and that of the Turks was collapsed, as identified by Nabil Matar in *Islam in Britain*.²¹ This is the pattern of constructing Muslim identity which is principally identified in this thesis.

The ‘experiential’ category Burton states ‘had its basis in contemporary cross-cultural encounters’, the burgeoning of contact through trade, travel, captivity and embassy which occurred during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²² Yet although there were multiple contacts during this period through these channels of contact, it will be argued in this work that these contacts did little to alter the dominant underlying perception of Muslims. These new encounters largely took the form of relations based on political pragmatism and financial profit and so rarely involved discussions of religion; and if they did, they did not produce significant clarification of the perceptions of Islamic belief on which British constructions of the Muslim other were predicated. The travellers who made these new contacts produced observations on the nature and behaviours of Muslims little different from those of earlier periods, principally because it was from the same ‘inventory’ (what Burton terms the textual-historical) that their constructions were drawn.

²¹ Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp.153-167.

²² Burton, *Traffic*, p.23.

Although Burton observes that some of these writings contained ‘a store of narratives concerning beneficial trade and even friendship with the Turks,’²³ I would argue that these examples would constitute, in the early modern period, exceptions that proved the rule, and could be seen as examples of Williams’ category of the ‘emergent/ unincorporated.’ Burton’s final category is that of the ‘domestic’ – comprising the ideas which he sees as ‘all those notions of difference that contributed to an Englishman’s sense of normative selfhood’, and as such were not ‘necessarily related to Islam and the Turks.’²⁴ Burton places in this category notions such as class, gender, nationality, race, religion and sexuality and notes that this ‘wide-ranging store of ideas could be drawn upon to make sense of Islamic otherness in order to shore up its defining hierarchies, axioms, and boundaries’²⁵. Burton points out that ‘in the realm of the domestic inventory, meaning is made in a more symbiotic dynamic with the other two inventories.’²⁶ Yet effectively all of these categories were symbiotic, and in relation to early modern British concepts of Muhammad, and consequently of Islam, I would argue that that the ‘textual-historical’ was by far the most powerful category.

The early modern texts employed in this thesis have been selected with a view to providing a cross-section of generic backgrounds and include versions of the polemic biography found in theological works, histories and travel writings.

Among the theological works examined are the ‘History of the Turks’ included in

²³ Burton, *Traffic*, p.24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.22.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24.

the 1570 edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*,²⁷ perhaps the most influential Protestant tract of the early modern period; Meredith Hanmer's *the Baptizing of a Turke* (1586), a text which records a sermon given at one of the extremely rare conversions of a Muslim to Anglican Christianity, and Henry Smith's *God's Arrow Against Atheists* (1593). From the continental Protestant tradition the translation of Danish theologian Niels Hemmingsen's *The Faith of the Church Militant* (1581) and *A Worke Concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian religion* (1587) by the Huguenot apologist Philippe de Mornay are also examined. Also included in the theological works is the preface written by Alexander Ross for his *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649), translated from the French version of André du Ryer and representing the first publication of the *Qur'ān* in English.

Of course, the matter of religion is the most difficult of all to separate from other areas of discourse during this period in Britain. The accession of Elizabeth I to the English throne in 1558 and the subsequent settlement of the Church of England had brought a state church back into force, both in the religious and political life of the country. This hegemonic status was little altered with the succession of James I in 1603, although the political attitudes of the two regimes towards Islam were very different. As Christopher Hill noted in *The Century of Revolution*, when commenting on the role of the Church of England and its preachers on the ideological currents of the country:

²⁷ All quotes from this text in this thesis will come from the following edition: John Foxe, Stephen Reed Catterley (ed.), *Acts and Monuments*, Vol.4, (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1837).

In the days before the existence of newspapers, with no radio or television, we can scarcely exaggerate the influence of the parson in forming the political, economic, and moral outlook of his parishioners.²⁸

The fact of one state church at which attendance was compulsory and in which, as Hill also pointed out, ‘the pulpit was used for making government announcements and ministers were frequently instructed by the government to preach sermons slanted in a particular way,’²⁹ meant that the discourse within the Church of England regarding other faiths, particularly Islam, Catholicism and Judaism could only fall within very narrow parameters. Indeed, it could be said that some ideas on Islam simply could not be voiced, imposing effectively limits to representation which, as with other matters of religious orthodoxy, would have been policed at their outer limits by the full coercive power of the state. For this reason the foundational nature of Protestant theology in the formation of ideological positions and the representation of Islam will, by necessity, permeate almost all areas of this analysis.

The historical, geographical, anthropological and political works covered are John Pory’s hugely influential translation of Leo Africanus’ *A Geographical History of Africa* (1600); Thomas Newton’s translation of Celio Augustino Curione’s *Noteable History of the Saracens* (1575); the translated excerpts from Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* (1572, first produced in German 1544)³⁰; George

²⁸ Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, (London: Routledge, 1980), p.75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

³⁰ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection and compendious extract of the strau[n]ge and memorable things, gathered oute of the cosmographye of Sebastian Munster. Where in is made a playne descrypsion of diuerse and straunge lavves rites, manners, and properties of sundry nacio[n]s, and a short reporte of*

Whetstone's *the English Myrror* (1586); future Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot's *A Brief description of the whole world* (1599); Joseph Wybarne's *The New Age of Old Names* (1609); Peter Hevlyn's *Mikrokosmos* (1625) and Walter Raleigh's posthumously published *The life and death of Mahomet the conquest of Spaine together with the rying and ruine of the Sarazen Empire* (1637).

In selecting these texts I have tried to take into account what Edward Said called the 'strategic formation' of the texts:

[...] the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density and referential power amongst themselves and thereafter in the culture at large.³¹

This thesis will aim to show the dramatic level of intertextuality and citationality, to use Gerald MacLean's term, existing between these texts and will examine the way in which the ideas they expressed were the dominant ideas of their time. In selecting the texts I have also taken into account what Said called the 'strategic location' or 'the author's position in the text with regard to the oriental material he writes about,'³² and in my selection of authors and texts I have tried to select popular works, if not 'bestsellers', then at least works grounded firmly in the mainstream of British discourse on Islam during this period. These are not, in the majority of cases, by obscure extremists or sectaries, but rather people at the centre of political and religious life - high-ranking churchmen, respected theologians and academics and familiar political figures. In other words, these

straunge histories of diuerse men, and of the nature and properties of certayne fovvles, fishes, beastes, monsters, and sundrie countries and places, (London: Thomas Marshe, 1572).

³¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p.20.

³² *Ibid.*, p.20.

were figures with very real channels of communication to the society at large, who expressed, and shaped, the dominant discourse of their time on the question of Islam and its cultures.

The final genre of text to be examined is that of travellers' accounts, created by those who, unlike the fictional traveler of *Mandeville's Travels*, actually spent some time in Islamic countries and so were afforded the opportunity to observe at first-hand the nature of Islamic religious belief. I will seek to show that despite these opportunities to form new 'experiential' representations of Islam, this made very little difference to the images of Islam and its prophet that were reproduced in their texts. The travellers' texts which will principally be examined here are William Biddulph's *The Travels of certain Englishmen* (1609); John Cartwright's *The Preacher's Travels* (1611); and George Sandys' *Relation of a Journey began An. Dom. 1610* (1615), although some reference will also be made to the slightly later account by William Lithgow's *Totall discourse, of the rare adventures, and painful peregrinations of long nineteene yeares travayles* (1632).

Of course, it is in many ways a false division to separate the theological, political and historical when analysing texts of this period; as indeed it is equally impossible, as I will show, to view the texts of travellers in isolation from the theological concepts and projects that inform them. The Christian travellers of the early modern period seem not to have visited Muslim lands with the purpose of discovering anything about Islam, but rather based their experiences and interpretations in the traditions which they had brought with them from home. This results in a version of the situation described by Umberto Eco

in *Serendipities* where, in a discussion of intellectual misunderstanding, he comments that:

We (in the sense of human beings) travel and explore the world, carrying with us some 'background books'. These need not accompany us physically; the point is that we travel with preconceived notions of the world, derived from our cultural tradition. In a very curious sense we travel knowing in advance what we are on the verge of discovering, because past reading has told us what we are supposed to discover.³³

In the case of the British travellers in the Orient during the early modern period, there seems to be a situation where, as Eco states, 'the influence of these background books is such that, irrespective of what travellers discover and see, they will interpret and explain everything in terms of these books.'³⁴ This aspect of the textual production of early modern travellers is highlighted by Gerald Maclean in his discussion of William Biddulph's *The Travels of certain Englishmen* (1609). Maclean describes the way in which citationality was one of the defining aspects of early modern travel accounts, as indeed for Edward Said it would be a central feature of Orientalism, and gives, in Biddulph's own words, a clear demonstration of this concept.³⁵ Biddulph, who as Church of England clergyman ministering to Englishmen abroad was also deeply concerned with the danger of 'infection' from exposure to other faiths, states of his own position:

³³ Umberto Eco, *Serendipities*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p.54.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.54.

³⁵ Gerald Maclean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire 1580-1720*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.82. Maclean points out that Biddulph's own version of the polemic biography was copied verbatim from the diplomat Giles Fletcher's *The policy of the Turkish Empire* (London: Iohn Windet for W[illiam] S[tansby], 1597).

Although I am now many thousand miles distant from you, yet I have changed but the aire, I remaine the same man, and of the same minde, according to that old verse, though spoken in another sense,

Coelum, non animos mutant qui trans mare current.

That is,

They that over the sea from place to place doe passe,
Change but the aire, their minde is as it was.³⁶

In the case of Biddulph this is a particularly significant statement, as the attitudes towards Islam which he took with him to the East, and which remained unchanged by experience, would have formed the bases of the sermons which he preached to other Englishmen visiting the east in his role as the Church of England minister at Aleppo. Through this channel of communication these ideas would have had a role in constructing also the perceptions of these visitors, perhaps much more powerfully than the limited religious discussion, they would, in all probability, have conducted during their contacts with Muslims while resident there. This would have meant that ideas from home, the product of this 'citational' system outlined by Maclean, could still potentially be feeding directly into the experience of Englishmen overseas.

These ideas, as will become clear when the texts of Biddulph and others are analysed later, carried the influence of centuries of textual production on Muhammad and Islam, and this predominance of citationality and repetition would have meant that even given the opportunity to discover at first-hand the nature of the faith and its founder, the travellers were far more likely to cling to the fictions found in this tradition. In terms of their views of Islam and its prophet, most of these writers need have travelled no further

³⁶ Cited in: Ibid., pp.71-2.

than a well-stocked library at home. Of course, the repetition of these ideas in the works of authors who had actually travelled to Muslim areas would also have had a reinforcing effect, feeding back into the culture revived by the, albeit illusory, authenticity granted to them through the relations of those who had experienced life in the east.

Before the ‘Orientalist Academy’: Arabism and Access to Islamic Texts in Early Modern Britain

In *Orientalism* Edward Said gives as one of the definitions of ‘orientalism’ that of an academic discipline, whereby:

Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.³⁷

In this sense early modern Britain had no coherent or structured Orientalist academy at all, particularly in its philological aspects; the attempt to read and interpret Arabic texts, including the *Qur’ān*, was in its infancy, or rather its ‘second childishness’, having declined from the prominence afforded *Arabium studia* in the intellectual life of medieval Britain. As Karl Dannenfeldt illustrated in a piece outlining the development of Arabic studies amongst renaissance humanists, Britain lagged woefully behind the continental mainland in this philological discipline.³⁸ It was probably only in Spain that Arabic studies had regressed as significantly as in Britain; previously Spain had been the epicentre of Arabic translation, including the famous translational school of Toledo which had produced so many of the texts of the middle ages, including the *Qur’ān* of Mark of Toledo. Yet following the conquest of Granada in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella, the so-called ‘Annus Mirabilis’ which had also seen Columbus’s voyage of discovery and the

³⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1995), p.2.

³⁸ Karl Dannenfeldt, ‘The Renaissance Humanists and the Knowledge of Arabic’, *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol.2 (1955), pp.96-117.

expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Spanish attempts to ‘purify’ their culture had led to public burnings of Arabic manuscripts, such as that carried out by Ximénez de Cisneros in 1499 in which as many as 5,000 manuscripts perished and had eventually led to the 1567 decree by Philip II which prohibited the Muslims of Granada from wearing their traditional dress and practising their customs, including the speaking of the Arabic language.³⁹ These acts of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in pursuit of *limpieza se sangre* would lead to uprisings amongst the ‘Moriscos’, as the Moorish population was known, in Granada during the sixteenth century and would eventually culminate in the infamous act of the wholesale expulsion of the Moriscos from Spanish soil in 1609. For this reason Arabic studies in Spain became largely a dead letter during the early modern period.⁴⁰

As G.J. Toomer details, it was Italy which was ‘at the forefront of Arabic studies’ in Europe, and most particularly in the production of printed Arabic texts, an issue which, as I will show, was to prove a major stumbling block in the advancement of the projects of British Arabicists.⁴¹ By 1538 the Venetian printer Paganino de Paganinis had produced a printed Arabic *Qur’ān*, which had seemingly been produced as a purely commercial venture with an eye to a market amongst the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. This venture failed, probably, as Toomer suggests, due to the ‘contemporary Muslim suspicion of printing’ and the printed Arabic *Qur’ān*, of which only one copy survives, does not

³⁹ See: G.J. Toomer, *Easterne Wisdome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.17.

⁴⁰ Even though, as Toomer points, out the Escatorial did acquire the library of the Sultan of Morocco Mawlāy Zaydān ‘by an act of piracy’ in 1611, giving Spain ‘the largest and most varied collection of Arabic manuscripts in Europe at a stroke’, the prevailing anti-Arabic culture of Spain ensured that these texts were of no importance whatever for Arabic studies in the seventeenth century [Toomer, *Easterne Wisdome and Learning*, p.17].

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

seem to have found its way into the collections of other European countries.⁴² Paganino, probably due to the cost of producing the specialist fount and then making no return, went bankrupt; the same difficulty of cost in the production of Arabic typeface was later to confront English Arabists.

Italy also benefited from the work of the Spanish Muslim convert al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al Wazzān, better known to the world by his adopted Christian name of Johannes Leo or Leo Africanus. He had been captured by Christian corsairs in 1518 and brought to Rome where he was allowed access to the Arabic texts of the Vatican library, before eventually converting to Christianity after a two-year imprisonment. 'Leo' produced an Arabic grammar as well as his more famous 'Description of Africa', which was included in Giambattista Ramusio's *Della Navigazioni et viaggi* (1550), one of the inspirations for Richard Hakluyt's compendium of travellers' accounts, *The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation* (1589).

Leo Africanus's *Description of Africa* was eventually translated into many European languages, including the English edition of 1600 translated by John Pory with the support of Hakluyt, becoming one of the most important 'authentic' sources on the Islamic world in early modern Europe and also making Leo Africanus the archetype of the converted 'Moor', including Shakespeare's *Othello*, although Leo himself eventually returned to Morocco and reconverted to Islam.

⁴² Ibid., p.20.

Dannenfeldt identifies Robert Wakeman (d.1537) as the earliest of the sixteenth-century English humanists to have an understanding of Arabic and cites his *Oratio de Laudibus et utilitate trium linguarum, Arabicae, Chaldaicae, et Hebraicae* (1524) as the first book printed in England to contain examples of Arabic characters. Dannenfeldt also mentions diplomat and humanist Richard Pace (1483?–1536) as knowing Arabic, along with Church of England clergyman and physician Richard Argentine (d.1586), who had made a plea for the reinstatement of the study of Arabic at Oxford and Cambridge.⁴³

Dannenfeldt ends his noticeably short list with two scholars who had contributed to the translation of the King James Bible: Richard Brett (1567/8–1637), a clergyman and linguist, and the Arabist and mathematician William Bedwell (*baptised* 1563, *d.* 1632), whom Dannenfeldt calls ‘father of true Arabic studies in England.’⁴⁴

The study of Arabic did not regain the lost ground in any appreciable way, and certainly had no concrete academic institutional basis, until the mid seventeenth century, when in Cambridge on 23 March 1632 Abraham Wheelock was given the first chair in Arabic at a British University⁴⁵. Wheelock had been a student of William Bedwell, whose *Index Assvratorem Muhammedici Alkorani, That is, A Catalogue of the Chapters of the Turkish Alkoran* (1615) and *Mohammedis imposturae* (1625), were two of the only works of the sixteenth and seventeenth century dealing with Islam which were written by someone with a working knowledge of Arabic. The former of these two texts is described by Nabil Matar as ‘the closest that any English Arabist had produced about the *Qur’ān* in

⁴³ Dannenfeldt, pp.115-6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.116.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of early modern Arabists and translations of the Qur’an and Islamic material, see: Nabil Matar, ‘Alexander Ross and the First English Translation of the Qur’an’, *The Muslim World*, 88, 1988, pp. 81-92 and Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 73-120.

England,⁴⁶ although this only consisted of a list of the titles of the 114 *sūras* of the *Qur'ān*.

Even the first English translation of the *Qur'ān*, produced under the title of *The Alcoran of Mahomet* in 1649 by Alexander Ross, was not the product of a translator with knowledge of Arabic, but had rather been translated from the French version of André du Ryer, no translation directly from the Arabic into English being in print until George Sale's 1734 version.⁴⁷ Wheelock's post at Cambridge was funded by his friend and patron, the Prebysterian politician and later lord mayor of London Sir Thomas Adams. Interestingly, Adams was also a successful merchant with the Drapers' and later the Massachusetts Bay and East India Companies, demonstrating the sort of link between the Orientalist academy and issues of trade and imperialism which would later be traced by Said.⁴⁸

Matar points out that Wheelock began a translation of the *Qur'ān* into Latin and Greek in 1647, which, in keeping with the tradition of Western translators, would be accompanied by a polemic in Arabic, once again clearly announcing the reason for which the translation would be attempted⁴⁹. Matar also shows the obstacles which stood in the way of any attempt by an English Arabist in attempting a translation of the *Qur'ān*, the first, and perhaps most fundamental, being the difficulty in locating a copy of the *Qur'ān* in

⁴⁶ Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p.74.

⁴⁷ George Sale, *The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed: translated into English immediately from the original Arabic; with explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators, to which is prefixed a preliminary discourse*, (London, 1734).

⁴⁸ Keith Lindley, 'Adams, Sir Thomas, first baronet (bap. 1586, d. 1668)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; Alastair Hamilton, 'Wheelocke, Abraham (c.1593–1653)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁴⁹ Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p.75.

Arabic. Until 1631 Cambridge University had no manuscript of the *Qur'ān*, a copy then being donated to the University by William Bedwell, at the request of Abraham Wheelock.⁵⁰

The status of the *Qur'ān* amongst Muslims, as a Holy book which should not be viewed by unbelievers, was also cited by the Oxford orientalist John Gregory who commented that the difficulty in obtaining a manuscript derived from the Prophet 'Mahomet Abulcasim, the son of Abdalla', who had stated that the book should not be touched except by those who are 'pure'; Gregory also notes that 'the Law is yet in force among the Turks for some special Alcorans of note, one of the which sort inscribed in the same manner may be seen in the Archives of our publick library.'⁵¹

The difficulty faced by potential translators in obtaining a version of the *Qur'ān* in Arabic from which to work was compounded by the absence of what Wheelock described as 'a Typographie of faire Arabic Characters'.⁵² As Matar has detailed, Cambridge did not possess such a set and despite the support of such men as the antiquarian Thomas Smith, who approached members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines and eventually persuaded the Regent-house of Cambridge to vote for the 'printing of the Alcoran at the University charge'⁵³, eventually nothing was to come of any of these efforts and the dissemination of an Arabic *Qur'ān* was to remain highly restricted and a problematic issue for anyone wishing to examine the book first hand.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.74.

⁵¹ Cited in: Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp.74-5.

⁵² Cited in: Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p.75.

⁵³ Cited in: Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p.75.

So, throughout the sixteenth century until the middle of the seventeenth century British commentators without knowledge of Arabic who wanted to examine a translation of the *Qur'ān* would have been left with only Medieval Latin translations and later with continental versions in Italian or French. The earliest and, perhaps, best known Western translation of the *Qur'ān* was that completed in 1143, under the guidance of the abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, by the Englishman Robert of Ketton.⁵⁴ Robert's motives in setting aside his scientific work and joining the translational team assembled by Peter the Venerable seem to have been partly mercenary (he was obtained by Peter 'with entreaty and a high fee'⁵⁵) and partly through spiritual conviction in the work which Peter was carrying on, confronting the attitude of hatred towards all Muslims amongst Christian clerics who Robert described as saying:

Either by ignorance and negligence, that His beautiful portion of the human race [the Muslims] should hear nothing of His nuptials, or should be held fast in the chains of darkness and by the songs of the Sirens.⁵⁶

Peter's attempt to replace this animosity with a more irenic spirit of Christian love, backed by polemic purpose, can be seen in his statement to Muslims in the *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Sarecenorum* that, 'I do not attack you, as some of us often do, by

⁵⁴ Robert of Ketton had been working in Spain translating principally works of Arabic astronomy and mathematics, particularly geometry, including the algebra of Al-Khwārizmi, which was to become a foundational text on the topic throughout Europe (the word 'algebra' being originally derived from the Arabic *jubura*, meaning to restore), and indeed is credited as being the first European to use the trigonometrical term 'sinus' (sine) [Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.65].

⁵⁵ Dorothy Metzlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p.30.

⁵⁶ Cited in: Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, p.64.

arms, but with words; not by force, but by reason; not in hatred, but in love.’⁵⁷ This statement did little to blunt the polemic edge of the Cluniac corpus, which through Martin Luther and Theodore Bibliander’s reprint in 1543, was revived for an early modern audience.

Robert of Ketton’s translation, entitled *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* (‘the law of Muhammad the pseudoprophet’), formed the keystone of the Cluniac corpus of translations of Islamic texts, which also included a translation of the earliest Muslim biography of Muhammad, the *Sīrat Rasul Allah* of Muhammad Ibn Ishaq, translated by Herman the Dalmatian, another of Peter’s team of Arabists, as *De generatione Machumet et nutritura eius*. A translation of material from the *sīra* and *hadīth*, combined with a chronology and genealogy of the first seven *khalifas*, was also produced in another version by Robert of Ketton as *Fabule Saracenorum*,⁵⁸ which appeared elsewhere as *Chronica mendosa & ridiculosa Saracenorum, de vita Mahometis & successorum eius*.⁵⁹ The titles of these translations clearly mark the polemic purpose which informed the production of the whole of the Cluniac corpus and which would, as I will show, continue to be the dominant approach to Islam and Muhammad during the early modern period.

The influence of the translations produced under the auspices of Peter the Venerable in the production of early modern, and particularly Protestant, ideas about Islam and Muhammad was assured by the republication in Switzerland of the entire Cluniac corpus in 1543 under the sponsorship of Martin Luther, and edited by Swiss theologian

⁵⁷ ‘Aggredior inquam uos, non ut nostril sepe faciunt armis sed uerbis, non ui sed ratione, non odio sed amore’. Cited in: Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, p.161.

⁵⁸ Metzlitzki, p.33.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.33.

Theodore Bibliander (Theodor Bushmann), as *Machvmetis Sarracenorum Principis Vita Ac Doctrina Omnis, Quæ & Ishmaelitarum, & Alcoranum dicitur*. As Matthew Dimmock has pointed out, the reproduction of this compendium of texts translated and written under the Catholic order demonstrates that the Reformation ‘did not immediately lead to a questioning of these early Christian conceptions of Islam; rather it conformed and disseminated them.’⁶⁰ The reproduction of the whole Cluniac corpus meant that the works of theological polemic it contained alongside Ketton’s *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* would also be revived and recirculated.

Knowledge of this edition of the *Qur’ān* in England is highlighted by the references made by William Bedwell, in the preface to his *Mohammadis imposturae*, to:

Peter, Abbot of Cluniak, a man highly commended in his time, for learning, religion, and Christian charitie, did well nere 500 yeares since, cause Robert of Reading our countryman, to translate the Alkoran or lawes of Mohamed into the Latine tongue...⁶¹

Having already discussed the translations carried out by Church fathers in the pursuit of the ‘discoveries of old heresies’ as a justification for his investigation and exposition of

⁶⁰ Matthew Dimmock, ‘Introduction’ in *William Percy’s Mahomet and his Heaven*, (Reading: Ashgate, 2006), p.3.

⁶¹ William Bedwell, *Mohammedis imposturae: that is, A discovery of the manifold forgeries, falshoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed with a demonstration of the insufficiencie of his law, contained in the cursed Alkoran; deliuered in a conference had betweene two Mohametans, in their returne from Mecha. Written long since in Arabicke, and now done into English by William Bedwell. Whereunto is annexed the Arabian trudge, interpreting certaine Arabicke termes vsed by historians: together with an index of the chapters of the Alkoran, for the vnderstanding of the confutations of that booke* (London: 1615), Sig.A4. The use of the topological name ‘Robert of Reading’ by Bedwell is probably from his misreading of Roberts Latinate name ‘Rodbertus Ketenensis’ as ‘Retinensis’, but it is noticeable that he picks up on the status of Robert as his ‘countryman.’ [Charles Burnett, ‘Ketton, Robert of (fl. 1141–1157)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)].

the beliefs of Islam, Bedwell goes on to use the history of the translation of Islamic material for the purposes of defending his decision to publish a work dealing with the religion of Islam and also of encouraging the study of Arabic in England.

In encouraging the study of Arabic Bedwell gives the precedent of the Council of Vienna under Pope Clement V (1311) which he states, ‘hath an act enioyning certaine Universities to maintaine Professours of the Arabicke tongue, for the translating of books out of that language into Latine’, and in outlining the Council’s reasons for such a move states that:

[...] those holy Fathers had no care of Physicke and Astronomie, but of Diuinitie onely: and therefore they meant of the Alkoran and such others concerning religion.⁶²

As well as this implied call for the reinstatement of Arabic studies for the purposes of refutation of Islamic texts, Bedwell also mentions the offer to the Council of Constance (1414-1418) by John of Segovia of ‘the Alkoran by him translated and confuted’ - another Latin version of the *Qur’ān* which is now lost.⁶³ He then goes on to confirm the importance of the Ketton/Cluniac translation in the European tradition by noting that ‘In the yeare of our Lord 1543, Theodorus Bibliander, [...] did publish and imprint the aforesaid version of *Retinensis* [Ketton] the English-

⁶² Op cit., Sig. A4.

⁶³ Bedwell does not mention the Latin translation of Mark of Toledo, a near contemporary of Robert of Ketton, whose version, as I will discuss shortly, has generally been much preferred by scholars, yet was far less widely circulated than the Cluniac text.

man.⁶⁴ Bedwell goes on to observe that the Italian version by Andreas Arrivebene,⁶⁵ produced in 1547 and the only vernacular translation mentioned by him, is 'is nothing but *Retinensis* Italionated', waspishly adding that, 'neither do I thinke that he vnderstood much Arabicke.'⁶⁶

The influence of the Cluniac translation by Robert of Ketton was, then, pervasive and enduring; a theologian or scholar in early modern England would still, in all probability, be left with only this version, most probably in the Bibliander edition, as a means to investigate the content of the *Qur'ān*. The translation made by the Rutlandshire cleric has been the subject of extensive criticism levelled at its accuracy, from the medieval period on, although more recent work by Thomas E. Burman has replied to some of the charges made against Ketton's text.⁶⁷

As James Kritzeck points out in his work on the Cluniac corpus, however, 'translation of the *Qur'ān* poses a special problem, since the style of the original itself is by no means easy to comprehend,'⁶⁸ a problem reflected by the complexity and voluminousness of the tradition of Qur'ānic exegesis called *tafsīr*. Kritzeck then goes on to say of *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* that:

⁶⁴ Ibid., Sig. A4.

⁶⁵ *L'Alcorano di Macometto : nel qual si contiene la dottrina, la vita, i costumi, et le leggi sue / tradotto nuovamente dall' Arabo in lingua Italiana.* (Venice, 1547). This version was, in fact, an Italian translation of Ketton's *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete*.

⁶⁶ Op. Cit., Sig. A4. In fact Bedwell was correct; Arrivabene's text was indeed a translation of the Bibliander edition. See G.J. Toomer, *Easterne Wisedome and Learning*, p.9 (note).

⁶⁷ Thomas E. Burman, 'Tafsir and Translation: Traditional Arabic Quran Exegesis and the Latin Qurans of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo', *Speculum*, Vol.73. No.3 (Jul., 1998), pp.703-732.

⁶⁸ Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, p.111.

Robert's solution to this difficulty, as he explained to Peter the Venerable, was to sacrifice absolute accuracy for comprehension. In the process of doing so, he took liberties which produced some almost comic effects.⁶⁹

Kritzeck cites the work of Darío Cabelanas, who in a careful examination of the texts found 'two classes of imperfection, the external and the internal.' The external errors include such matter as Robert's decision to create a new subdivision for the *sūras* of the *Qur'ān*, not sticking to the original 114, and also his rearranging of the verse structures of individual *sūras*. The internal errors are such things as the fact that Robert:

[...] tended to use superlatives instead of positives, expressed causes and conclusions left unexpressed in the original, and occasionally made rather bad mistakes in translating terms.⁷⁰

Some of these matters had been commented on by medieval critics, including John of Segovia, in the preface to his lost fifteenth-century translation of the *Qur'ān* mentioned by William Bedwell. In his paper analysing Ketton's translation and replying to some of its critics, Burman, in showing how critical opinion from the fifteenth century to the present has viewed *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* as 'a loose misleading paraphrase', describes how John of Segovia:

Not only objected to Robert's redivision of the *Qur'ān* into more than the standard 114 surahs, but also decried the God-like way in which he had translated; he had moved what was at the beginning of many Qur'anic passages to the end, and vice versa; he had altered the meaning of

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.111.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.111.

Qur'anic terms as he translated them; he had often left out what was explicitly in the text, but incorporated into his Latin version what was only implicit in the original.⁷¹

Burman also quotes the opinion of the English orientalist George Sale (c. 1696-1736), who in 1734 produced *The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed: translated into English immediately from the original Arabic*, which, as the title suggests, was the first translation of the *Qur'ān* produced in English by an Arabist.⁷² Sale comments that Robert of Ketton's translation:

[...] deserve[d] not the name of a translation; the unaccountable liberties therein taken, and the numberless faults, both of omission and commission, leaving scarcely any resemblance of the original.⁷³

On the face of it these seem to be fairly damning criticisms of Ketton's translation. Both Kritzeck and Burman also show ways in which critics have preferred the translation carried out slightly later by Mark of Toledo (fl.1193-1216), another translator working out of the Toledan translation school, whose Latin version of the *Qur'ān* was inspired by archbishop of Toledo Roderigo Jiménez de Rada.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Thomas E. Burman, 'Tafsir and Translation: Traditional Arabic Quran Exegesis and the Latin Qurans of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo', *Speculum*, Vol.73. No.3 (Jul., 1998), pp.703-732.

⁷² Arnoud Vrolijk, 'Sale, George', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷³ Cited in: Burman, 'Tafsir and Translation...', p.706.

⁷⁴ This translation was undertaken:

[...] as part of the mobilization of arms and opinion preceding the campaign of Las Navas de Tolosa that would see the Christian kingdoms of Spain destroy the Almohad army and set the stage for the Christian conquests of the next four decades. (Burman., pp.706-7)

The motivating force behind Mark of Toledo's translation is once again polemical and confrontational, yet generally his version had been preferred over that of Robert of Ketton.

Both Kritzeck and Burman draw attention to the work of Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, considered the most important twentieth-century commentator on *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete*; Burman describes d'Alverny as being 'particularly unrelenting' in her condemnation of Robert due to his 'tendency to paraphrase, to use specifically Christian language to translate Islamic terms, and to connect in his Latin version what were separate ideas in the Arabic' and summing up her conclusion on the translator as evincing that 'the expatriate Englishman was simply too clever to be trusted.'⁷⁵

In *Islam and the West*, in the chapter dealing with 'The Place of Self-Indulgence' in Western interpretations of Islam, Norman Daniel gives an example of how Robert of Ketton's translational style could lead to a deformed interpretation of Qur'ānic verses. In the translation of the *sūra Yusuf* (Joseph), now conventionally placed as *sūra* 12, Daniel describes the choice of words used by Robert of Ketton as an instance of his tendency to 'call a spade a bloody shovel', or to 'heighten or exaggerate a harmless text in order to give it a nasty or licentious ring.'⁷⁶ The passage in question, which describes the reaction of Egyptian women on catching first sight of the beauty of the young Joseph, is translated in one modern edition as 'when they saw him, they admired him.'⁷⁷ George Sale, in the first translation from Arabic into English, translated it as 'when they saw him they praised him

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.706.

⁷⁶ Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.165.

⁷⁷ *The Qur'an: A Modern English Translation*, Majid Fakhry (trans.), (Reading: Garnet, 1997).

greatly'; yet Ketton translates the passage as '*quo viso, omnes menstruatae sunt*'⁷⁸, provoking Sale to comment that:

The old Latin translators have strangely mistaken the original word [...] and then rebuke Mohammed for the indecency, crying out demurely in the margin, *O foedum et obscoenum prophetam!*⁷⁹

As Daniel points out, this piece of outraged marginalia is, in fact, Bibliander's, demonstrating the powerful effect of Robert of Ketton's translational decisions on an early modern reader. Daniel also points out Sale's assertion that, in isolation, the Arabic term *akbara* could be given the alleged meaning, but that it is 'the absurdity of choosing it in the context that shocks us' and concludes that 'Ketton deformed it to make it repulsive to decent readers.'⁸⁰

Whatever the relative virtues and demerits of Robert of Ketton's version of the *Qur'ān*, it remained the only intelligible version available to most British scholars, in the medium of print, until the mid seventeenth century, and so its errors and polemic framing texts became part of their tradition also. In examining the development of translations of the *Qur'ān* in early modern Britain it is also worth commenting that in the minds of most polemicists and for the production of their

⁷⁸ 'When they saw him they all menstruated.'

⁷⁹ Cited in Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.165.

⁸⁰ Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.165. Burman has produced a defence of the methods of Robert of Ketton which claims that his 'paraphrased' translation of the *Qur'ān* is, in fact, an attempt to convey the spirit, rather than the letter, of the holy book of Islam by incorporating into the translation the interpretations of the *Qur'ān* produced through *tafsīr*, the Muslim exegetic tradition. While Burman sees Mark of Toledo's text as far more literal, he argues that he too 'interpolated material from the Arabic exegetical tradition' and argues that this discovery, 'Should force us to rethink some of what we have long believed about how medieval Christians confronted and attempted to understand Islam. See: Thomas E. Burman, 'Tafsir and Translation...' for his examples.

material on Islam, access to a *Qur'ān* or to any authentic versions of *hadith* or *sira* was certainly not necessary. These commentators, as the content of their work evinces, were perfectly able to reproduce concepts from within the centuries-old tradition of Christian polemic without feeling the need to approach primary sources, such was the power of the mythology surrounding Islam and its prophet during the early modern period.

Translation is never a value-free activity and invariably involves the operation of the ideology and cultural baggage of the translator on the text translated. Certainly the translation of Islamic material, or of material dealing with Islam, into English, whether from original Arabic sources or from Latin or continental languages (or indeed from Arabic into Latin or continental languages) was a far from straightforward matter during the medieval and early modern periods. As Luise Von Flotow comments, translations are:

[...] embedded in the social, political and cultural processes of their day. Translation, the careful reading and deliberate rewriting of a text, can be viewed as doubly political; not only was the first text embedded in and influenced by certain political configurations, but the second text, the rewritten version, adds yet another layer of politics, that of the new translating culture and era.⁸¹

In relation to the ability of medieval and renaissance translators to approach Islamic texts or texts on Islam this brought into play a huge hinterland of ideological, theological and

⁸¹Luise von Flotow, 'Translation in the Politics of Culture', in: Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Luise von Flotow and Daniel Russell (eds.), *the Politics of Translation in the Renaissance and the Middle Ages* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2001), p.9.

cultural preconceptions relating to Islam, Muhammad and the cultures and beliefs of the 'Islamic world'. von Flotow goes on to cite Rita Copeland's work on rhetoric, hermeneutics and translation in the context of medieval vernacular translations of Latin texts to highlight the way in which a translation carried out within 'academic systems of rhetoric and hermeneutics ... also carries the ideological import of those systems'⁸², or in her own words, the way that 'political and ideological issues impinge on interpretive practices'. These statements are highly relevant to the study of the interpretation of Islamic texts, or of texts on Islam, during the medieval and early modern periods; where the ideological and theological systems in which the translator or commentator operated were not matters in the background or of subconscious influence, but were more often than not explicitly stated by the commentator at the outset of their work. It could be argued that these ideological and hermeneutical systems formed a vicious circle in the approach to Islamic texts and texts on Islam, and also in the representation of Muslim cultures, a situation where pre-existing polemical approaches fed back not only into any subsequent attempt at translation or commentary on textual sources, but also into the interpretation and representation of the material cultures of Islam.

⁸² Rita Copeland, cited in: *Ibid.*, p10.

‘An Antidote, to confirm in thee the health of Christianity’: Polemic and Apotropaic Purpose and the Western Tradition on Muhammad, the *Qur’an* and Islam

The reasons for such a great number of generically diverse texts of the medieval and early modern periods to include biographies of Muhammad, and the purposes of Christian commentators in examining or translating Islamic texts, including the *Qur’ān* itself, were often made explicit by the authors or translators respectively. Frequently included in the prolegomena to their examination of the roots of Islam or of their descriptions of contemporary Islamic cultures, the details of which were conflated as the representations of contemporary behaviours were extrapolated from the ‘origins’, is a clear statement of their polemic, homiletic and apotropaic purpose in approaching a discussion of the subject.

In these remarks on the purpose of examining the life of Muhammad, the contents of the *Qur’ān*, and for expounding the tenets, and effects, of Islamic belief in general, it is possible to see the conceptual limits which were generally imposed on any analysis of Islam and its cultures during the early modern period. These prefatory remarks demonstrate the ways in which an objective approach or discussion of Islam and its origins was simply not possible, when the available models for analysis existing in the West were rooted in centuries of exegetic and polemic tradition. This statement of polemic purpose was, as I mentioned earlier, also true for the prefaces to the most important editions of the *Qur’ān* during the early modern period: Luther’s preface to Bibliander’s 1543 Latin *Qur’ān* and

Alexander Ross's English *Qur'ān* of 1649, the latter of which, the source for the heading of this chapter, included, in later editions, a particularly virulent and abusive polemic biography of Muhammad penned by the translator himself.

From the time of Peter the Venerable and the commissioning of the first Western translation of the *Qur'ān* in 1143, the investigation of Islamic material, and in particular the *Qur'ān*, had generally been intended to serve two purposes: firstly to facilitate the conversion of the 'infidel' through disputation and, secondly, to provide warnings and homiletic material aimed at deterring the faithful from conversion and to inculcate a hostile and anathematic attitude towards Islam in the audience or readership. In early modern efforts, usually purported to be aimed at achieving and communicating a more accurate picture of the beliefs of Muslims, this dual purpose continued to hold true, although the ambition towards conversion became less prominent, perhaps suggesting a more realistic assessment of the direction in which conversions tended to happen and of the limited possibilities, given the balance of power between East and West, which existed to convert Muslims to the Christian faith.

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In Martin Luther's preface to Bibliander's 1543 edition of the *Qur'ān* (itself a redaction of the Cluniac translation of Robert of Ketton) he makes a clear statement of his purpose with the exhortation that:

Just as the apostles condemned the errors of the nations, so now the church of God ought to refute the errors of all the enemies of the gospel, so that

the glory of God and his Son Jesus Christ might be celebrated against the devil and his instruments.⁸³

Luther's concern was that the producers of the wilder and more inaccurate polemic against Islam had ignored the vital matter of what was, at least superficially, attractive about the religion and in doing so had immeasurably weakened their own position. As early as 1530 in a preface to *Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum*, a Latin tract on the religion and culture of the Turks which was probably the work of one Georg von Meulbach, a Dominican who had been a prisoner in Constantinople some 70 years earlier, Luther had bemoaned his lack of access to accurate texts on Islam. He stated at that time that all he had been able to read were 'a *Refutation of the Alcoran*⁸⁴ and the *Critique of the Alcoran* by Nicholas of Cusa,⁸⁵ and he identified in these texts the intention of the authors 'through pious examination to frighten sincere Christians away from Muhammadanism and hold them secure in the faith of Christ.'⁸⁶ What Luther sees as problematic in this approach is that:

While they [Robert and Cusa] eagerly take pains to excerpt from the Qur'ān all the most base and absurd things that arouse hatred and can

⁸³ Martin Luther, 'Preface to the *Qur'ān* of Dr. Martin Luther, Professor of Theology And Pastor of the Church at Wittenberg' in: Sarah Henrich and James L. Boyce (Trans. and ed.), 'Martin Luther – Translation of Two Prefaces on Islam, *Word & World*, XVI, Number 2, Spring 1996, p.263.

⁸⁴ A medieval tract by a 'Brother Richard', later translated and published by *Luther as Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi, Prediger Ordens* (1542).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.258.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.258. Interestingly Nicholas of Cusa's *Cribatio Alkorani* ('the Sifting of the Qur'ān, 1460), is generally seen as one of the more irenic treatments of Islam, attempting as it does to 'sift' the Qur'ān for correspondences to the gospels. See: Nancy Bishala, *Creating East and West : Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), who points out that Cusa included in his work a reading of the Muslim paradise as a metaphor for 'absolute bliss' and of Muslim denial of the crucifixion as having its root in Islamic veneration of Jesus. Bishala also points out that Cusa still condemns Muhammad for 'sensuality, worldliness, dishonesty and use of force' (p.145).

move people to ill-will, at the same time they either pass over without rebuttal or cover over the good things it contains.⁸⁷

In doing this, Luther asserts, the authors achieve ‘too little credibility or authority, as it were cheapening their work either because of hatred of Turks or because of their own lack of powers of refutation’.⁸⁸

What Luther aims at, and what he sees the other polemics as missing, is the ability to take into account what is attractive in Islam, and to understand thereby the success of the religion, the role of his investigation being to penetrate this disguise of virtue in order to reach the real matter beneath. Luther states that the *Libellus* seems to present its case with ‘the highest degree of credibility’ as the author:

[...] relates details so as not only to recount the evils of the Turks but also to exhibit alongside them the best things, and he presents them in such a way that through comparison with those people he might reprove and censure our own.⁸⁹

Luther highlights two common tropes in the representation of Islam, particularly in travellers’ accounts; the elaborate nature of the ceremonies of Islam, often compared by Protestants to the ceremonies of the Roman Church, and the level of zeal demonstrated by Muslims towards to the performance of their religious duties, both of which he views as being attractions to the potential convert.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.258.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.258.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.258.

Luther comments on how in the *Libellus* it can be seen that ‘the religion of the Turks or Muhammad is far more splendid in ceremonies – and, I might almost say, in customs – than ours,’ a comment which is telling in itself, confusing as it does, custom and religion. Luther goes on to state that the:

[...] modesty and simplicity of their food, clothing, dwellings, and everything else, as well as the fasts, prayers and common gatherings of the people that this book reveals are nowhere seen amongst us.⁹⁰

Luther then claims that Christian monks would be ‘put to shame by the miraculous and wondrous abstinence and discipline amongst their religious’ and goes on to remark that:

[...] our religious are merely shadows when compared to them, and our people clearly profane when compared to theirs. Not even true Christians, not Christ himself, not the apostles or prophets ever exhibited so great a display.⁹¹

He concludes of this ‘display’, a vitally important word in the context of what Luther is about to go on to say, that, ‘This is the reason why many persons so easily depart from faith in Christ for Muhammadanism and adhere to it so tenaciously.’⁹² Luther here arrives at the primary purpose behind his sponsorship of works on Islam such as the *Libellus*, and for his own interest in having a fuller knowledge of the tenets of Islamic faith: to construct more effective and accurate

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.259.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.259.

⁹² Ibid., p.259.

apotropaic and polemic arguments in order to prevent Christians from being impressed by the 'display' of Muslim religiosity and consequently 'turning Turk' and converting to Islam. The anxiety concerning conversion to Islam in early modern Europe was considerable and in his approach to the analysis of Muslim belief Luther demonstrates one of the principal tropes employed by Western writers to explain the level of apostasy, of Christians 'Turning Turk': that of deception, which along with the idea of 'seduction' by Islam, were seen as a central reason for the defection of Christians to 'Mahomet's law.'⁹³

Yet, as in many of his his other tracts, and in subsequent Protestant polemic against Islam, there is a dual purpose to Luther's arguments against Islam in the preface to the *Libellus*. This tract provides an example of the new Protestant reorientation of polemic on Islam to include a parallel attack on the Church of Rome, a technique which would be utilised repeatedly throughout the works of Protestant writers on Islam, forming one of the essential differences between medieval and early modern works on the subject.

As he did in the tract *On the War with the Turks* (1529),⁹⁴ Luther now moves from a discussion which deals solely with the dangers, in this case the dangerous attractions, of Islam, to one where he makes it clear what he means by 'good Christians', and identifies who is at risk from the seductive and deceptive

⁹³ As I will show later, these two ideas, along with the third feature of violent or forcible conversion, were intimately connected with representations of Muhammad himself and his methods in spreading Islam at the faith's inception.

⁹⁴ See Appendix III, p.480.

attractions of Islamic belief and ritual. He states that 'I sincerely believe that no papist, monk, cleric, or their equal in faith would be able to remain in their faith if they should spend three days among the Turks.'⁹⁵

Luther then embarks on a full-blooded attack on the Church of Rome, paralleling its practices with those of Islam. He first remarks that it would be 'only the sincerely religious' amongst the Catholics who would be attracted by the seeming virtues of Islam and that:

The rest of the mob and the greater part of them, especially the Italians, those swine from the band of Epicurus, who believe absolutely nothing, are secure from every heresy and error, strong and invincible in their Epicurian faith, armed as much against Christ as against Muhammad, or against even their own pope.⁹⁶

In this mordant observation Luther makes clear that ironically these members of the Church of Rome are safe from the lures of Islam, only because they are lost already. He then continues in his appeal to true believers by contrasting the exterior religiosity of Islam and Catholicism with the doctrine of *solo fides* which he propounded himself, stating that his intention is to show that:

The Christian religion is something other and more sublime than showy ceremonies, tonsures, hoods, pale countenances, fasts, fEasts, canonical hours, and that entire show of the Roman church throughout the world.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.259.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.259.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.259.

Comparing this performativity, even theatricality, of the Catholic model of religious observance with that of Islamic worship, Luther observes that ‘in all these things the Turks are far superior’; he then concludes of the ‘Turks’ that despite these shows of faith they are seriously deficient, indeed fundamentally wrong, in their religion as, ‘they continue to deny and ardently persecute Christ, no less than our papists deny and persecute him,’ using the question of the Muslim denial of the incarnation and the perception of Catholic perversion of ‘true religion’, which Luther sees as tantamount to denial of Christ, to once again equate the two faiths.⁹⁸

The power and persistence of this argument, based on the paralleling of the exteriority and performativity of both Islam and Catholicism, can be seen in *The image of both churches* (1570) by John Bale. Bale’s description of Catholic ceremony states that:

The pope in his church hath ceremonies without number, none end is there of their babbling prayers, their portases, bedes, temples, altars, songs, howrs, bells, images, organs, ornaments, Jewels, lights, oilings, shavings &c that a man would think they were the proctours of paradise.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.259.

⁹⁹ John Bale, *The image of both Churches after the most wonderfull and heauenly Reuelation of saint Iohn the Euangelist, contayning a very fruitfull exposition or paraphrase vpon the same. Wherin it is conferred vwith the other scriptures, and most auctorised histories. Compyled by Iohn Bale an exyle also in thys lyfe, for the faithfull testimony of Iesu.* (London: Thomas East, c. 1570), Sig.B3. This is repeated verbatim in: Henry Ainsworth, *An animadversion to Mr Richard Clyftons advertisement Who under pretense of answering Chr. Lawnes book, hath published an other mans private letter, with Mr Francis Johnsons answer therto. Which letter is here justified; the answer therto refuted: and the true causes of the*

He then turns to ‘Mahomet and his Church’, displaying the tendency to describe aspects of Muslim religion in Christian terms, which he describes as being ‘plenteous also in holy observations’, relating how Muslims:

[...] wash themselves oft, frequent their temples, pray five tymes in the day, they reverently incline, they lye prostrate on the ground, they fervently cal to God, they absteyn from wyne, they abhor Idolles, they hate them that are proude, and commend all sobernesse.¹⁰⁰

Although correctly identifying what would have been seen as positive aspects here, the abhorrence of idolatry and the abstinence from alcohol, Bale makes no further comment on this, instead going on to link ‘Mahomet’ and the pope together through the Biblical prophecy of Daniel, saying that ‘Daniel maketh these two but one, because they are both one wicked spirit.’¹⁰¹ Bale then goes on with his comparison, noticeably placing the Pope and ‘Mahomet’ in the same temporal space through use of the present tense, stating that:

The Pope Maketh his boast, that he is the High Preist, he is of equal power with Peter, he cannot err, he is the head and spouse of the Church [...]

lamentable breach that hath lately fallen out in the English exiled Church at Amsterdam, manifested, by Henry Ainsworth (London: 1613), p.106.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.106.

¹⁰¹ The reading of Islam through the book of Daniel connected Muhammad, and subsequently the Ottoman Turks, with the ‘fourth beast’ which would be ‘a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces’ (Daniel 7:23). Muhammad was seen as the figure following the ‘ten kings’ who would ‘speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High’ and also ‘change the times and the law’ (Daniel 7:25). Amongst other text this reading occurs in Niels Hemmingsen’s *Faith of the Church Militant* (1581), pp.77-8, and in William Biddulph’s *The travels of certaine Englishmen*, 1609 (in Kenneth Parker, *Early Modern Tales of Orient: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.92).

Mahomet braggeth also that he is that great Prophet, the promised Messias, the Apostle of both testaments.¹⁰²

Here Bale demonstrates another common confusion which will be seen later in the detailed analysis of the polemic biography, and which seems to arise from the conflating of the position of Muhammad in Islam with that of Jesus Christ in Christianity - the idea of Muhammad as a Messiah. He then goes on to outline an important aspect of the 'seductive' nature of Islam in its inclusion of the veneration of Christ as a prophet, stating that of 'Mahomet' that:

He is wel contented that Christ be an holy Prophet, and a most worthy creature, yea the word of God, the sowl of God, and the spirit of God, conceived of the Holy Ghost, but he wil in no case grant him to be the Son of God, nor that he dyed here for mans redemption.¹⁰³

This is, of course, one of the most important theological dividing lines between Islam and Christianity: the status of Jesus. In the discussion of Muhammad's 'framing' of his law, particularly in league with his, wholly fictional, collaborator Sergius, this aspect of Christian readings of Islamic belief will be discussed later in relation to Muhammad's intention to deceive and seduce potential Christian converts. Bale also adds to this confused concordance between Islam and Catholicism the idea that 'Both these two mainteyners of mischief allow Moses law, the Psalter, the Prophets, and the Gospel.'¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid., Sig.B3.

¹⁰³ Ibid., Sig.B3.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Sig.B3.

Bale demonstrates here a deformed understanding of the religious texts allowed in Islam, but does not take long before arriving at his principal point regarding the relationship with Old and New Testament scripture for both Muslims and Catholics, stating that even though, as he understands it, they ‘commend them, advance them, sing them, read them, honour them,’ this is made meaningless through an extra-scriptural supercessionism in which:

[...] they have their own filthy lawes preferred above them, the Pope his execrable decrees, and Mahomet his wicked Alkoran: ells wil they murder men without measure.¹⁰⁵

Bale’s conclusion is ultimately the same as Luther’s regarding the contradiction between the exterior show, the apparent goodness, of Islam and Catholicism and the reality, which is a perversion of true faith which they will ‘murder’ to maintain, meaning that, ‘Thus though they outwardly appear very vertuous, yet are they the malignant Ministers of Satan, denying the Lord which hath redemed them.’¹⁰⁶ The central matter of the denial of Jesus’ divinity, the result of the Muslim belief that the one unforgiveable sin is *shirk* or association of any being with the godhead, can be seen clearly stated in these examples from *Sura 5 (Al-Ma’ida, The Table)*:

Those who say that Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary, are unbelievers. The Messiah said: “O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely, he who associates other gods with Allah, Allah forbids him

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Sig.B3.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Sig.B3.

access to Paradise and his dwelling is Hell. The evildoers have no supporters!” (5:72)

And Sura 18 (*Al-Kahf*, the Cave):

And to warn those who say: “Allah has taken a son.”

They have no knowledge thereof, nor do their fathers. What a dreadful word, that comes out of their mouths! They only utter a lie. (18: 4-5)

This essential theological divide will be seen to underlie and inform all other readings of Islamic belief, a feature of Islamic theology which for Western Christian commentators in the early modern period, as in the Middle Ages, made any other accusation leveled against Islam, and of the behaviours of both Muhammad and Muslim believers, potentially believable. Essentially, for commentators on both the Islamic and Christian sides, the belief of the other in these central, yet diametrically opposed, articles of faith made, and indeed for some still makes, the believer in the other position guilty of the most heinous blasphemy and perversion of religion.

Luther, in his preface to the *Libellus*, goes on to extend his comparison of the parallel exteriority of the virtues of Catholicism and Islam to the matter of behaviours as represented by ‘good works’, expressing the hope that Catholics:

May [...] finally then grasp this truth, namely that the Christian religion is by far something other than good customs or good works. For this book

shows that the Turks are far superior to our Christians in these things as well.¹⁰⁷

In coupling together Islam and Catholicism through the exteriority and performability of their faith Luther makes it clear that in his opinion it is impossible for a Catholic theologian to refute Islam effectively and states that:

If it should come to the point of arguing about religion, the whole papistry, with all its trappings would fall. Nor would they be able to defend their own faith and at the same time refute the faith of Muhammad, since then they would have to refute those things that they themselves most approve and for which they most strive.¹⁰⁸

In sharing religions of externality, performance and extra-scriptural foundations, Islam and Catholicism are made to mirror each other and to form dual enemies to 'true' religion. Luther is able to move on from this depiction of the deceptive virtue of the Turks to indulge in more straightforwardly abusive commentary, remarking that there are no doubt 'many base and absurd things to be seen among the Turks' and collapses the temporal space between the authorship of the *Libellus* and his own time by commenting that these 'absurdities' are, 'likely of the same sort as the ones this book describes before the capture of Constantinople,'¹⁰⁹ demonstrating the atemporal approach to Islam and its cultures as unchanging in their essence.

¹⁰⁷ Luther, *Two Prefaces*, p.259.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.260.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.261.

Luther then adds urgency to his argument and draws attention to the immediate peril facing Christendom, revealing that his purpose in publishing the *Libellus* is ‘to anticipate and prevent the scandal of the Muhammadans. Since we have the Turk and his religion at our very doorstep, our people must be warned.’ Luther fears that unless such a warning is effectively issued Christians will convert:

[...] either moved by the splendour of the Turkish religion and the external appearance of their customs, or offended by the meager display of our own faith or the deformity of our customs...

This leads them, seduced or deceived by the exterior show of Islamic faith and the apparent ‘virtues’ of the Turks, to ‘deny Christ and follow Muhammad.’¹¹⁰

Ultimately Luther comes back to the familiar opposition to Islam over the matter of the incarnation, stating that ‘Muhammad denies that Christ is the son of God’ and so goes on to outline the corollaries of this fundamental error, employing rhetorical *repetitio*, that in the matter of the other central Christian beliefs Muhammad also:

[...] denies that he arose from our life, denies that by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are justified [the central tenet of Luther’s theology], denies that he will come to judge the living and the dead (though he does believe in the resurrection of the dead and the day of judgement), denies the Holy Spirit, and denies the gifts of the Spirit.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.261.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.262.

It is by these articles of faith which Luther asserts the Christian community ‘must be fortified against the ceremonies of Muhammad’ and that ‘With these weapons his *Qur’ān* must be refuted.’¹¹² It is these aspects of the *solo fides* mode of theology that Luther asserts against the exteriority and ritual which ‘The Turks and the papists may be radiant in,’ while at the same time being ‘void of true faith and filled alike with other most disgraceful crimes, abominable before God and hateful among people.’¹¹³ The direct corollary of misbelief is identified once again as being the manifested behaviours, particularly the deviant acts, of its adherents.

Luther hopes at the end of his preface to the *Libellus*, ‘if I ever get my hands on that Muhammad and his Qur’ān’, that he will be able to say more on the matter, and in his preface to the Bibliander edition of 1546 he does just that. Luther locates his attempt at analysing the *Qur’ān* in the context of the refutation of other erroneous faiths, stating that:

As I have written against the idols of the Jews and the papists, and will continue to do so to the extent that it is granted to me, so also have I begun to refute the pernicious beliefs of Muhammad, and I will continue to do so at more length.¹¹⁴

In doing this he places himself within the refutational tradition of the Church fathers and men such as Peter the Venerable, who also came to the study of Islam after

¹¹² Ibid., p.262.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.262.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.263.

completing polemic analyses of the Jews and of the Petrebrusian heresy.¹¹⁵ This contextualising of the dissemination and examination of Qur'ānic material within this tradition acted as a defence against accusations of occasioning danger by exposing the world to possible corruption. This same defence was used by William Bedwell in the preface 'to the Christian Reader' in his *Mohammedis imposturae* (1615), which, in its lengthy subtitle, presents a classic example of polemic purpose being stated from the outset of a work. Bedwell's text, which claims to be a translation of 'a conference had betweene two Mohametans, in their returne from Mecha. Written long since in Arabicke', makes clear its trajectory in this subtitle, which evinces itself to be:

A discouery of the manifold forgeries, falshoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed with a demonstration of the insufficiencie of his law, contained in the cursed Alkoran.¹¹⁶

Again here there can be seen the representation of Muhammad as 'seducer', already highlighted earlier. Bedwell's book also included a section, befitting the work of England's leading Arabist, called the 'Arabian trudgman' for 'interpreting certaine Arabicke termes vsed by historians', and also contained a breakdown of the *suras* of the *Qur'ān* which the title states is included 'for the vnderstanding of the confutations of that booke' - 'understanding' and 'confutation' clearly being indivisible to a

¹¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of Peter the Venerable and the Cluniac translation of the *Qur'ān* see: James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

¹¹⁶ William Bedwell, *Mohammedis imposturae: that is, A discouery of the manifold forgeries, falshoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed with a demonstration of the insufficiencie of his law, contained in the cursed Alkoran; deliuered in a conference had betweene two Mohametans, in their returne from Mecha. Written long since in Arabicke, and now done into English by William Bedwell. Whereunto is annexed the Arabian trudgman, interpreting certaine Arabicke termes vsed by historians: together with an index of the chapters of the Alkoran, for the vnderstanding of the confutations of that booke* (London: 1615).

Christian examination of the book. Bedwell pre-empts criticism which might be levelled at the dissemination of Islamic material by observing that:

If any man shall object and say, as the consistorie of Rome did by the Talmud, That it were better that such foolish fables and blasphemies were concealed and vtterly suppressed, then made publike and common to all¹¹⁷

he would answer that in doing so he had 'done no more, nay not so much, as the ancient Fathers, *Tertullian, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Augustine*, and others, who haue taken vpon them to confute the errors and opinions of Heretiks, haue done'. Here Bedwell places himself within the medieval tradition on Islam, which viewed the faith as just such a 'heresy', a trope which although still in use, became less common in the early modern period. He goes on to say of disseminating Islamic material that:

[...] in the Alkoran, saith a learned Diuine, there is no one opinion so impious & wicked, which may not be found in the bookes of those writers which I haue before spoken of; to wit, *Irenaeus, Tertullian*, the Ecclesiasticall historians, *Epiphanius, Philastrius*, and *Augustine*; whose bookes do breed well nere as oft as conies.¹¹⁸

Bedwell also claims that in the production of these texts, 'printers do thereby reape no small gaines and withall do deserue very well of all good students'. Bedwell also claims that there are 'Some things also, in the discoueries of old heresies, are met withall, more absurd and grosse, then the Alkoran doth afford any.'¹¹⁹ In taking this line Bedwell

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Sig.A3.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Sig.A3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., Sig.A3.

manages to incorporate the *Qur'ān* into the tradition of heretical opinions, thereby both condemning it and diffusing controversy over the controversial reproduction of its content. Also, by locating the examination of the *Qur'ān* within the Patristic exegetic tradition of refuting these hereies, he validates the enterprise as a necessary defence of Christian truth.

In his preface to the 1543 Bibliander *Qur'ān* Luther also sets out to defend the examination and dissemination of the *Qur'ān* and Islamic materials. Luther suggests that in creating effective polemic against Islam, just as he has done with the 'Jews and papists', it is 'useful to study closely the writings of Muhammad himself' and states that:

Accordingly, I have wanted to get a look at a complete text of the *Qur'ān*. I do not doubt that the more other pious and learned persons read these writings, the more the errors and the name of Muhammad will be refuted¹²⁰

For Luther, as for later commentators, access to the *Qur'ān* can only have one effect for the 'pious and learned' reader: that of more effectively and fully condemning Islam. For, as Luther goes on to say, once again linking Antisemitism to his Anti-Islamic polemic:

Just as the folly, or rather madness, of the Jews is more easily observed once their hidden secrets have been brought out in the open, so once the book of Muhammad has been made public and thoroughly examined in all

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.263.

its parts, all pious persons will more easily comprehend the insanity and wiles of the devil and will be more easily able to refute them.¹²¹

In this schema there is no possibility whatsoever of an objective approach to the *Qur'ān* or to Islam, for Luther 'understanding' of the text equates directly with refutation and, as he states, 'This is the reason that has moved me to wish to publish this book.'¹²²

Luther also attempts to answer concerns about the potential danger that through the dissemination of the *Qur'ān* 'weak minds may be corrupted as it were by an infection and turned from Christ'.¹²³ Here Luther employs the trope of Islam as 'infection', which alongside the previously mentioned ideas of 'seduction' and 'deception,' was a common device in representing the spread of Islam, with Islam being figured as creeping pathogen swallowing the Christian world. Luther answers this concern with a rhetorical appeal to the convictions of true Christians, who he believes will easily recognize the manifest falsity of Islam as he hopes:

[...] there be none so infirm in the church of God that they do not have this conviction fixed in their mind, that [...] it is patently impossible that any religion or doctrine about the worship or invocation of God be true that utterly rejects the prophetic and apostolic writings.¹²⁴

Here again it is an appeal to the extra-scriptural nature of Islam that forms the keystone of Luther's analysis. The statements within the *Qur'ān* which firmly locate

¹²¹ Ibid., p.263.

¹²² Ibid., p.263.

¹²³ Ibid., p.263

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.264.

Muhammad within the traditions of the Prophets, where he is repeatedly referred to as the 'reminder' and not a figure creating a faith *de novo*, are meaningless to Luther as they do not derive from what he views as the transcendental and universal biblical texts.

Of course, Islamic rejection of the Christian gospels as 'corrupted' would have been anathema to Luther, as to other early modern Christians, but in this preface Luther, who has presumably read the *Qur'ān* by this time, seems to work against the clear statements in the which locate it within the Abrahmic prophetic tradition - statements such as that in Sura 2 (*Al-Baqara*, The Cow), which commands that Muslims are to state in answer to Jews and Christians who want them to convert that:

We believe in Allah, in what has been revealed to us, what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il [Ishmael], Ishaq [Isaac], Jacob and the Tribes, and in what was imparted to Moses, Jesus and the other prophets from their Lord, making no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.
(2:135)

Luther, conversely, states that 'Muhammad acknowledges [...] that he is devising a new belief that dissents from the prophets and apostles' and moves from this point into a conflation of Islam with the polytheism of Ancient civilisations, compelling the faithful, in the light of Muhammad's rejection of the holy texts of Christianity, to reject his 'new' faith as they have other erroneous faiths which came before:

Therefore, as you firmly repudiate the beliefs of the Egyptians, who worship cats and of the Arabians who worshipped dogs, so you shall denounce this new creation of Muhammad, because he himself openly admits that he does not embrace the teachings of the prophets and the apostles¹²⁵

It is interesting here that Luther chooses to connect Islam to the ancient beliefs of Muhammad's own people, the Arabs, and also to that of the Egyptians, so giving Islam a place within the tradition of Oriental and African paganism, in which it seems to figure as a natural successor. Strangely, in his next statement Luther seems to echo the words of the *Qur'ān* when he states that 'the only true religion is that which was from the beginning handed on by God, with clear testimonies, through the prophets and apostles', which, ironically, would be exactly the view Muslims would take towards Islam. Of course, the radical difference between the positions of the two faiths is the status of the texts which form the keystone of their revelatory and theological traditions: the *Qur'ān* and *the Bible*, and particularly the opposing ways in which they view the figure of Jesus. Luther, as with all other early modern Christians (and indeed those after), could never accept the *Qur'ān* as a revelatory text, being a book which they saw as perverting and supplementing what they viewed as the already complete text of the Bible and denying the divinity of Jesus, any more than Muslims could accept the Christian Bible as a truthful record of the life and status of Jesus.

Luther concludes his preface to the Bibliander *Qur'ān* with an apocalyptic rallying call to true Christians to 'fight on all fronts against the ranks of the devil'. He lists the

¹²⁵ Luther, *Prefaces*, p.264.

‘varied enemies’ against whom Christians are already engaged, including the usual suspects of ‘Papist defenders of idolatry’ and ‘the Jews’, but also referring to the new menace of extreme Protestants such as ‘the multifarious monstrosities of the Anabaptists’ and also the Spanish antitrinitarian theologian Servetus (whose ideas on the pagan nature of the Trinity were frequently compared to Islamic concepts on the incarnation). He ends by exhorting Christians that, just as they had opposed these enemies, they should ‘now prepare [...] against Muhammad.’¹²⁶ To this end he makes another clear statement of his reasons for sponsoring the publication of the *Qur’ān*, observing that it is impossible to comment on ‘matters that are still outside our knowledge; and that:

Therefore, it is of value for the learned to read the writings of the enemy in order to refute them more keenly, to cut them to pieces and overturn them, in order that they might be able to bring some to safety, or certainly to fortify our people with more sturdy arguments.¹²⁷

The Bibliander *Qur’ān* would have, in all probability, been the only possibility available to an English reader to examine for themselves the contents of the holy book of Islam until the publication in 1649 of Alexander Ross’s *The Alcoran of Mahomet* which, as discussed earlier,¹²⁸ was translated not from an Arabic original but from the French translation of Du Ryer’s French edition. As Ross put it himself in prefatory section included in the 1688 edition entitled ‘A needful Caveat or Admonition for

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.266.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.266.

¹²⁸ See above. p.54.

them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the *Alcoran*':

[...] the great *Arabian* Impostor now at last after a thousand years, is by the way of *France* arrived in *England*, and his *Alcoran*, or gallimaufry of Errors, (a Brat as deformed as the Parent, and as full of Heresies, as his scald head was of scurf) hath learned to speak *English*.¹²⁹

This linking of the theological 'deformity' of the *Qur'ān* to the theological 'deformity' of the 'Imposter' Muhammad is a common trope, as already discussed; but here Ross goes further and attributes to Muhammad physical deformity in the form of a scabrous ('scald') head caused by scurvy ('scurf'). This was a far less common technique, as little was generally said about Muhammad's appearance in the polemic biographies. One example of a physical description of Muhammad can be found in Thomas Newton's *A notable historie of the Saracens* (1575), where Muhammad, labeled by Newton in his title as '*their first péeuish prophet*', is described as being:

[...] of a meane stature, bigge headded, somewhat broune complexioned, chéerefully countenauced and liuely coloured, a long bearde, and yet not hoare: because alwayes as it beganne to waxe graye, with oyntmentes he altered it: his visage and looke was graue and portly, pretending a kynde

¹²⁹ Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet, translated out of Arabick into French, by the Sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and resident for the French king, at Alexandria. And newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities. To which is prefixed, the life of Mahomet, the prophet of the Turks, and author of the Alcoran. With A needful caveat, or admonition, for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran* (London: Randal Taylor, 1688), no page numbers in text. Although not included in the first edition of 1649, the inclusion of this 'Caveat' in the 1688 edition serves to demonstrate the persistence of these ideas throughout the early modern period.

of Maiestie ioyned wyth gentlenesse and curtesie, hys legges very well proportioned...¹³⁰

Although this is a somewhat more positive image on first reading than that presented by Ross, there is still the suggestion of the deceitful nature of Muhammad in his dyeing of his hair and in his ‘pretending’ Majesty. Newton also goes on to qualify his description with a comment that although Muhammad was ‘in talke verie curteous, in mynde and body both stoute, stronge and venturous, quicke and prompte of witte’, the description of Muhammad’s intelligence and inventiveness also being a common feature of many of the polemic biographies, he was ‘the same (as Salust writeth of Catiline) wicked and disposed to all mischief, bolde, hardie, and suche a one that cared for no perilles.’¹³¹ Ross also makes sure to add that Muhammad was ‘also a déepe counterfeytor and dissembler in euery matter, but by nature verie eloquent withall’, making it clear that even though aspects of Muhammad’s physical appearance may be attractive, these only acted as a disguise for his true iniquity, in a similar manner to Luther’s attitude towards the appearance and reality of Islam itself.

In his introduction to his *Qur’ān* Ross possibly derived his description of the prophet from George Sandys *Relation of a Journey*, who describes Muhammad in the following terms:

¹³⁰ Thomas Newton, *A notable historie of the Saracens Briefly and faithfully descrybing the originall beginning, continuaunce and successe aswell of the Saracens, as also of Turkes, Souldans, Mamalukes, Assassines, Tartarians and Sophians. With a discourse of their affaires and actes from the byrthe of Mahomet their first péeuish prophet and founder for 700 yéeres space. VVhereunto is annexed a compendious chronycle of all their yeerely exploytes, from the sayde Mahomets time tyll this present yeere of grace. 1575*, (London: 1575), p.3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

Meane of stature he was, & evill proportioned: having ever a scald head, which (as some say) made him wear a white shash continually; now worn by his sectaries¹³²

The description has Sandys making the incredible suggestion that the wearing of turbans by Muslims originates in the emulation of Muhammad's use of a white sash to cover his diseased scalp. The connection between physical deformity, disease and spiritual and moral turpitude was a common one in medieval and renaissance writings, and although little mention was made of Muhammad's appearance in the polemic biographies, many included references to Muhammad as an epileptic (with all its contemporary associations with demonic possession) or as being otherwise diseased through his dissolute lifestyle.

Indeed, Ross makes a clear connection between the *Qur'ān* and monstrosity, where in describing his reasons for publishing the edition he states that:

I suppose this piece is exposed by the Translator to the publick view, no otherwise than some Monster brought out of Africa, for people to gaze, not to dote upon; and as the sight of a Monster or mishapen creature should induce the beholder to praise God, who hath not made him such¹³³

In advancing this racialised slur, connecting the physical description of Muhammad with what he goes on to call 'this mishapen issue of Mahomet's brain,' Ross puts forward his

¹³² George, Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of AEGypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning*, (London: [by Richard Field] for W: Barrett, 1615), p.53.

¹³³ Ross, *Alcoran*, no page.

belief that just as the viewing of the monstrous African should make the European viewer grateful to God for their own appearance:

[...] so should the reading of this Alcoran excite us both to bless God's goodness towards us in this Land, who enjoy the glorious light of the Gospel, and behold the truth in the beauty of holiness; as also to admire God's Judgments, who suffers so many Countreys to be blinded and inslaved...

making it clear that, in his view, a reading of the *Qur'ān* by a good Christian can only serve to reinforce their sense of religious rectitude and, by association in this instance, racial and national superiority over the Islamic 'Other'.

The very subtitle of Ross's *Qur'ān* identifies his purpose in producing the translation, stating that it is '*for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities*'; the subtitle also advertises its inclusion of '*the life of Mahomet, the prophet of the Turks, and author of the Alcoran*', demonstrating again the status of the Turks as the synecdoche of Islam and connecting them intimately with the details which will be included in this 'life', which provides a particularly lurid example of the genre of polemic biography, aimed partly, as usual in this tradition, at discrediting the 'author' of the *Qur'ān* and consequently disproving his revelation. The tenacious survival of these ideas throughout the Reformation period can be seen in the fact that the purposes outlined by Ross for his translation and publication of the *Qur'ān*, although more than one hundred years after the Latin edition of Luther and Bibliander, are practically identical. The difference comes only in other religious groupings whom Ross chooses to castigate in parallel with Islam.

For Luther it was the Catholic Church and sects such the Anabaptists; for Ross, a High Church Anglican at the time of the English Revolution, it was the new radical Protestant sects of the Interregnum government.

In his preface to the 'Christian Reader' Ross again outlines clearly his purpose in producing this edition of the Qur'ān, stating that:

THERE being so many Sects and Heresies banded together against the Truth, finding that of Mahomet wanting to the Muster, I thought good to bring it to their Colours, that so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou maist the better prepare to encounter, and I hope overcome them.¹³⁴

In this statement of intention Ross can clearly be seen to echo the intentions of Luther in sponsoring the Bibliander edition of 1546, and indeed the intentions of earlier publicisers of translations such as Peter the Venerable: that of facilitating more effective refutation through exposure and dissemination. Ross swiftly moves to allay any fears about the possible danger of corruption of Christian belief by publishing the *Qur'ān*, assuring his Christian reader that although 'It may happily startle thee, to find him so to speak English, as if he had made some Conquest on the Nation', the truth is that even given the new ability of Muhammad to 'speak' to them:

[...] thou wilt soon reject that fear, if thou consider that this his Alcoran, (the Ground-work of the Turkish Religion) hath been already translated into almost all Languages in Christendom, (at IEast, the most general, as

¹³⁴ Ross, *The Alcoran* (1649 edition), Sig.A2.

the Latin, Italian, French, &c.) yet never gained any Proselyte, where the Sword, its most forcible, and strongest argument hath not prevailed¹³⁵

Ross reinforces the idea of Islam as a religion of violence and of its spread through conquest and compulsion of the vanquished, an idea which will be discussed at greater length in a later section of this thesis. Ross even goes on to state that Muslims themselves are unable to find any other justification for their faith aside from a providential argument based on expansion through conquest, describing how:

[...] the greatest Doctors of their Religion have never alledged any thing for the truth thereof; but the success of their Wars, and greatness of their Empire, than which nothing is more fallacious: for that which both in former, and these latter Ages hath been common to the bad with the good, cannot be a certain evidence of the justice of a Cause, or the truth of Religion.¹³⁶

For Ross, as for other early modern commentators, there was a need to justify the truth and superiority of Christianity, most particularly their own version of the faith, in face of Muslims' conquest and empire. Not to do so would otherwise result in a reading of the geo-political situation as a providential confirmation of the truth of Islam, as Ross suggests is the contention of Muslim authorities. This need to contextualise and diffuse this potential view of Islamic military success runs through many of the texts examined in this thesis, and is evident in the frequent need for the retreat into an eschatological view of history, discussed earlier, with its *telos* of Christian victory

¹³⁵ Ibid, Sig.A2-3.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Sig.A3.

grounded in the Millennial belief in the return of Christ, or into a representation of Muslim success as a providential punishment for Christian sin.

Ross goes on to discuss the way in which he believed the *Qur'ān* to be disseminated and its ideas in the transmitted, within in Muslim world. He firstly observes the absurd content of the *Qur'ān* which, he assures the Christian reader, they will find 'rude' and 'farced with contradictions, blasphemies, obscene speeches, and ridiculous fables', noting that even 'modest, and more rational Mahometans' have 'excused' it, commenting that 'their Prophet wrote an hundred and twenty thousand sayings, whereof three thousand only are good'. Yet despite what he perceives to be the nature of the content of *Qur'ān* and the identification of the nature of this content by even 'modest' and 'rational' Muslims, Ross goes on to describe the way that within Islam the *Qur'ān* is:

[...] esteemed so sacred, that upon the Cover thereof is inscribed - Let none touch it but he who is clean. Nor are the vulgar permitted to read it, but live and die in an implicite faith of what their Priests deliver...¹³⁷

From this perception of the *Qur'ān* as a restricted text Ross moves to conclude, citing the example of the Dutch humanist and jurist Hugo Grotius (Huig de Groot) that this holding back of the text from the 'vulgar', as from non-Muslims, is 'is a manifest argument of its iniquity: For that Merchandise may justly be suspected, which will not be sold, unless unseen.'¹³⁸ This argument fed into the frequently repeated polemic

¹³⁷ Ibid., Sig.A3.

¹³⁸ Ibid., Sig.A3.

accusations leveled at Islam as being a religion opposed to reason and discussion, evidenced by what was perceived as an unwillingness or even blanket prohibition of the debating of its tenets or examination of its texts by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

This prohibition of reasoned analysis of the *Qur'ān* leads Ross to conclude that as 'all Men are not alike perspicacious in the knowledge, and discerning of things', this had led to conversions to Islam as, 'some by arrogancy, and vain conceit of themselves, others by affection; Some by custom' have been 'drawn into error',¹³⁹ setting out very narrow terms for conversion outside the principal cause of compulsion through violence. Yet Ross also points to the hope of conversion for those fallen into 'error', stating that the condition of the 'Mahometans' is not an irreparable one, making it clear to his Christian readership that:

[...] should we believe that the way to eternal life cannot be understood by them, who without any respect of profit or preferment, seek it, submitting themselves, with all they have, to God, imploring his assistance, we should sin against his infinite goodness.¹⁴⁰

Ross then draws parallels between the actions of the 'Turks' in forbidding reasoned analysis with that of the new radical Protestant Commonwealth government in attempting to suppress the publication of his edition of the *Qur'ān*.

¹³⁹ Ibid., Sig.A4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Sig.A4.

As Nabil Matar has detailed,¹⁴¹ as soon as there was a realisation that the *Qur'ān* was going to be published in England it was reported by a Colonel Anthony Weldon, resulting in the actions reported to the House of Commons on 21 March 1649 that:

[...] the Serjeant at Arms did apprehend the Printer of the Turkish Alcoran, licensed by Dr. Downeham; and hath seized the Books; Ordered, That it be referred to the Council of State, further to examine the Matter; and to discharge the Prisoner, or continue him in Prison, as they shall find Cause; and to take what further Order they shall think fit for the Suppressing of the Books, and further Imprinting of them.¹⁴²

As Matar goes on to observe, there is no evidence for any proceedings against Ross and the Commonwealth's voting of toleration of other religions, including Islam, in the name of commerce meant that there was already a Muslim presence in Britain. Matar concludes that whatever the motivations for the suppression of the texts these were eventually set aside or ignored as Ross's *Qur'ān* was printed and released on 7 May 1649.¹⁴³

In Ross's prefatory section addressing his idealised 'Christian Reader' he demonstrates the common trope of combining anti-Islamic polemic with criticism of Christian error, observing that this suppression has been the work of those 'conscious of their own instability in Religion, and of theirs (too like Turks in this) whose prosperity and opinions they follow, were unwilling this should see the Press.'¹⁴⁴ This example of the

¹⁴¹ Nabil Matar, 'Alexander Ross and the First English Translation of the *Qur'ān*', *The Muslim World*, 88, 1988, pp.81-92.

¹⁴² *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 6: 1648-1651 (1802)*, pp. 169-71.

¹⁴³ Matar, 'Alexander Ross...', p.83.

¹⁴⁴ Ross, *Alcoran.*, Sig.A4.

internalisation of anti-Islamic polemic and its redeployment in intra-Christian controversy leads to a situation where Ross is confident that in the case of his Christian reader, ‘if thou hast been so true a votary to orthodox Religion [i.e. the Anglican Church], as to keep thy self untainted of their [the Commonwealth Radicals] follies, this [the *Qur’ān*] shall not hurt thee’, but makes it clear that:

[...] as for those of that Batch, having once abandoned the Sun of the Gospel, I believe they will wander as far into utter darkness, by following strange lights, as by this *Ignis Fatuus* of the Alcoran.¹⁴⁵

The ‘Batch’, here meaning the radical Puritans of the Commonwealth government, are shown to be already lost by pursuing their own extra-Biblical theology (their ‘strange lights’)¹⁴⁶, and in a similar way to the faithless Catholics of Luther’s preface to Bibliander’s *Qur’ān* are at less risk from the publication and reading of the contents of the *Qur’ān* than from their own heretical approach to religion.

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Other texts of the period which include discussions of Islam and Muhammad are equally explicit in expressing their polemic purpose and in stating their approach to the subject. John Foxe, in the second edition of his *Acts and Monuments* (1570), states that ‘The prodigious vanities, lies, and blasphemies contained in this law called Alcoran, are rather

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Sig.A4.

¹⁴⁶ A detailed examination of the radical religious ideas current during the English Revolution can be found in Christopher Hill’s *The World Turned Upside Down* (London: Penguin, 1991 (1972)).

to be laughed at than recited,¹⁴⁷ showing that in his view the *Qur'ān* is not worthy of serious investigation at all. Thomas Roger's translation of Lutheran professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) places its investigation of Islam under the heading 'Against Mahomet, or the Turkes, who take vpon them to be the true Church, and yet are not,'¹⁴⁸ once again demonstrating the direct conflation of Muhammad with the Turks as interchangeable terms, as well as a pre-emptive statement of the falsity of Islam. The text describes itself in its subtitle as:

A treatise written as to the instruction of the ignorant in the groundes of religion, so to the confutation of the Iewes, the Turkes, atheists, Papists, heretiks, and al other aduersaries of the trueth whatsoever...¹⁴⁹

So providing an example of the regular conflation, or parallel treatment, by Protestant authors of Islam, atheism, Catholicism and Judaism, a feature which, as I will show when dealing with the beliefs contained in the polemic biographies regarding the nature of Muhammad's prophethood, the composition of the *Qur'ān* and the subsequent nature of Islamic belief, was often personified by the personality and career of Muhammad himself.

¹⁴⁷ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

¹⁴⁸ Neils Hemmingsen, Thomas Rogers (trans), *The faith of the church militant moste effectualie described in this exposition of the 84. Psalme, by that reuerend pastor, and publike professor of Gods word, in the famous vniuersitie of Hassine in Denmarke, Nicholas Hemmingius. A treatise written as to the instruction of the ignorant in the groundes of religion, so to the confutation of the Iewes, the Turkes, atheists, Papists, heretiks, and al other aduersaries of the trueth whatsoever. Translated out of Latine into English, &c. by Thomas Rogers* (London: 1581), p.76.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.76.

The intention and methodology of Hemmingsen's text is clearly laid out when he states that 'I thinke it not amisse to examine these pointes', and makes a list of the points he will cover:

1. What prophecies haue gone before of this sect; 2, What was the occasion thereof; 3, Who was the auctor; 4, What companions he had; 5, Howe it increased & was confirmed; 6, What lawes it hath; 7, what fables are mixed to their guile & deceitfulnes; 8, What maner of Paradise it promiseth to ye fauorers; 9, By what arguments the impietie of Mahomet may be refuted; 10, And finalie, how the mindes of men may be comforted against the rage of satan ranging so in ye world.¹⁵⁰

Hemmingsen covers the familiar ground of deception, Muhammad as 'author' and the nature of the Muslim paradise in the project of encouraging refutation and providing comfort in the face of the threat of Islam. This sense of threat is reiterated in the text when Hemmingsen describes how 'more daylie their sect doeth increase, and godlinesse decrease in manie, who had rather be counted than be godlie indeed,' using the method of employing the threat of Islam to castigate error in Christian belief, such as the 'Epicures' (a term often used by Luther to describe the Church in Rome) who 'fondlie doe reason of religion.' In the context of this weakening of faith amongst Christians, to the advantage of the Turks, Hemmingsen states that to combat this:

I thinke it good to admonish the yonger sort concerning the Turkish sect, yt vnderstanding what it is, they maie abhorre it the more, and shun the same euen as they would the diuel himselfe.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.76-7.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.76.

Having investigated the ‘ridiculous fables’ of the *Qur’ān*, Hemmingsen reiterates his apotropaic purpose, in expressing the hope that:

[...]the vanitie of this villaine [Muhammad] being found-out, we may the more earnestlie beg at the handes of God, that he woulde not suffer this vagabonde and theife to enter vpon his Church, but shewe mercie vpon vs, and not punishe vs according vnto the multitude of our sinnes.¹⁵²

The title of Chapter Three of Henry Smith’s extremely popular *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593), ‘Wherein is briefly shewed, the Religion of Mahomet to be a false and wicked Religion’, also makes clear the trajectory which it will take in examining Islam. Smith makes it plain that his purpose is one of confirming Christian belief by comparing it to ‘the Mahometish Religion’, believing that through such a comparison ‘the truth of the Christian Religion will appéere so much the more: for when blacke and white are laid together, the white carrieth the greater estimation and glorie with it’.¹⁵³ In Joseph Wybarne’s *The nevv age of old names* (1609) Islam is discussed under ‘New Names of False Religions’ in a section entitled ‘The Impostures of Turcisme and Iudaisame’, once again showing Islam as a religion to be refuted, this time in parallel with the familiar religious bogeyman of Jewish belief.¹⁵⁴

The works of travellers show a similar purpose to those of commentators at home in Europe. The preacher William Biddulph, in his *The travels of certaine Englishmen*,

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.91-2.

¹⁵³ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.K1.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph Wybarne, *The nevv age of old names By Ios. Wib. Master of Artes of Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge*. (London : Printed [by John Windet] for William Barret, and Henry Fetherstone, 1609), no page number.

(1609), makes it clear that his coverage of Islam and of other cultures has the purpose of encouraging both piety and patriotism in his readership. Biddulph asserts that through his descriptions of the Turkish polity and religion:

[...] all men may see how God has blessed our country above others; and be stirred up to thankfulness. Hereby subjects may learn to love, honour, and obey their good and gracious king, when they shall read of the tyrannous government of other countries, and of the merciful government of theirs.¹⁵⁵

As well as encouraging this devotion to king and country Biddulph, perhaps not entirely unselfishly, observes that through reading his descriptions of Islamic religion ‘readers may learn to love and reverence their pastors, and to thank God for the inestimable benefit of the preaching of the Word amongst them,’ in comparison to the ‘blindness and palpable ignorance other nations live, not knowing the right hand from the left in matters that concern the kingdom of Heaven.’¹⁵⁶ Biddulph also points out that although false religion is preached by Islamic religious authorities the Muslims ‘yet reverence and honour their blind guides and superstitious churchmen like angels, and provided for their maintenance royally,’ perhaps implying that the ministers of the true faith, like himself, should receive similar treatment.

In introducing the topic of Islam in *The preachers trauels* (1611), in the context of describing Arabian society, John Cartwright observes that:

¹⁵⁵ William Biddulph, *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (1609), in: Kenneth Parker (ed), *Early Modern Tales of the Orient: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.85.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

[...] it shall not be amisse to insert a word or two, of Mahomet and his superstition, who was borne in this country, and hath seduced the greatest part of the world with his abominable religion.¹⁵⁷

Once again Cartwright sets up an oppositional approach to the subject of Islam, and also demonstrates the trope of Muhammad as ‘seducer’ which was so often repeated in early modern texts. Cartwright makes transparently clear his purpose in writing his account of the Islamic world as he expresses the wish that his work will:

[...] perswade my louing Countri-men, that either shall hereafter serue in the warres of *Hongary* against the Turk or trade in those places, vtterly to detest the *Turkish* Religion, as the only way that treads to death and destruction.¹⁵⁸

And to conclude with ‘Ludovicus Vives, who compareth Heathenisme and Mahometisme, to glasse’¹⁵⁹:

Touch not glasse, for though it be bright, yet is it brittle, it cannot endure the hammer: and Christianisme to gold, do you melt it, or doe you rubbe it, or do you beate it, it shineth still more orient.¹⁶⁰

The attitude of the texts examined in this section in approaching Islam and the figure of Muhammad are typical of those found across genres in early modern writing in

¹⁵⁷ John Cartwright, *The preacher's travels* (London: 1611), p.105.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.105.

¹⁵⁹ Spanish Humanist (b.1472-d.1540).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.105.

English on the topic, demonstrating the contention of this thesis that an objective approach to an examination of Islam in Britain during this period was all but impossible, the negative dominant ideologies, which had been operating in Europe for centuries in respect to the Muslim world, being too powerful for the Christian commentator to overcome.

Origins: The Historical and Cultural Context of Muhammad in Early Modern Western Constructions of Islam

In the time of these so great garboyles and diuersities in religions, and among suche blockishe and rude people, was Mahomet borne.

Thomas Newton *A notable historie of the Saracens* (1575)

In medieval polemic biographies it had always been essential in establishing the life of Muhammad as 'an essential disproof of the Islamic claim to revelation'¹⁶¹ to have him born in lowly or base circumstances, including a mixed familial religious background which most commonly included Jewish and idolatrous parents. This enabled the reinforcing of the idea of Islam as a composite religion, a syncretic faith which reflected in its tenets the mixed parentage and heresy-ridden milieu of its prophet - a construction which remained largely unchanged during the early modern period. There was also a seeming need in these texts to impute a similarly base nature to the first, and subsequent, converts to Islam, whether they had converted from the pagan religions of Arabia or from Christianity or Judaism. This litany of racial or cultural slurs was also applied more generally to the people of Arabia, often combining accusations of ignorance, credulity, aggression, criminality, dishonesty, barbarity and sensuality - in short, the attributes which would thereafter be accorded to Muslims in general.

The quasi-racial, or rather pseudo-genealogical, identification of the first Muslims as Saracens, Hagerenes or Ishmaelites also had a vital role in the exegetic and eschatological

¹⁶¹ Daniel, *Islam and the West*, p.100.

readings of the religion of Islam during the medieval period and continued into the works of the early modern commentators through the 'inheritance' of these identities, or at least of their attributes, by subsequent cultural groups converting to Islam. In this way the racial and cultural traits attributed to Muhammad and the early converts to Islam constituted, it could be argued, the foundations of the representation of the behaviours, character and nature of Muslims throughout the early modern period, as they had in the preceding centuries. These representations form the core of an essentialising, ahistorical and atemporal, system of representation which would prove remarkably resistant to modification.

Even though cogniscent of the difference between discrete Islamic cultures in terms of racial, linguistic and other aspects, the Western Christian commentator was always likely to return at some stage to the matter of religion to provide explanations and paradigms in describing these cultures; differences between discrete Muslim peoples was acknowledged, and occasionally exploited, but the weight of tradition meant that they were still, at root, 'Mahometans' to the Christian observer of the medieval and early modern periods and with this came a whole series of essentialising cultural and/or racial traits, largely denotative of multiple forms of deviance and threat.¹⁶² In this process the span of centuries between the life of Muhammad and the early modern exigence of

¹⁶² In this thesis I will argue that while the term 'Moor' generally carried with it a series of phenotypic racial markers which were not present in the same way in the term 'Turk', which presented a more fluid category, allowing Europeans to 'turn' and become 'Turks.' For a detailed analysis of the intersection of religion and race see: Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.45-74. For discussions of the figure of the Moor in early modern English writing see: Eldred Jones, *Othello's countrymen: the African in English Renaissance drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) and Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991).

resisting the ‘the greatest terror of the world,’¹⁶³ as Knolles describes the Ottoman Turks, was effectively collapsed and the perceptions of Muhammad contained in these polemic biographies functioned as the foundational concepts in the construction of the ‘nature’ of Ottoman Turks and of the ‘natures’ of other Islamic cultures.

This process can be seen at work in many of the many works from the early modern period dealing with the history of the Turks and their ‘policy’ or ‘law’, in which the historiographic technique was to commence the account with a biography of Muhammad as originator or instigator and then to leap the across the intervening centuries to the rise of the Ottoman Turks themselves. Nabil Matar has described this collapsing of the temporal gap between Muhammad and the first Muslims and the more contemporary cultures of Islam as a ‘process of de-historicization.’¹⁶⁴ He gives the example of the history of the Turks included in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, which, after some Apocalyptic prologomena dealing with the Revelation of St John, follows the pattern outlined above by opening with an account of the time when ‘this pestifereous sect of Mahomet first began’, which includes the standard polemic biography of the ‘damnable Mahomet’¹⁶⁵ himself, and then leaps directly to the time of Ottoman (Osman) I and the inception of the ‘Turkish tyranny.’¹⁶⁶ In doing so, as Matar points out, Foxe has made a huge temporal leap, ‘deleting thereby over 700 years of “Saracen” and Arab History,’¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Richard Knolles, ‘The Author’s Induction to the Christian Reader’ in *The generall historie of the Turkes from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Othoman familie: with all the notable expeditions of the Christian princes against them. Together with the liues and conquests of the Othoman kings and emperours faithfullie collected out of the- best histories, both auntient and moderne, and digested into one continuat historie vntill this present yeare 1603* (London: Adam Islip, 1603), no page number.

¹⁶⁴ Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.157.

¹⁶⁵ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, Stephen Reed Cattley (ed.), (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1837), pp.20-21.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹⁶⁷ Matar, *Islam*, pp.157-8.

and connects the perceived nature of Muhammad and his early followers directly, and without the mediation of centuries of interpretation, with the Ottoman Turks. In this sense the scheme that operated in relation to Islam mirrored the medieval historical approach to Judaism outlined by Anthony Bale in his recent work *The Jew in the Medieval Book*. Bale identifies the technique as being one which ‘comprehended the past through the concerns of the present, informed by moral judgement rather than modern notions of historical objectivity.’¹⁶⁸ In this way the medieval inheritances of the approach to Islam had taken on the construction of a Muhammad and an inception of Islam which explained the perceived behaviours and nature of contemporary Muslims, giving precedence to the Turks in the same way that the medieval commentator had to the ‘Saracen’.¹⁶⁹

Bale also notes the ‘mutability of the medieval notion of time’ in relation to producing the history of the Jews, which, as with many of the early modern histories of Islam, was able to collapse long periods together as well as blurring cultural and political identities to produce a seamless flow from Muhammad to the present, a process which was, as with the ahistoric approach to the Jews an ‘explicitly religious enterprise’. Bale also identifies in the medieval reading of Judaism how ‘Christian typology, apocalypticism and supercessionism in effect reformat Jewish time in terms of its usefulness and resonance to a Christian present and future,’¹⁷⁰ again echoing the process which occurs in the eschatological readings of Islam produced by early modern Protestants, where the threat

¹⁶⁸ Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.23.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.24.

of Muslim power is contained by a narrative model which ensures their defeat through a millennial *telos*.¹⁷¹

Central in the production of these foundational ideas on the interpretation of Islam was the role of biblical exegesis and of the dominance of biblical and theological, particularly eschatological, readings of the world, its cultures, races and even geography. In this regard the biblical figures of Ishmael, Antichrist and of Gog and Magog had particular importance (a feature shared, as this section will show, with early modern constructions of the Catholicism and its cultures), as did prophetic biblical texts such as the book of Daniel and, of course, the Revelation of St John. The early modern period, in Britain as elsewhere in Europe, was one where theological considerations exerted a powerful, indeed a defining, influence on the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of commentators in all fields of investigation.

To operate outside these prescribed theological understandings, whether exemplified by the dogma of the Catholic Church or ideas of the various dominant Protestant theologies in the 'reformed' states, was to risk accusations of heresy, atheism or apostacy, all of which were signs of religious deviance with profoundly political connotations and which will be found constantly to reoccur in the texts analysed here. This situation had the result of imposing either explicit or implied limits to representation of religious 'others', creating a situation where

¹⁷¹ The supercessionism which had once been applied to the Jews, though not applicable to the post-Christian Islam, would find its way instead into the readings of the Catholic other which formed the regular analogue for Islam in these Protestant readings.

some things simply could *not be said or written*, at least not without severe personal consequences for the offending party. What will also become apparent in this analysis is the degree to which these representations of the religious ‘Others’, whether Muslim, Jewish or Catholic, were blurred, conflated and paralleled, almost always returning to points of theological and biblical justification to create their images of religious, and consequently of cultural, political and social deviance, often resulting in apocalyptic conclusions.

The production of these exegetic and eschatological views of the world and of history was also vital in the construction of a new Protestant national identity, in England and Scotland as in the other new Protestant states of Europe. The reading of the world through biblical prophecy allowed the commentator on the new Protestant state to locate their nation within a teleological providential historical schema, which could counter the reality of the threat existing from Catholic and Muslim powers in their current geo-political situation. As Matar describes it:

With its emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus, eschatology enabled communities within the Reformation movement to affirm their unique role in the fulfillment of God’s design in history.¹⁷²

In this system of examining history, contemporary situations and, most importantly, in reading the future regarding the Muslim, and also the Catholic, world, Protestants were able to locate themselves and their nations in a schema which had as its ultimate *telos* the second coming of Christ and the victory of the

¹⁷² Matar, *Islam*, pp.153.



faithful over the infidel ‘other’; and the ability to see themselves as having a vital role, as the ‘elect’ or ‘true’ faith, in bringing about this event. It must be remembered that in this period England had no empire, but was rather a nation which was under threat from religious enemies, particularly those of the Catholic powers. In this way the location of the English nation within a providential schema would have provided comfort and a means of securing moral superiority, at a time when material and military superiority was woefully lacking. In the case of the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim powers this eschatological and providential schema provided a series of theodicean ways of reading the military and imperial successes of the Islamic powers which included a narrative that guaranteed their eventual overthrow and judgement.

The importance of outlining ‘the originall Pedagrew of the first founder and authour of their damnable Secte [Islam]’¹⁷³ for medieval and early modern authors was, as mentioned earlier, vital to the project of discrediting Islam. John Foxe begins his account of the ‘pestiferous sect’ of ‘this damnable Mahomet’¹⁷⁴ by providing some possible dates for the beginning of the religion and the sources for these calculations, including variously 621 A.D., 622 A.D., and most interestingly the calculation of Martin Luther and John Carion, who Foxe states:

¹⁷³ Newton, p.2.

¹⁷⁴ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

...refer it unto the eighteenth year of the reign of Heraclius, which is A.D. 630, unto which number the computation of the BEast, signified in the Apocalypse, doth not far disagree, which numbereth the name of the bEast with the Greek letters χ, ξ, σ ; which Greek letters, after the supputation of the Grecians, make the number of 666.¹⁷⁵

This association of key dates in Muhammad's life with the number of the BEast in the Revelation of St John, and the linking of Muhammad, and later his 'successors' the Ottoman Turks, with the figure of Antichrist is also a theme which will reoccur many times in the texts examined during this thesis. The employment of biblical prophecy in the treatment of Islam would include exegetical approaches to the book of Daniel and also expositions on the figures of Gog and Magog, which would frequently identify the Roman Church and the Turkish Empire with these apocalyptic figures.

Foxe goes on to say of 'this damnable Mahomet' that 'his father was a Syrian, or a Persian; his mother was an Ishmaelite.'¹⁷⁶ The mention of the descent from Ishmael, which is repeated in many of the polemic biographies, has a series of vital significances in the representation of Islam in Christian thought from the earliest polemics through to the early modern period and was interpreted as reinforcing the connection of Islam with Judaism, but also brought into play the other significances of Ishmael within biblical prophecy and subsequent exegesis.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p.21.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.21.

¹⁷⁷ See, Appendix II, p.475.

Foxe, in common with many of the writers of polemic biographies, focuses on the composite nature of the *Qur'ān* and its 'laws', and attributes this to Judaic influence. Foxe related, in characteristically febrile style, how:

This ridiculous Alcoran is so blanced and powdered with such divers mixtures of the Christians, Jews and Gentile's laws, giving such liberty to wantonness of flesh, setting up circumcision, abstaining from swines' flesh and judaical notions, and so much standeth on father Abraham, that this filthy Alcoran is supposed of some, not to be set out in the days of Muhammad, but that certain Jews had some handling also in this matter, and put it out after his death.¹⁷⁸

Here Foxe makes the claim that rather than the *Qur'ān* receiving the influence of Judaism during the life of Muhammad through family connections or connivance with Jewish collaborators, the more common tropes of explaining the *midrashic* Old Testament content of the *Qur'ān*, it is rather the product of Jewish redaction after the death of Muhammad, an assertion which operates to intensify the culpability of the Jews in the foundation of Islam.

This idea is repeated, and augmented by the addition of the hand of 'Heretikes' and 'Heathens', in Meredith Hanmer's *The Baptising of a Turke*, where he states, quoting as a source 'Antoninus' (St. Antoninus [Pierozzi] 1389-1459, a dominican Archbishop of Florence, historian and theologian), that after the death of Muhammad:

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.21.

The disciples of this false prophet could not agree in the reading, pointing, understanding and expounding of the Alcoran. Some added, some diminished, some maimed, and some corrupted the Lawe. The Jewes put in what please them best, the heretikes urged their opinions, the Heathens also pleaded for themselves, so that the Alcoran was despoiled, and of no reputation.¹⁷⁹

This attack goes to the very heart of Islamic faith, interrogating the *Qur'ān*'s authenticity and textual integrity, and, for a Western Christian audience, by connecting it to the Jews, activates the latent reservoir of anti-Semitic concepts which had such power in the early modern period. Foxe also uses the idea of a posthumous redaction of the *Qur'ān* to tie the book back into the idea of association with the bEast of the Book of Revelation, stating that 'it seemeth forst to take its force about the number of years limited in the Apocalypse'¹⁸⁰ (i.e. 666 A.D.) and quotes the relevant passage from *the Bible*. In this passage he manages to give his polemic a dual purpose, combining castigation of the man he calls the 'devilish Mahomet' with an element of anti-Semitic polemic facilitated by the inclusion of the role of Jews in the production of the *Qur'ān*.

The Church of England clergyman Thomas Newton's translation of Celio Augustino Curione's Latin history *Sarracenicæ historiae* (Basle: 1568), translated as *A notable historie of the Saracens* (1575), was very important,

¹⁷⁹ Meredith Hanmer, *The baptizing of a Turke A sermon preached at the Hospitall of Saint Katherin, adioyning vnto her Maiesties Towre the 2. of October 1586. at the baptizing of one Chinano a Turke, borne at Nigropontus* (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1586), no page number.

¹⁸⁰ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

representing, as it did, the first translation of a major continental work on the history of Islam into English, consequently transferring many of the ideological positions on Islam contained in the continental tradition for an insular British audience. The subtitle of the work establishes that this history, which will deal with the history of Islam and Islamic nations ‘tyll this present yeere of grace 1575’, will begin its analysis with ‘the byrthe of Mahomet their first péeuish prophet and founder.’¹⁸¹ This element, as in all the polemic biographies included in works of the early modern period, forms the interpretational keystone for the rest of the work, and demonstrates the kind of ahistoric leap, and consequent blurring of cultural identities and collapsing of historical time, from Muhammad to the Turks discussed by Nabil Matar.¹⁸² Newton approaches the section in Book One of his work which contains the polemic biography of Muhammad with a contextual history of the Arab people, including the descent from Ishmael and Sara (hence ‘Saracens’). Newton describes the Arab people as ‘A people naturally and generally geuen to theft and robbrie, as all others commonly are which dwell in hoate Countries’¹⁸³ and then goes on to describe the ‘Many kindes of religion [...] vsed among them’, including Christianity, Judaism, those who:

[...] honoured the Sunne and Moone, some certain trées, some Serpentes, some a Towre called Alcaba, which they beléued and thought was builded by Ismael, some one thing and some another.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Thomas Newton, *A notable historie of the Saracens* (London: William How, 1575).

¹⁸² Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp.153-184.

¹⁸³ Newton., p.3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3. The mention of the ‘Alcaba’ (the Ka’ba at Mecca), which would later become a site sacred to Islam and one of the stages on the Hajj, highlights a place which often became one of the reasons for the imputation of idolatry to Islam by Christian commentators, along with the pagan past of the Arabs.

Newton then locates Muhammad in this context, stating that, 'In the time of these so great garboyles and diuersities in religions, and among suche blockishe and rude people, was Mahomet borne.'¹⁸⁵ The idea contained here of Islam as an religion attractive to the ignorant, the morally corrupt and the unreasonable remains a central feature of description of Islam and its adherents, and particularly in relation to Christian converts to Islam, the so-called 'renegadoes', throughout the early modern period.

This concept demonstrates the perception in the Christian world of a reflexive relationship between Islam as a religion and its converts, whether individuals or whole cultures. On one hand the behaviours of these peoples is attributed to conversion to Islam, as with the comment by Neils Hemmingsen of the Ottomans that 'the madnes of the Turkes doth sufficientlie proue the auctor of their sect to be the diuel,'¹⁸⁶ in which case Islam (and the wickedness of its 'auctor' Muhammad) are causative of the behaviours of the converts. Yet, conversely, the suggestion was also commonly made that some cultures or persons were predisposed to conversion due to their inherent wickedness, as suggested in the view of George Whetstone, again speaking of the Turks, that 'these (as barbarous & infidell people,) receyued the damnable sect of Mahomet, as the first yt was presented vnto them, & which best agréed with their wicked customs.'¹⁸⁷

Newton's version of Muhammad's family background again highlights his mixed religious parentage and the influence of this factor on the production of a religion full of 'barbarous rites, mystie errors, blinde ignorance,' which he calls

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.3.

¹⁸⁶ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant*, p.76.

¹⁸⁷ George Whetstone, *The English mirror* (London: 1586), p.70.

‘deuelish, absurde and detestable.’¹⁸⁸ Newton describes Muhammad’s parents, saying that his ‘father was named Abedela & his mother Emma a Iew borne, both poore folkes and of base parentage.’¹⁸⁹ Again, the idea of a base and ignoble origin is an essential part of the narrative. Newton goes on to locate the foundation of Muhammad’s religious ideas, describing how:

[...] (his father beyng an Ismaelite and his mother a Iew) he was in his tender age by them instructed and taught both the rites of the Hebrewes and the manner of worshipping that the Gentiles vsed.¹⁹⁰

This religious eclecticism is later exacerbated in Newton’s account, as in several of the other polemic biographies, by Muhammad’s experiences as a trader where he ‘gotte great acquaintance and crepte highly in faouour with the *Hebrews*, *Christians* and *Gentiles*,’¹⁹¹ which again provides him with the opportunity to assemble ideas from a variety of religious backgrounds in order to construct his new religion and make it attractive to as many potential followers as possible.

Meredith Hanmer produced one of the most comprehensive of the early modern polemic biographies in his sermon on *The Baptizing of a Turk* (1586), originally delivered at St Katherine’s Hospital near the Tower of London on the occasion of the conversion of ‘one Chinano a Turke’ from Islam to the Church of England. Hanmer took advantage of the rarity of the situation to present a lengthy case against Islam, Muhammad and the adherents of the faith; the duration of his

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Newton, *A notable historie*, p.2.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

sermon was justified by Hanmer by his, 'not having at other times the like occasion offered me to discourse of the like matter.'¹⁹² Hanmer locates the birth of Muhammad in 596 A.D. and goes on to say that he was:

[...] borne of the line of Ismaell the sonne of Abraham by Agar the bondwoman, having to his father one Abdara, and to his mother one Emma being very obscure and base parents.¹⁹³

Hanmer goes on to state that 'his father was a heathen, & his mother an Ismaelite, and consequently no ignorant of the Hebrew tongue.'¹⁹⁴ This later leads Hanmer to the conventional conclusion that:

[...] having ... an heathen to his father, and an Hebrew to his mother and urged of both sides ... received not the one law nor the other thoroughly, but a smack of both.

Muhammad's familial background is then coupled by Hanmer with the description of him consorting with 'Christians, Jews and Infidels,' concluding with the depiction of the opportunistic Muhammad employing his mixed religious knowledge to construct his new religion, describing how 'to the end that his law might be the more favoured, hee borrowed somewhat of every sect.'

¹⁹² Meredith Hanmer, *The baptizing of a Turke* (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1586), no page numbers in text.

¹⁹³ His stated source is the Latin world history by the Venetian scholar and historian Marcus Antonius Coccius Sabellicus, the *Enneades sive Rhapsodia historiarum* (1504).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, no page number (Sig. A9?).

In the version of Muhammad's background included by Henry Smith in *Gods Arrow Against Atheists* (1593) an account the importance of the mixed religious background of Muhammad is utilized to depict his cunning use of fortuitous theological eclecticism to advance his cause, and is also related to a more contemporary enemy, as Smith states that:

Mahomets Religion is a patched religion, mixt partly with Iudaism, partly with Gentilism, partly with Papisme, partly with Christianisme, béeing subtilly contriued for the erecting of the same, and to bring followers after him...¹⁹⁵

It is worth noting the inclusion of 'Papisme' in the catalogue of tributary faiths here, a sign of the reorientation of polemic in the Protestant atmosphere and state religion of post-Marian England. Smith, himself a Church of England clergyman and master rhetorician, does not miss the opportunity to transform the heretical Christianity traditionally seen as contributing to the conceptual and theological framework of Islam into 'Papisme', hence demonstrating the metaphorical and polemical link made between Islam and Catholicism in early modern England.

Smith goes on to describe Muhammad's family background, like Hanmer giving Sabellicus as his source. Smith relates that:

¹⁹⁵ Henry Smith, *Gods Arrowe Against Atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.J2. The version of Muhammad's familial background included by Smith is mostly identical word for word with the version found in Hanmer's sermon, and given that Hanmer's work has the earlier print date by seven years, it is likely that Smith's version borrows heavily from Hanmer's tract; showing once again the passage of ideas within the closed citational tradition.

Mahomets Father was an Heathen, and his Mother an Ismaelite, wherby it came to passe, that whilst his Mother taught somewhat of the religion of the Hebrews, and his Father on the other side the religion of the Gentiles, Mahomet (like a dutifull child, but not like a discréeete sonne) obeyed both, and that was some cause of his mirt and patched religion.¹⁹⁶

Again there is the idea of a young Muhammad imbibing the mixed religious teachings presented by his environment and storing them in readiness for the later production of the chimeric religion which Islam was perceived to be by Christian commentators.

Other texts are similarly explicit in their description of the mixed religious identities of Muhammad's parents. In John Pory's 1600 translation of Leo Africanus' *A Geographical History of Africa* Muhammad's birth year is given as 562 A.D. and of his family it states that:

[...] Mahumet his father, was a certain prophane Idolater called Abdalá, of the stock of Ismael and his mother one Hennina a Iew, both of them being of very humble, and poore condition.¹⁹⁷

Again the connection with the line of Ishmael is made, and this time the inclusion of Muhammad's father as a 'profane idolater' hints at themes which would be related with Islam for centuries to come. Another, rather more blunt, permutation of Muhammad's family background is delivered in Joseph Wybarne's *The New*

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., Sig. J2-J3.

¹⁹⁷ Leo Africanus, John Pory (trans.), *A geographical historie of Africa, written in Arabicke and Italian by Iohn Leo a More, borne in Granada, and brought vp in Barbarie* (London: Eliot's Court Press, 1600), p.380.

Age of Old Names (1609), in a chapter headed 'the impostures of Turcisme and Iudaisme', where he describes he describes 'Mahomet one of the finest jugglers since creation' as 'a Mungrell, borne of an Ismaelite, and a Jewish mother.'¹⁹⁸

George Whetstone in *The English Myrror* (1586) is rather more equivocal than many of the texts of the period and opts instead for a short discussion of the 'sundry' views of 'what parentage, and countrie this false Prophet Mahomet was', largely deriving his information from the work of fifteenth-century Italian humanists such as Platinus and Pomponius Letus. Platinus, Whetstone states, says that Muhammad 'sprong from noble line', whereas the 'moste diligent authour' Letus:

[...] affirmeth that he was of a race, base, vile, and obscure, which may the rather be credited, for that a man so euill, in whome was nothing worthye of memorye: but malice and iniquitie, may hardly be the issue of noble bloud.¹⁹⁹

On Muhammad's racial background, Whetstone is, unusually among the writers of the time, who are at least able to identify him as an Arab, once again loath to commit, stating that, 'Some saye he was a Persian, some other an Arabian, and both opinions not without reason, for that at that time, the Persians gouerned

¹⁹⁸ Joseph Wybarne, *The New Age of Old Names* (London: William Barret & Henry Fetherstone), p.94.

¹⁹⁹ George Whetstone, *The English myrror A regard wherein al estates may behold the conquests of enuy: containing ruine of common weales, murther of princes, cause of heresies, and in all ages, spoile of deuine and humane blessings, vnto which is adioyned, enuy conquered by vertues* (London: J. Windet for G. Seton, 1586), p.56.

Arabia.²⁰⁰ And in the question of Muhammad's parents and their religion he repeats yet another permutation of a familiar formula:

Touching his father, were he noble, or villayne, sure it is that he was a Gentill, and neither Iewe nor Christian: by his mothers side, the better opinion is, that he descended from Abraham, by the ligne of his sonne Ismaell, whom he had by his Chamber mayd Agar, and so as a Iewe, obserued the lawe of the Iewes.²⁰¹

The use in medieval works of the inter-related appellations 'Ishmaelite', 'Saracen' and 'Hagarene' in relation to Muslims, and particularly to the Arab followers of Muhammad, the terms being replaced to a large extent in general descriptions of Muslims by the term 'Turk' by the early modern period, had roots in actual Islamic tradition.²⁰²

In Walter Raleigh's version of Muhammad's life he begins with a point about the etymology of Muhammad's name, claiming that 'Most writers accord' that the name 'Mahomet ... in the Arabique signifies Indignation or Furie,'²⁰³ although he gives no sources for this assertion. Raleigh then goes on to say of Muhammad's parentage that he was:

[...] the sonne of Abdalla a Marchant in Mecca, a City in Arabia Faelix; his mother a Jew, and himselfe in Anno Dom. 571. borne Posthumus. At

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.56.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p.56.

²⁰² See, Appendix II, p.475.

²⁰³ Walter Raleigh, *The life and death of Mahomet the conquest of Spaine together with the rying and ruine of the Sarazen Empire* (London: Ralph Hodgkinson for Daniel Frere, 1637), p.1.

the second yeere of his age his mother deceased, a poore woman that labored for her living bred him up.²⁰⁴

Again we have the inclusion of a Jewish mother and the description of Muhammad's poverty, but this time with his being raised by an unnamed 'poore woman', a feature which does not appear elsewhere in the English polemic biographies of the early modern period.

In terms of Muhammad's early life the Thomas Rogers' translation of Neils Hemmingsen's *Faith of the Church Militant* (1581), which seems to owe a great deal to the account in Higden's *Polychronicon*, also reads the life of Muhammad through the prism of the prophecies contained in the Book of Daniel.

Hemmingsen's version is contained in the chapter aimed 'Against Mahomet, or the Turkes, who take vpon them to be the true Church, and yet are not,' and begins with the observation that 'in his youth by reason of his pouertie liued by theft and robbetrie', but 'afterward hauing heaped much riches together,'²⁰⁵ hence attributing to him both base origins and criminality. In this yoking together of Muhammad and the Turks there can also be seen an example of the collapsing of temporal space and cultural difference between Muhammad and later Islamic cultures.

Similar versions of Muhammad's early life can also be found in continental works. In a 1594 translation of the French Humanist Louis Leroy de Coutance's

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p.79.

De La Vicissitude ou Variété des Choses en l'Universe (originally published in France in 1575), the section dealing with 'The Religion, Power, knowledge, & other excellence of the Arabians, or Sarasens; and other Mahometists', speaks of Muhammad as the most 'renowned' of the Arabs and 'the authour of the Alcoran, and founder of the Sarazen Empire'²⁰⁶ and then describes him as 'being borne of an obscure, & poore parentage', but also relates how he:

[...] eventually came to great riches, power, & authority, making himselfe the law-giuer of mankind; & making the people beleue, that he was the prophet and messenger of God.²⁰⁷

Leroy then goes on to describe the traditions of representing Muhammad, observing that:

The christians which haue written against Mahomet, do cal him a diabolical magician, a liar, a deceiuer; & say that he was the son of a Pagan; & borne of a lew; a theefe, a whore-monger, & a cunning contriuer: an idolater of religion; poore of fortune; presumptuous of vnderstanding; ignorant of learning; & renowned for vilanies.²⁰⁸

In this catalogue of the scurrilous accusations levelled at Muhammad, interestingly qualifying the statement by crediting these ideas to third-person sources, Leroy lists features which run through the polemic biographies of the

²⁰⁶ Louis Leroy, *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world and the concurrence of armes and learning, thorough the first and famousest nations: from the beginning of ciuility, and memory of man, to this present ... and translated into English by R.A.* (London: Charles Yetsweirt, 1594), p.97.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.97 (Sig.S1).

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.98 (Sig.S2).

early modern period and which through their placing in the person of the founder of Islam came to inform the work of early modern writers the constructions of the nature and character of contemporary Muslim figures.

The accounts of Muhammad's life included in the works of writers who had either travelled to, or were resident in, Islamic countries do not deviate in any significant way from the tradition produced in Europe. This feature, which militates against the argument that increased contacts between Christian and Muslim necessarily facilitated better understanding of Islamic belief, is common to all of the travellers' accounts which I have examined in the process of researching this thesis. George Sandys in his *Relation of a Journey* (1615) says Muhammad, introduced as the man from whom the Turks receive their 'Moral and Ecclesiasticall lawes', was:

[...] a man of obscure parentage, born in Itrarip [probably a corruption of Yathrib, the original name of Medina] of Arabia in the year 551. His father was a Pagan, his mother a Jew both by birth and religion.²⁰⁹

Again the combination of the 'obscure' parentage and Pagan and Jewish heritage is included in the narrative and this is echoed and augmented in the comments of William Biddulph. Biddulph in his *the travels of certain Englishmen* (1609)

²⁰⁹ George Sandys, *The Relation of a Journey*, p.52.

which, along with Neils Hemmingsen's *Faith of the Church Militant* (1581) which it in many ways resembles,²¹⁰ comments that:

Anno Dom. 591 ... was Muhammad born in Arabia, in a base village called Itraipia [Yathrib]. His parents were of different nations, and different in religion. His father, Abdallah, was an Arabian; his mother Hadidja²¹¹, a Jew both by birth and profession.²¹²

Biddulph goes on to comment that:

His parentage (according to most histories) was so mean and base that both his birth and infancy remained obscure and of no reckoning till that his riper years (bewraying in him a most subtle and crafty nature and disposition) did argue some likelihood that the sharpness and dexterity of his wit would in time abolish the baseness and obscurity of his birth.²¹³

This image of Muhammad as a cunning and intelligent man, who employed these talents in the cause of deception and self-advancement, will be seen to be repeated many times in the accounts of Muhammad's early career and prophethood, particularly in relation to his use of religion as a political instrument and a basis for the achievement of temporal power. The image of Muhammad as a perfidious and ambitious man set on conquest and expansion of empire would also form the mould for the depiction of Muslim figures

²¹⁰ Much of Biddulph's material on the life of Muhammad is also taken from Giles Fletcher's *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597)

²¹¹ Here Biddulph seems to confuse the name of Muhammad's mother with that of his first wife Khadija.

²¹² William Biddulph, *The travels of certain Englishmen* (1609) in: Kenneth Parker, *Early Modern Tales of the Orient: a Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.92.

²¹³ *Ibid.* p.92.

elsewhere in the literature of the early modern period, including those found in the ‘Turk plays.’

Part Two

“Three Things”: Deceit, Sexuality and Violence in Early Modern Representations of Islam

Martin Luther and the 'Three things': the Thematic Approach to the Construction of Muslim Behaviour

The three categories under which the remainder of this thesis will be organised are derived, at least in part, from the work of Martin Luther, in many ways the foundational thinker in the development of Protestant views of Islam, as in the production of Protestant thought *per se*. In this sense, although this thematic approach is, in a sense, an organisational fiction, and could conceivably open this analysis to the charge of reductionism, the thematic categories chosen were certainly not alien to the Protestant thinkers of the early modern period, and indeed it is the reductionism in the approaches of these early modern commentators which has informed the structure of the analysis here. In his tract *On War Against the Turk (Vom Krieg wider die Türken, 1529)*, Luther utilises three categories in his description of the deterministic influence of the life of Muhammad and the perceived content of the *Qur'ān* on the culture, laws and government of the Turks.²¹⁴

Luther, having already spoken of Muhammad and the *Qur'ān* as 'a book of sermons or doctrines of the kind that we call pope's decretals',²¹⁵ demonstrating the parallel polemicising of Islam and Catholicism which was a central feature of early modern Protestant discourse, particularly in the matter of the creation of

²¹⁴ In this text Luther is speaking particularly about the Ottoman Empire, although the basis of his ideas in Islamic theology would mean that such a reading would be produced of any Muslim people; indeed 'Turk' had by this time, as previously mentioned, already become a synecdoche for Muslim identity.

²¹⁵ Martin Luther, 'On the War Against the Turks', in: *Luther's Works*, Volume 46, 'The Christian in Society' III, Robert C. Shultz (ed.), (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962-71), p.176.

extra-scriptural law), goes on to identify the ‘three things’ which he sees as being the essential features of Muhammad’s teaching and of the contents of his ‘foul and shameful book’, as he terms the *Qur’ān*.

The factors of Muhammad’s teachings presented by Luther, almost a millennium after the death of the prophet, as constituting the central features of the culture of the Turks are, ‘lying, murder and disregard of marriage.’²¹⁶ In doing this Luther’s text demonstrates the ahistorical collapsing of time identified by Nabil Matar in Western eschatological use of the Prophet.²¹⁷ In other words, Luther identifies the three essential categories of Muslim behaviour, and consequently identity, as deception, violence and deviant sexuality or sensuality; and it is these ‘three things’ which will constitute the thematic categories under which the remaining sections of this thesis will examine early modern British perceptions and representations of Muslim belief and behaviour.²¹⁸

Each section will begin with an overview of representations of Muhammad in the polemic biographies in regard to these thematic elements and will then go on to demonstrate the extension of these ideas into more general representations of Muslims and of Islamic cultures during the early modern period, particularly that of the Ottoman Turks. By this method this thesis will aim to demonstrate the unchanging place of Muhammad as a foundational, and ahistoric, archetype in the creation of constructions and stereotypes of Muslims and of the cultures of the ‘Islamic World’. Of course, these attitudes were not always deterministic of such

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.182.

²¹⁷ Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp.153-184.

²¹⁸ For a full discussion of Luther’s exposition of these three categories in *On War Against the Turk*, see Appendix III, pp.480-488.

political matters as the foreign policy of British monarch (although they were to some extent for the arch exegete James I), and even less so of the trade relations of British merchants, where the motive of profit overcame any distaste for the religion and culture of the trade partner. Yet underlying patterns of alliance, 'traffique' and interaction which existed between the English and the Muslim world were, this thesis will argue, often unshakeable views of the beliefs and behaviours of the Muslim other which would not only dominate the texts of the early modern period, particularly those of the London stage, but would survive into the imperial era and even the modern world.

I

DECEPTION

The ‘Pseudo-Prophet’ and His Book: Discrediting the Revelation of Muhammad

The accounts of deception as a central feature of the prophetic career of Muhammad in the polemic biographies hinge on several common themes: the deceptive, immoral and ambitious nature of Muhammad himself; his use of his epilepsy to counterfit revelation;²¹⁹ the role of his wife Khadija in the establishment of his prophethood; his con-tricks involving such animals as a dove, a bull and a camel to present the as divinely received and his collaboration with Jews and heretical Christians, and particularly the figure of the monk Sergius, in creating his new religion. All of these techniques, along with the use of sexual enticement and violence, were seen by Christian commentators in the West as being employed by Muhammad in the pursuit of material wealth and temporal power and the religion of Islam as being a creation of Muhammad aimed at securing him these worldly ends.

²¹⁹ For an examination of the significance of the condition of epilepsy in the medieval and early modern context, see Appendix IV, pp.489-492.

Epilepsy, Deception and the Role of Khadija in Early Modern Texts

The epilepsy of Muhammad is usually described in the most degrading and graphic language in the polemic biographies and is usually made central to his beginning a career of deception as a false prophet, most particularly concentrating on his deceiving of his wife Khadija, who is generally seen as the first to fall victim to Muhammad's cunning. In this sense the version of Khadija parodies the role of the Khadija of the *sīra*, where she is venerated as the first Muslim.

Muhammad's epilepsy is most frequently depicted as the result of his intemperate lifestyle, a feature which connects with the medieval and early modern conception of Islam as a worldly faith, a religion of the flesh, and in most of these versions Khadija is shown as believing Muhammad's lies with alacrity and subsequently being vital in the spreading of his deceptive claim of prophethood, rather than accepting the shame of an afflicted husband. The accusation of excess, as discussed briefly earlier, is repeated throughout the texts of the early modern period in Britain and is also intimately connected to the figure of Khadija through the idea of Muhammad marrying her to secure her wealth. In Thomas Newton's *A notable historie of the Saracens* (1575) he describes how Muhammad married 'Hadigia' and:

[...] beyng in possession of the wedow and all her substance & by meanes therof growen to great wealth, he often fell grouelong on the ground,

foming and froathing at the mouth (for he had the fallyng sicknes) and laye in a horrible extasie or distraction of minde...²²⁰

Newton goes on to describe how Khadija 'tooke very heuily' this manifestation of epilepsy and 'cursed her fortune, in that shée had so lothsomely matched her selfe'.²²¹

Newton's version shows Muhammad reacting opportunistically to his wife's concern over his sickness and turning it to his own advantage - he describes how Muhammad:

[...] to appease her grieffe and to make her from great agonie to leape to sodaine ioye, tolde her that the same happened vnto him by the operation of the Spirite of God himselfe, who appeared vnto him and reuealed certaine things, which he should pronounce and shewe to the people, touching the law of Moses and of Christ...²²²

In Newton's version Khadija's reaction is equally opportunistic and is described in dismissive style as he tells of how the 'olde trotte' who 'tenderly loued him for his lustie corage and beautifull age', was at once convinced:

[...] not to love him as a husband, but to worship and reverence him as a holy man and a divine Prophete highly in Gods favour, and to blaze his holines abroad among her Companions and Gossippes.²²³

²²⁰ Thomas Newton (Celio Augustino Curione), *A notable historie of the Saracens Briefly and faithfully describving the originall beginning, continuauce and successe aswell of the Saracens, as also of Turkes, Souldans, Mamalukes, Assassines, Tartarians and Sophians. With a discourse of their affaires and actes from the byrthe of Mahomet their first péeuish prophet and founder for 700 yéeres space. VVhereunto is annexed a compendious chronycle of all their yeerely exploytes, from the sayde Mahomets time tyll this present yeere of grace. 1575* (London: 1575), p.5.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

²²² *Ibid.*, p.5.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

This, somewhat comic, treatment of the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic career is typical of the versions which would come after.

George Whetstone's version in *The English mirror* (1586) has Muhammad's exhibition of 'the falling evill' credited as either 'the vengeaunce of God sent to abase his pride, or the malice of the deuill by this plague to colour his impious enterprise' and describes how his 'straunge passions much amazed both his wife and houshold seruauntes.'²²⁴

Whetstone also has Muhammad excusing himself by asserting that:

[...] the Angell of God oftentimes talked with him, and vnable as a man to sustaine his diuine presence, he entered into this agonie and alteration of spirit, and that by this visitation, he forelearned what was the almightie will and pleasure of God, whose expresse charge he followed.²²⁵

Whetstone then goes on to present the conclusion that:

By these subtil illusions & protestations, he not only seduced his familiar friends and allies, but by his cunning and their false rumours he was admired and reputed through the greater part of Arabia, as the Prophet of God.²²⁶

Whetstone's version of this familiar tale also displays the trope of the spread of Islam as a 'seduction', which, along with the trope of the spread of the religion through violence, was repeated in many other texts.

²²⁴ George Whetstone, *The English mirror* (London: 1586), p.57.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.57-8.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58.

In *The Baptizing of a Turk* (1586) Meredith Hanmer describes the events in very similar terms. Hanmer relates how Muhammad ‘had the falling sickenes, which took him extremely, so that he grovelled along the grounde, and fomed piteously at the mouth’ and also details how ‘his wife being of great honour and substance bewailed her harde hap, in matching with a beggarly Rascall, and a diseased creature’;²²⁷ once again in this version Muhammad is shown to react opportunistically to his predicament and:

Persuaded his wife and others that he was a Prophet, that the spirite of God fell upon him & that the Angel Gabriel, in the forme of a Dove came to his eare, and revealed him secrets, whose presence he was not able to abide, therefore he prostrated himselfe and lay in a Traunce...²²⁸

In this version Hanmer includes the legend of the dove and the corn which Muhammad has taught ‘to feed at his eare,’²²⁹ which will be discussed at more length later. Hanmer adds to his version a measure of misogynistic comment which seems aimed at effeminising the birth of Islam; he describes how after Muhammad’s claim to prophethood:

[...] his wife, in a while being therein satisfied, chatted the same among her Gossippes saying say nothing, my husband is a Prophet. The women after their manner, whereof all of them all canne keepe no counsel, blabbed abroad that Mahomet was a Prophet.²³⁰

²²⁷ Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turke* (London: 1586), Sig.B1.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, Sig.B2.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, Sig.B1.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, Sig.B2.

And concludes that '*Et taliter ex fæminis fama [...] pervenit ad viros*, and so by women menne came to know thereof,'²³¹ opening Islam to the possibility, indeed the probability, of negative interpretations through the prism of early modern antifeminism as a religion spread by the gossip of women. This version is repeated almost verbatim in Henry Smith's *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593), which describes how Muhammad's wife and her friends 'blazed abroad that Mahomet was a Prophet' and consequently that 'from women it [Islam] came to men by notable fraud, & was established through wiles, deceit, subtiltie, and lyes.'²³² This crediting of the spread of Islam to women is also found in John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus' *A geographical historie of Africa* (1600), which states that Muhammad:

[...] perswaded this law [the *Qur'ān*], first by giuing his wife to understand, and his neighbours by her meanes, and by little and little others also, that he conuersed with the angell *Gabriell*, vnto whose brightnes he ascribed the falling sicknes, which many times prostrated him vpon the earth...²³³

This version is also found in Joseph Wybarne's *The new age of old names* (1609) which, as with the other versions above, has Muhammad 'having married his Mistresse, which was very wealthy, by drunkennesse (as it is thought) falling into the falling-sickenes' and when his wife subsequently 'rebuked him, as if he were a drunken beggar' told her, in confidence, that just as 'Daniel was sicke when he saw the Angel, it is the Angel Gabriel which appearing to me, thus astonisheth my

²³¹ Ibid., Sig.B2.

²³² Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: John Danter, 1593), Sig.J3.

²³³ Leo Africanus, John Pory (trans.), *A geographical historie of Africa* (London: 1600), p.381.

senses.²³⁴ The fact of telling Khadija in confidence is shown in Wybarne's version to be another cunning ploy by Muhammad. Wybarne describes how Muhammad 'meant that he should publish what he sayed' and so 'intreated her to conceale it', knowing that 'as a River stopped, growes higher above the bankes, so there is a generation called Women, which being desired to be silent, will tell it more liberally' and consequently Muhammad's wife 'promised silence with her tongue but not for the tongue of her heart' and 'at the next Gossips meeting, she told them her husband was a Prophet', concluding, as with the other commentators that 'so from women it went to men.'²³⁵ This faintly comic version of the inception of Muhammad's revelation, which seems to echo figures like Noah's wife in the medieval Mystery plays with her 'gossips', has the satirical effect of belittling the figure of Muhammad, and consequently the religion of Islam.

The tenacious survival of this version of the beginning of Muhammad's revelatory career and of the role of his wife in the deceptive spreading of the new faith can be clearly seen in the section title 'A Summary of the Religion of the Turks' appended to the 1688 edition of Alexander Ross's *Alcoran of Mahomet*, under the sunheading 'THE LIFE and DEATH OF MAHOMET, THE Prophet of the Turks, and Author OF THE ALCORAN'.²³⁶ Ross's version has Muhammad going on a retreat into the wilderness and then after two years returning 'as if newly returned from the Oracles of Heaven' at which point he 'stileth himself a Prophet sent from God.'²³⁷ Ross then describes how God 'willing through his mercy, to withdraw him from that precipice of his everlasting ruine,

²³⁴ Joseph Wybarne, *The new age of old names* (London: John Windet for William Barret, and Henry Fetherstone, 1609), p.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.94-5.

²³⁶ Alexander Ross, *the Alcoran of Mahomet* (London: 1688).

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.v.

and admonish him of his error, afflicted his body with the falling sickness,²³⁸ echoing Whetstone's version of the affliction of epilepsy as 'the vengeance of God' for Muhammad's blasphemous claims to prophethood. Yet, once again, the reaction of Muhammad to this divine sanction is that of the opportunist, in this case ignoring the judgement of God against him and his deceptive claim to be a prophet. Ross describes how Muhammad 'instead of repenting, made an advantage to promote his wicked design', and goes on to tell the familiar story of how:

[...] his Wife lamenting to see her self yoked to one so diseased, and tormented with an hideous infirmity, he excused it, and easily wrought in her a belief, that being constrained frequently to converse with the Angel Gabriel, his frail body, unable to abide the splendor of his heavenly presence, fell into that distemper, and at the departure of the Divine Ambassador, recovered its former condition.²³⁹

Once again in Ross's version it is Khadija who 'believing this, was not wanting to divulge the rare qualities of her husband, his admirable sanctity, and frequent converse with the Angel' spreads the news of Muhammad's prophethood which 'gained him the esteem of a Prophet in his own house, and reverence among his Neighbours'.²⁴⁰ What can clearly be seen in these texts are examples of the subversion of the Muslim conception of Khadija as the first Muslim, or at least the first to accept Muhammad as a prophet, to create an image of a woman as ambitious and deceptive as her husband,

²³⁸ Ibid., p.v

²³⁹ Ibid., pp.v-vi

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p.vi

and whose own feminine faults and subterfuge are made central to the spread of Islam.²⁴¹

Muhammad's opportunistic use of his epilepsy can also be found in other version of the polemic biography, where the staging of revelation is used to reinforce his position more generally in his contemporary community and secure obedience. In Thomas Roger's translation of Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) the warlord Muhammad is shown using his epilepsy to secure support from his army, amongst whom it is stated, missing no opportunity for heaping insults on the prophet of Islam, that, 'manie could not abide ye basenes of his birth, nor the odiousnes of his former life, especialie they loathed him for a disease he had, which was the falling sicknes.'²⁴² Hemmingsen describes how Muhammad sought to 'redeeme himselfe from this contempt,' stressing the credulity and lack of sophistication of Muhammad's contemporary audience by stating that such a move was 'an easie matter amonge the foolish common people.' Hemmingsen goes on to describe how Muhammad:

[...] pretended à diuinitie in his doinges, faining himselfe to enter communication with God, and so when he talked, to be rauished out of himselfe, and seemed like vnto one afflicted with the falling sicknes.²⁴³

The political purpose in practising this deception is then made plain as Hemmingsen describes how Muhammad transformed his mandate to rule from an earthly to a divine

²⁴¹ The figures of deceptive Muslim women were also a common feature of early modern 'Turk' plays such as the character of Rossa in Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1609) and Voada in Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612), and along with the imputation of effeminacy to Muslims, and of effeminisation through conversion to Islam, will be something which will be discussed in more detail later.

²⁴² Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.80.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.80.

sanction by stating ‘plainlie, but vntrulie, howe he was no more à capitane, and prince elected through the fauor of souldiors, but à prophet, and a messenger of the almightie God’, with the intention that ‘under the shew of diuinitie he might haue all men the more obedient to his wordes’.²⁴⁴ The version included in Roger’s translation of Hemmingsen is duplicated *verbatim* by William Biddulph in his *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (1609), demonstrating the contention made earlier in this thesis that although the body of the Christian traveller may have entered the Islamic world, the mind of the Christian commentator most often remained securely in the accepted traditions to be found in the libraries and pulpits of home.²⁴⁵ This aspect of the work of Western authors can also be seen in the version of the humanist traveller George Sandys, who describes in his *A relation of a iourney* (1615) how Muhammad was ‘much subject to the falling sicknesse’ and made his followers ‘believe that it was a propheticall trance; and that then he conversed with the Angel Gabriel.’ Once again, although resident in Istanbul, Sandys’ description shows no alteration of the centuries-old Western tradition.²⁴⁶

The version included in George Abbot’s *A briefe description of the whole world* (1599), whose author was a future Archbishop of Canterbury, shows the place of these depictions of the deceptive and politic nature of Muhammad’s revelatory career at the centre of the dominant religious discourse of the Church of England. Abbot describes how Muhammad:

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.80.

²⁴⁵ See: William Buddulph, *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (London: 1609), p.93.

²⁴⁶ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of AEgypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning.* (London: Richard Field for W: Barrett, 1615), p.53.

To maintaine his credit & authoritie with his owne men, he fained that he had conference with the holy Ghost, at such time as he was troubled with the falling sickness, and accordingly, he ordained a new religion.²⁴⁷

The Church of England clergyman and historian Peter Heylyn in his *Microcosmos: A little description of the great world* (1625),²⁴⁸ dedicated to Prince Charles (Heylyn would later be under the patronage of Charles' Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud), also utilised the central features of the polemic biographical tradition in his treatment of Muhammad as an epileptic and deceiver. Heylyn's version has Muhammad 'troubled almost continually with the Falling-sicknes' and in order 'to mask which infirmity', due to it being 'repugnant to his pretended omnipotency', he has Muhamamd claim that 'it was only a diuine rapture, wherein he conversed with the Angel Gabriel'. Heylyn adds, perhaps reflecting the obsessions of his monarch James I which ran to demonology and witchcraft as well as Islamophobia, that Muhammad was 'well seen in Magick' and that through this means and 'and help of the Divell' he 'taught a white Pigeon to feed at his eare, affirming it to be the Holy Ghost, which informed him in diuine precepts'.²⁴⁹

'A Great Doer with Mahomet': The figure of Sergius

²⁴⁷ George Abbot, *A briefe description of the whole world* (London: 1599), Sig.E.

²⁴⁸ Though initially published in 1621, I have consulted the 1625 edition: Peter Heylyn, *A little description of the great world* (London: 1625), p.617.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.617. Here Heylyn brings in the myth of Muhammad's dove, which will be seen to reoccur many times in early modern texts.

In the depiction of the deception of Muhammad and of the falsity and syncretism present in the *Qur'ān* and in Islamic doctrine there was no more important figure in medieval and early modern texts than that of the heretical monk Sergius, sometimes called Nestorius, who is featured in almost all versions of the life of Muhammad during the medieval and early modern periods. In the polemic biographies Sergius is inextricably linked with the birth of Islam as a religion and with the devising of the methods to ensure its spread, often along with Jewish collaborators, as an advisor or planner of the religion. Sergius often acts in these texts as something between a religious advisor and what we would recognize as the modern species of 'spin doctor', although the biographies sometime go as far as crediting him as author of the *Qur'ān* itself.

The probable root of the figure of the collaborator monk lies in the Islamic *sirat* versions dealing with the early life of Muhammad and his encounter with the monk Bahīrā. The version of the meeting between Muhammad and the monk described in Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah* has Muhammad taken by his uncle Abū Tālib on a merchant caravan to Syria and tells of how, 'When the caravan reached Busrā in Syria, there was a monk there in a cell by the name of Bahīrā, who was well versed in the knowledge of the Christians.'²⁵⁰ This idea of a man knowledgeable about Christianity survives in a distorted form in the figure of Sergius of the polemic biographies, though little else is recognisable of the Islamic version. The *Sirat* version continues to say of the monk that:

²⁵⁰ Ibn Ishaq, A. Guillame (trans.), *Sirat Rasul Allah (The Life of Muhammad)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.79.

[...] while he was in his cell he saw the apostle of God in the caravan when they approached, with a cloud overshadowing him among the people. Then they stopped in the shadow of a tree near the monk.²⁵¹

Though the monk had normally ignored the Quraysh traders, on this occasion he invites them to his house and honours them with food. The Quraysh leave Muhammad behind, due to his youth, when visiting the monk's house, but at the request of the monk he is brought into the house. At this point the *sirat* version has the monk approaching Muhammad:

Bahīrā got up and said to him, 'Boy, I ask you by al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā to answer my question.' Now Bahīrā said this only because he had heard his people swearing by these gods. They allege that the apostle of God said to him, 'Do not ask me by al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā, for by Allah nothing is more hateful to me than these two.'²⁵²

This section evidently seems to be geared towards demonstrating the early monotheism of Muhammad, and particularly his rejection of al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā, two of the tutelary deities of Mecca and, along with Manāt, the goddesses involved in the revelatory controversy of the *Gharaniq* ('the birds'), better known in the West as the incident of the 'Satanic verses'. At this point the monk investigates Muhammad and identifies the seal of prophecy on his back, at which point he asks Abū Tālib what his relationship to the boy is. Abū Tālib replies that he is the boy's uncle and Bahīrā issues a dire warning:

²⁵¹ Ibid., p.80.

²⁵² Ibid., p.80.

Take your nephew back to his country and guard him carefully against the Jews, for by Allah! If they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him great evil; a great future lies before this nephew of yours.²⁵³

This somewhat anti-Semitic passage seems to serve the purpose of providing a foretelling of Muhammad's prophetic career, the absence of which in scripture was often held against him by Christian authorities. However, this is the end of the Christian monk Bahīrā's involvement with Muhammad in the *sira* and, although providing the probable basis for the figure of Sergius, is, as this section will show, plainly nothing like as formative or extensive as the influence of the fictional monk in Christian polemic biography.

The version reproduced in William Caxton's version of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1483) states that Muhammad 'fayned hym to be a prophete' and describes how 'them that he myght not drawe to hym by myght / he drewe to hym by fayned holynesse.'²⁵⁴ The Caxton text then goes on to describe how Muhammad:

[...] beganne to byleue the counceyl of that Sergyus / whyche was a moche subtyl man / and enqyred alle that he shold do secretelye / & reported it to the peple and callyd hym gabryel.

²⁵³ Ibid., p.81.

²⁵⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive, Lombardica historia* [Golden Legend] (London: William Caxton, 1483), no page numbers.

Here Sergius, as in many of the medieval and early modern texts, is credited with the idea of Muhammad pretending to receive revelations from the angel Gabriel and the text concludes that ‘thus machomete in faynyng hym self to be a prophete / helde alle the seynourye of alle that people’. Other results of Sergius’ influence are also mentioned by Caxton’s translation, including the clothing and ceremonies of the ‘sarazyns’, of which the text states that:

[...] by cause that thys Sergyus was a monke / he wold that the sarasyns shold vse the habyte of a monke / that is to wete a gowne without an hood/ and in / the gyse of monkes they shold make many knelynges.

This element of the story can be seen repeated over a century later by Meredith Hanmer in *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586) where he describes how:

Sergius the Monke [...] persuaded Mahomet in his Alcoran to commend the humitilie of Christian Monks and priests. He made him deliver the Saracens a monks coule, which they use unto this day. Also: Instarmonachorum multas genu-flexiones. *Many duckings and crouching after the manner of monks*, which is seen in their kind of salutation.²⁵⁵

The Caxton version of *The Golden Legend* also credits Sergius as being the root of Islamic teaching and possibly of the *Qur’ān*, as it states that ‘machomete published to them many of the lawes that the sayd Sergyus taughte hym,’ also observing that he

²⁵⁵ Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turke* (London: 1586), Sig.B8. This version is also contained verbatim in Henry Smith’s *Gods arrowve against atheists* (1593), which duplicates Hanmer in most aspects. See: Henry Smith, *Gods arrowve against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.J4-K1.

‘toke many of moyses lawes’, reinforcing the derivative nature of Islam in the eyes of the Christian commentator.

The only point at which *Mandeville's Travels* comes close to the features of other medieval polemic biographies is in relating the story of the hermit befriended by Muhammad. The *Mandeville* story may have its roots, as with the stories of Sergius the monk and or the Nestorian collaborator, in the *sirat* relating to Bahīra, yet this story is used to explain the Islamic prohibition of alcohol. The *Travels* describes Muhammad, during his travels as a trader, meeting a ‘gode heremyte that dueled in the deserts a mile from Mount Synay’ who he ‘loued wel.’²⁵⁶ The text then goes on to describe how ‘so often went Machomete to this heremyte that alle his men weren wrothe, for he wolde gladly here this heremyte preche and make his men wake alle nyght.’²⁵⁷ This seems to hint at Muhammad receiving religious instruction from people of other religions, but this aspect of the polemic tradition is not emphasized. The text then describes how Muhammad’s men decide to ‘putte the heremyte to deth’ and how during a night when ‘Machomete was drunken of gode wyn and he felle on slepe’ the men took his sword from its sheath and ‘therewith thei slowgh this heremyte and putten his swerd al bloody in his schethe ayen.’²⁵⁸ The text describes how when Muhammad wakes the next morning and ‘fond the heremyte ded’ he was ‘ful sory and wroth and wolde haue don his men to deth,’ until they convince him that ‘he himself had slayn him whan

²⁵⁶ *op. cit.*, p.103.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.103.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.103.

he was drunken, and schewed him his swerd alle bloody.²⁵⁹ The text then tells how Muhammad then ‘cursed the wyn and alle tho that drynken it’, explaining that this is the reason why ‘Sarrazines that ben devout drynken nuere no wyn.’²⁶⁰

The interjection of this violent episode is the only part of *Mandeville's Travels* which approximates to the more extreme elements of the tradition of polemic biography and the text is in many ways more irenic in its treatment of Islam and its prophet than many of the texts produced in the early modern period. This version is repeated almost verbatim in the anonymous work entitled *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse of the turkes lawe called Alcoran* produced by Wynkyn de Worde in 1519, a text which repeats much of the material in *Mandeville's Travels*, along with some additional material from Higden's *Polychronicon*, including the naming of Muhammad as a ‘nygromancer’ in its subtitle.²⁶¹

The *Polychronicon* had itself been printed by William Caxton in 1482 and again by de Worde in 1495, with a version produced by ‘John Reynes boke seller’ in 1527, ensuring its place on the bookshelves of sixteenth-century English readers; all of these editions used the 1387 translation by John of Trevisa.²⁶² The version contained in Trevisa's version of Higden's *Polychronicon* states that, ‘A monk þat heet Sergius was i-put out of þe company of þe monkes þat he was among foe he

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.103.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.103.

²⁶¹ Anon, *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse of the turkes lawe called Alcoran. And also it speketh of Machamet the nygromancer* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1519).

²⁶² Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon* (London: John Reynes, 1527).

was i-falle into Nistorius his error.²⁶³ The text goes on to describe how Sergius then ‘com into Arabia and putte hym self to Machometus, and enformed hym,’ once again placing Sergius at the very root of the formation of Islamic doctrine.²⁶⁴

Perhaps the strangest version of the provenance of the syncretic and derivative version of Islam is found in the ‘C’ text of William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (c.1380). In this version it is stated, in the speech of Anima from Passus XVII, that Muhammad himself was a renegade Christian:

Me fynde wel þat Macometh was a man ycristened
And a cardinal of court, a gret clerk withalle,
And persuade to haue be pope, prince of holy chirche. (ll.165-8)²⁶⁵

Here Muhammad is shown to be a high-ranking churchman, with ambitions to be pope. The text then relates how when his ambitions in Rome were not realised, ‘Forthy souhte he into Surie and sotiled how he myhte/ Be maister ouer alle tho men’ (ll.169-170). Although the idea of Muhammad as ambitious man, indeed a man monomanically fixated on power and domination, and also as a person employing religion to further his political goals, would be continued in the early

²⁶³ The version I have used here is from: Ranulf Higden, (ed. Joseph Rawson Lumby), *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis: together with the English translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*, Rolls Series 41, (London: Longman & Co., 1865-1895), p.21. The text also notes an alternative provenance for Sergius as ‘archedecon of Antiocha’ or ‘patriark of Ieruslam’ (p.21).

²⁶⁴ The mention of the Nestorian heresy is also important; as with the other heresies, particularly Arianism, which Sergius is seen to transfer to Muhammad in the polemic biographies, Nestorianism deals with the nature of Christ’s divinity. Nestorianism carries the doctrine of distinct human and divine persons in Christ and along with Arianism, the main Christian heresy denying the divinity of Christ, were associated with Sergius throughout the medieval and early modern period; seemingly being a direct product of the Muslim denial of Christ’s divinity, which was then explained in terms of familiar Christian heretical doctrines.

²⁶⁵ William Langland, Derek Pearsall (ed.), *Piers Plowman* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

modern texts, the depiction of Muhammad himself as a renegade Christian did not survive, although the other details of this version are applied elsewhere to Sergius.

The early modern versions of the story of Sergius and of Muhammad's collaborators in the production of the Qur'ān and of the central tenets of Islam also place the figure of the monk within the ambit of Christian heresies which denied the divinity of Jesus. In *Acts and Monuments* John Foxe states that:

It is thought that Sergius, a Nestorian, was a great doer with Mahomet, in contriving of this lying Alcoran; and so it doeth well appear by the scope and pretence thereof, which especially tendeth to this end, to take divinity from the person of Christ...²⁶⁶

Here the imputation of Sergius as a co-author involved in the 'contriving' of the Qur'ān can be clearly seen, as can the continued importance of Muslim denial of Christ's divinity in early modern texts. Foxe does acknowledge that Muhammad 'granteth notwithstanding' that Christ was 'a most holy man, and also that he is received up to God, and shall come again to kill Antichrist, &c', although, of course, the idea of Antichrist is meaningless in a Muslim context.²⁶⁷

The 1572 translation of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* describes how Muhammad's 'temeritie and malapertnes was also increased by the vnconstancie and vnfaithfulnes of

²⁶⁶ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.21.

one Sergius a pestilent monke', with the result that 'in a shorte space hee came to suche estimacion amongst the Arabians, that he was called and beleued to bee the great messenger of God and the great Prophet.'²⁶⁸ The text describes Sergius as being 'a Nestorian archeheritike banished from Constantinople fled into Araby' and the result of his 'asociating him selfe vnto Mahumets familiaritie' being that 'an ill maister and gouernor with a most filthy and abhominable scholer was sone vnited together'.²⁶⁹ In this description there is also an example of how the nature of Sergius was often used in the polemic biographies to condemn Muhammad by association, an aspect which is further highlighted as the text goes on to say of Sergius that he was 'a prater and ful of wordes, bold, rashe, impudent, subtile, craftye,' attributes which identify him as 'in al thinges agreing with Mahumet' in whose company, the prophet having now 'waxed mightye,' the text states 'the runnagate found a filthie priuy and dungeon of all wickednes.'²⁷⁰

The text also describes how Sergius taught his 'vnhappy maister [Muhammad] Nestorians madnes' and also, 'perswaded him to expulse and remoue the christians and their priestes from Damascus, Syria, & Arabia, and so to corrupte the Iudaicall lawe and depraue the Christian faith.'²⁷¹ Here the text brings into play perceived Muslim persecution of Christians by describing an expulsion which never occurred, religious toleration, if not religious equality, being a notable feature of all the Islamic empires through the *dhimmi* system. The text concludes that 'it cannot wel be rehearsed by howe manye craftye and subtile meanes this most vnfaythfull Apostata and runneagate hath deceiued and seduced

²⁶⁸ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection*, Fol.63.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Fol.63.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Fol.63.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Fol.63-64.

the people', equating Sergius with the much villified early modern figure of the 'runneagate' or renegado: the Christian convert to Islam.²⁷²

The translation also details Sergius' role in the composition of the Qur'ān, also including the role of Jews in the process, as Münster describes how Muhammad 'began to make a newe Lawe by the healpe of his mayster Sergius and certayne Iewes his companions,'²⁷³ and describes him as 'borrowing some thinges of the Hebrewes, and some thinges of the christians discipline' in order to 'write in a certayne volume all the lawes of his new sect, y^t whiche bookes name is *Alcoran*.' The text also notes that 'that boke not manye yeares agoe hath come into print,'²⁷⁴ presumably a reference to the Bibliander/Luther edition of the *Qur'ān* produced in 1546. The Münster version concludes of Muhammad that:

[...] withe Sergius hee made this booke full of wickednes & corrupted the true scriptures with counterfait interpretacions, and that he mighte be accompted the prophete and conseruatour of both Testamentes...²⁷⁵

He provides an echo of the medieval idea of Muhammad as a Christian by claiming that Muhammad 'flattered ye christians in this that he was baptized of Sergius,' a charge which is repeated verbatim by Meredith Hanmer in his *Baptizing of a Turke* (1586).²⁷⁶

The translation of Münster catalogues the syncretic product of Muhammad's heretical and Jewish collaborators, describing how he:

²⁷² Ibid., Fol.64.

²⁷³ Ibid., Fol.64.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., Fol.64.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., Fol.64.

²⁷⁶ See: Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turk* (London: 1586), Sig.B8.

[...] commaunded his people to be washte often for the expiacion of theyr offences. He folowed also the Iewes, in that, that he appointed circumcision, and abstinence from swynes fleshe...²⁷⁷

But also points out the way in which these aspects were also corrupted, stating that:

[...] circumcision whiche is commaunded to bee the eyght day, extendeth to the very ful & complet age, and baptisme that taketh awaye spyrytuall filthynes whiche ought not to be reiterate, is daylye of them reiterate,²⁷⁸

taking the opportunity to stress the perception of the unregenerate recidivism of Muslims, who repeat daily their ‘spyrytuall filthynes.’

Thomas Newton’s *A notable historie of the Saracens* (1575) describes how Muhammad ‘was grealy anymated by the peruerse and Deuilyshe Counsell of one Sergius a Monke’, who the text describe as ‘béeyng exiled and expulsed oute of Constantinople, for mayntainyng the Heresie of the Arrians’ and who had ‘fled into Arabie.’²⁷⁹ Newton’s text also describes the affinity between the Christian heretic, who he describes as coming ‘oftentimes [...] to the house of Abdimoneples,²⁸⁰ Mahomets maister’, and also tells of

²⁷⁷ Münster, Fol.66.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., Fol.66.

²⁷⁹ Thomas Newton (Celio Augustino Curione), *A notable historie of the Saracens* (London: 1575), p.4.

²⁸⁰ This could possibly a confused reference to Abu Talib, Muhammad’s uncle. The version included in Whetstone’s work seems to be the basis for the Alexander Ross’s in his *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649), where he describes how during the prosecution of heresy in the Byzantine Empire:

[...]Sergius a Monk, and Sectary of Nestorius, conscious of his error, and dreading the punishment, fled secretly into Arabia, and found retreat and entertainment with Abdemonople, the Master of Mahomet, where finding slender hopes of propagating his infectious Heresie (the Family being Pagans) and less of overthrowing his opposites in Religions, he resolved to take revenge on Christianity it self, and to that effect began to practise on Mahomet, as a subject prepared to receive the impression of his design. (ii-iii)

how Sergius ‘entirely loued Mahomet for the singular dexteritie that he conceyued to bee in his wit and towardnes,’²⁸¹ once again demonstrating the depiction of Muhammad as a cunning figure, well suited to Sergius’ Machiavellian instruction. This depiction of the relationship between Muhammad and Sergius can also be found in George Whetstone’s *The English mirror* (1586). The title of Chapter Seven of Whetstone’s work makes clear the position of the heretical monk in his version:

*Of the enuy of Sergius a monke of Constantinople, who being banished for heresie fledde into Arabia, vnto Mahomet, by whose diuelish pollicies, ambitious Mahomet, forced the people to holde him for a Prophet, which damnable sect, vntil this day hath beene nourished with the bloud of many thousandes.*²⁸²

Again Muhammad and Sergius are shown as a religio-political partnership, and one with spectacularly bloody results. Newton’s version describes the ‘envy’ of Sergius, the theme of his text being ‘a regard wherein all estates may behold the conquests of envy,’²⁸³ among the ‘blouddye cruelties’ detailed elsewhere in his text as the one act which ‘broched, the extreamest venim of the diuell’ and as being ‘many degress more extreame’ than the others.²⁸⁴ Whetstone also has Sergius begin as ‘a Monke in Constantinople’ who ‘raysed damnable heresies, to make him selfe famous’ and goes on to describe how ‘the sect of Mahomet, which his accursed head first planted in Arabia’ has:

Here Ross, as with Whetstone, uses both the revenge narrative of Sergius and also a reference to ‘Abdemonople, the Master of Mahomet.’

²⁸¹ Newton, p.5.

²⁸² George Whetstone, *The English mirror* (London: 1586), p.55.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, Frontspiece.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.56.

[...] left an impossibility to Belzabub to scatter in the world, a more blasphemy against God, and iniury towards men, whose opinions buried millions of soules in hell, whose bodies were to forme, many hundred yéeres after his departure vnto the Diuell. The actions of whom, and originall of Mahomets sect ensueth.²⁸⁵

Whetstone's version has Sergius arriving in Arabia 'In the Prime of Mahomets aduancement' and, in order 'to be reuenged of the Cleargie that banished him Constantinople' and to 'shew his malice, to despight God because he suffered him to prosper no better in his herestes' describes how 'in euery place he tormented the poore Christians.'²⁸⁶ Whetstone then provides an example of the use of Sergius to decry Muhammad, describing how:

[...] in the ende he lighted in acquaintance with Mahomet, whome Sergius founde in abilitie and power great, in witte quicke and subtill, in minde proude and ambitious, of disposition froward and enuious, a great practiser of magicke and nigromancie, and to bee shorte, that hee was ignoraunt in no vice, neither was there any lewde attempt that hee feared to enterprise

Here Muhammad can be seen as exhibiting the characteristics which would later be central to the construction of Machiavellian Islamic characters on the English stage. Whetstone describes how Sergius 'counseled Mahomet to take vpon him the name of a Prophet' and also how 'to giue him the greater credit, by magicke and other diuelish practises, hee illuded the people with some false miracles'²⁸⁷, achieving the end that 'his wife and most familiar friendes began to admire Mahomet, and to reuerence him as a

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.56.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p.56.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p.57.

holy Prophet,²⁸⁸ once again demonstrating the parody of the Muslim perception of Khadija as the first Muslim. Whetstone then goes on to describe how Muhammad ‘by his industrie’ became ‘learned in all lawes’ and then describes his political maneuvering as he relates how:

[...] in the beginning till he had well rooted his damnable sect, to reauue himselfe of many dangerous enemies, in parte he accorded with the Iewes, in part with the Christians, and moreouer in many thinges he agreed with the heretiques which raigned in his time...²⁸⁹

Whetstone then provides a list of heresies borrowed by Islam, observing that:

[...] he denied the Trinitie with the Sabellicans, with the Macedonians he denied that the holy Ghost was God, and approued the multitude of wiues with the Nicolaites, on the other part he confessed that our Sauour and Redeemer was a holy Prophet, and that he had the spirite of God: with the Iewes he receyued circumcision...²⁹⁰

As usual in these lists of heretical borrowing, it is the matter of the denial of Christ’s divinity which is the central feature, although Whetstone does take the opportunity here to include reference to what was seen as the deviant marriage laws of the Muslims, as well as reinforcing the links to Judaism through circumcision. Whetstone’s terse conclusion on Muhammad is that ‘to be short, being of no religion, hee entertained the professours of euery religion.’²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p.57.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p.57.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p.58.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p.58.

Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) extends the theological collaborations and appropriations of Muhammad to other figures aside from Sergius. Beginning by describing Muhammad as 'rude altogether and vnlearned,' Hemmingsen goes on to tell of how:

[...] he adioyned to him selfe two masters and counselors that were Christians, the one wherof was Sergius an Arian, and ye other Iohn Nestorius, to whom there came à third, who was à Iewe, à Thalmudiste. Euerie of which defended his seuerall sect.²⁹²

Here Hemmingsen includes the familiar attribution of Arianism to Sergius, but also includes the figure of Nestorius, suggesting the founder of the Nestorian heresy, who died c.452 AD about a century and a half before the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic career. Henningsen also includes a link with Judaism through the 'Thalmudiste', which seems to be merely a direct personification of the general Christian consensus on the Judaic roots of much of Muhammad's teaching.

Interestingly, a very similar account appears in John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus' *A geographical historie of Africa*, (1600), which seems to confirm the degree to which

²⁹² Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.80. A similar account, including the figures of 'two Iewes Apostates' and 'Iohn a Nestorian' appears in Edward Griomstone's translation of Pierre d'Avity's, *The estates, empires, & principallities of the world Represented by ye description of countries, maners of inhabitants, riches of provinces, forces, government, religion; and the princes that have governed every estate. With the beginning of all militarie and religious orders. Trranslated out of the Frinch by Edw. Grimestone, sareany at armes* (London: 1615), p.1067.

either translation or the pressure of writing for a papal ‘host’ transformed Leo’s Work. Pory’s Africanus describes Muhammad rising in times which ‘answered very fitly for one that woulde disturbe or worke any innouation’ as the Arabians ‘vpon some euill entreatie were malecontented with the Emperour Heraclius’ and also ‘The heresies of Arrius and Nestorius, had in a miserable sort shaken and annoied the church of God.’²⁹³ In the midst of this discontent and religious schism, where we are told ‘The Iewes, though they wanted power, yet amounted they to a great number. The Saracens preuailed mightily, both in number and force. And the Romaine Empire was full of slaues.’ The text then describes how Muhammad, ‘taking hold on this opportunitie, framed a law, wherein all of them should haue some part, or prerogatiue.’²⁹⁴ The ‘translation’ then relates how Muhammad was assisted in his creation of this ‘law’ by ‘two Apostata Iewes, and two heretikes’ and lists among them the familiar Western inventions, ‘Iohn, being a scholler of Nestorius schoole; and the other Sergius, of the sect of Arrius.’²⁹⁵

The text then describes how ‘the principall intention of this cursed law was wholie aimed against the diuinitie of our Sauour Iesus Christ’ who had been ‘wickedly oppugned by the Iewes and Arrians’ and describes how the new religion:

[...] it embraceth circumcision, & maketh a difference between meats pure & vnpure, partly to allure the Iewes. It denieth the Diuinitie of Christ, to reconcile the Arrians, who were then most mightie; it foisteth in many friuolous fables, that it might fit the Gentiles.²⁹⁶

²⁹³ Leo Africanus, John Pory (trans.), *A geographical historie of Africa* (London: 1600), p.380.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.380.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.380-1.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.381.

This demonstrates once again the view of Islam as hybrid religion of convenience created with the intention of consensus-building in the pursuit of power. It seems inconceivable that a man like Leo Africanus, who had been born a Muslim and had lived his whole life in the Muslim world, until his capture by the papacy and conversion to Christianity, could possibly have produced an account of Muhammad which was so completely embedded in the Christian polemic tradition.²⁹⁷ I have not been able to examine the original manuscript of Leo's work, but if this version is contained in that text, then it can only be assumed that the ministrations of those at the papal court while he was their 'guest', until his flight and return to Islam in North Africa, must have been extremely persuasive indeed.

Hemmingsen also shows Muhammad employing religion for political ends as he describes how he 'received al' contributions of the various faiths, 'supposing that he should not onely gratifie his companions, but also the more easilie allure al nations vnto himselfe', and so included in his teachings:

[...] the pertinacie of Arius, the error of Nestorius, and the vaine inuentions of the Thalmudiste. And therefore he receaued from the Iewe circumcision; from the Christians sundrie washinges as it were Baptismes; and with Sergius he denied the diuinitie of Christ.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ For a discussion of the translation of Leo Africanus see: Oumbelbanine Zhiri, 'Leo Africanus, Translated and Betrayed', in: Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Luise Von Flotow and Daniel Russell (eds.), *The Politics of Translation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Canada: University of Ottawa Press, 2001), pp.161-174.

²⁹⁸ Hemmingsen, *Faith...*, pp.80-1.

Hemmingsen also describes some early ‘renegados’ who were ‘baptized, and some-what instructed in Christianitie’, but who ‘as soone as theie had left the Romane Emperour for the hatred they bare against him, renounced foorth-with the religion which he defended’, which Hemmingsen compares to the example of:

[...] those tenne tribes of Israel, which reuolting from the house of Dauid vnto Roboam, despised the lawes of their fathers, and went from the seruice of the onelie true God vnto the inuocation of Diuels.²⁹⁹

This statement demonstrates the Biblical root of the anathematic manner in which converts to Islam were regarded during the early modern period.

William Biddulph, the Church of England minister resident in Aleppo, demonstrates once again in his account of Sergius and Muhammad’s advisors the citational nature of the polemic biographies at this time, even amongst those who had the opportunity, through residence in Muslim lands, to accrue more accurate knowledge. Instead of doing any research of his own Biddulph is content to quote verbatim the account in Hemmingsen on Muhammad’s collaborators. When he comes to discuss Muhammad’s political ambitions, describing how he and Sergius ‘had many times private conference how, and by which means, Muhammad might make himself ways to rise in honour and estimation’, it is once again a verbatim rendering of an earlier text, in this instance Giles Fletcher’s *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597).³⁰⁰ The Biddulph/Fletcher account includes a description of

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.81.

³⁰⁰ See: William Biddulph, *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (London: 1609), p.90 and Giles Fletcher, *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (London: Iohn Windet for W[illiam] S[tansby], 1597) p2-3.

the ambitious Muhammad as an ‘atheist’³⁰¹ and will be discussed more fully later in a section examining the connecting Islam with atheism and with the influence of the depiction of Muhammad’s political use of religion on the construction of several Muslim characters on the early modern English stage, including the eponymous antihero of Robert Greene’s *Selimus* (c.1588).

The account included by humanist and traveller George Sandys in *A relation of a iourney* (1610) also shows little sign of nuanced knowledge of Islam gained through contact with Muslim cultures. Sandys accurately describes Muhammad declaring himself ‘the last of the Prophets’, but then goes on to say that he considered himself ‘greater then Christ, as Christ was greater than *Moses*.’³⁰² Sandys’ account then describes how Muhammad lived for two years in cave near Mecca ‘where he compiled his damnable doctrine, by the helpe of one *Sergius* a *Nestorian* Monke, and *Abdalla* a Jew (containing a hodgepodge of sundry religions).’³⁰³ Sandys’ account seems here to confuse Muhammad’s father Abdallah (who was often described as Jewish) with the Jewish collaborators found in other versions of the story, an error which can also be found in Peter Haylyn’s *A little description of the great world* (1625), which might well have used the highly respected Sandys as its source. Haylyn’s version describes Muhammad as a ‘Captain of a rebellious multitude’ who ‘inducted among them a new Religion’ which consisted:

³⁰¹ Fletcher, p. 2 (Sig.B2), Biddulph, p.92.

³⁰² George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of AEGypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning* (London : Printed [by Richard Field] for W: Barrett, 1615), p.53.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.53.

[...] partly of *Iewish* ceremonies, which he learned of one *Abdalla*; partly of *Christian* precepts, taught him by *Sergius* a *Nestorian* Monke; and partly of other phantasticall fopperies, which his own inventions suggested vnto him.³⁰⁴

This statement certainly seems to follow very closely the syntax of Sandys' version, with the addition of a few added invective flourishes from Haylyn.

Sandys concludes with another example of the explanation of the spread of Islam based on the religious and social conditions of Muhammad's time, observing that:

Thus he planted his irreligious religion, being much assisted by the iniquities of those times: the Christian estate then miserably divided by multitudes of heresies. So that the disunitie of the professors made many to suspect the profession, and to embrace a doctrine so indulgent to their affections.³⁰⁵

This observation would have chimed with the divided state of Christianity in Europe during Sandys' own time, where the new 'internecine' conflict and disunity between Catholic and Protestant states was often sited as cause for the success of Islamic forces, most particularly the Ottoman Empire, by early modern commentators.

Texts from the mid to late seventeenth century, including the lengthy version of Muhammad's prophetic career contained in Walter Raleigh's posthumously published *The life and death of Mahomet the conquest of Spaine together with the rying and ruine*

³⁰⁴ Peter Haylyn, *A little description of the great world* (London: 1625), p.613.

³⁰⁵ Sandys, *A relation*, p.53.

of the Sarazen Empire (1637) and Alexander Ross's *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649), show very little change from the pattern of the other early modern versions, and indeed Ross's version seems to borrow from Raleigh's to some considerable extent. Raleigh, at first, seems to attribute genuinely religious motives to Muhammad when he describes him as being 'satisfyed with wealth, & given to ease' at which point he 'began to think on his/ Soule, whereof in his travels he had not been negligent.'³⁰⁶ Raleigh then describes Muhammad as:

[...] having been curious to understand the Religions of the Jews and Christians; which compared with the Idolatrie wherein he was originally trayned thirty yeeres) did worke in him assurance that Paganisme was the way to perdition, but to whether of these to incline, he stood doubtfull.³⁰⁷

At this point Raleigh has Muhammad taking the familiar course of 'falling in company with two Christian Artificers, inhabitants in Mecca' and:

[...] by conversation with them (who read the old and new Testament unto him, for himselfe was unlettered) he approved Christianisme for the best, and was of opinion that thereby, only, a man might attaine unto Salvation, and accordingly he framed his life.³⁰⁸

Raleigh seems to have Muhammad actually converting to Christianity, but this soon changes as Raleigh relates how his conversion 'bred admiration in them that knew him, and gave him a greater reputation than he did expect.'³⁰⁹ Raleigh describes how the 'hasty spring' of Muhammad's conversion was 'quickly blasted' as 'the Devill, taking advantage upon his weaknesses, enflamed his heart with pride, which wrought

³⁰⁶ Walter Raleigh, *The life and death of Mahomet the conquest of Spaine together with the rysing and ruine of the Sarazen Empire* (London: 1637), pp.3-4.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4-5.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

in him the desire to be esteemed a Prophet, thinking all other attributes of religion and sanctity to be but vile and base.³¹⁰

Raleigh now goes on to describe Muhammad retreating to a cave and delivering speeches and then the inception of the *Qur'ān* as he relates how, 'Grown now famous he thought it necessary to divulge into the world some works in wrighting, whereby his name might encrease,³¹¹ again demonstrating the roots of Islam in desire for temporal fame and power. Raleigh then describes how in the enterprise of constructing this text Muhammad's 'best help was a Jew scribe, who for want of a better scholler he entertained,³¹² but how shortly after:

[...] his Master the Divell (the Church of Christ then laboring with the sicknes of many Haeresies) procured the acquaintance of a Christian

³¹⁰ Ibid., p6-7 . This version seems to be largely paraphrased by Alexander Ross, who even uses Raleigh's title 'The Life and Death of Mahomet' for the appendix added to the 1688 edition his *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649). Ross's version describes how:

Being thus grown opulent, he [Muhammad] sometime continued his Trade, but then willing to take ease, as he had, during the Voyages through several Countries, been a seeker, and inquisitive concerning the diversity of Religions professed through the Universe; so now (though irresolute which to follow) he rejected all, as vain, and foolish, except Judaism and Christianity; and approving the latter as the best, accordingly framed his life, assuming a specious form of Sanctimony, which bred admiration in them that considered his former Education, and gave him a repute above his expectation. (iii)

The interesting difference here is that Ross uses the word 'seeker' to describe Muhammad, bringing into play the name of a radical sect from the Civil War era, likewise known for eclecticism in religion. Ross also describes the channeling of religion into feeding ambition for power as he describes how in the case of Muhammad the 'this hasty Fruit [of religion] was soon corrupted, and with the touch of Ambition (like the Apples of Sodom) soon vanished into stink and filthiness.' (Ross, iv). He repeats the last piece of Raleigh's description almost verbatim as he describes how:

[...] enflamed with his new gotten wealth, and fame, now entertained more ardent desires of being esteemed a Prophet, looking upon all other attributes of Religion, and sanctity, as vile and abject.(p.v)

The only real difference between the two texts is that Ross attributes this opinion to the teachings of Sergius, whereas in Raleigh's version Muhammad comes to this conclusion himself and then finds Sergius to help him.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.9.

³¹² Ibid., p.10.

called Sergius born in Alexandria, by profession a Monke, and by infection a Nestorian...³¹³

Raleigh now repeats the revenge narrative found in Whetstone's *The English mirror*, and indeed in Ross's version.³¹⁴ He describes Sergius as 'wittie, eloquent and learned' and goes on to relate how the monk:

[...] having mist of some Ecclesiasticall preferment which in his opinion he had deserved) full of despight and revenge, in a divelifh discontent, sought as well to raise a scandall upon the Christian Religion, as upon the professors thereof...³¹⁵

As with the version of Whetstone Sergius then finds Muhammad, who he identifies as 'the readiest way to kindle this fire', being a man 'who (as is already said) had won some extraordinary opinion of sanctity.'³¹⁶ Raleigh now places Sergius as the sole advisor as 'the Jew for insufficiency was discharged' and goes on to relate how Sergius, 'being fully informed how Mahomet had hitherto proceeded', was able to make him 'to understaud how weakly and grossly he had erred in fundamental points, necessary for the advancement of a new Religion' and in order to remedy Muhammad's religio-political mistakes:

[...] cunningly shewed him, not only the meanes how to smoothe his past errors without scandall, but to compose a new treatise, collected out of the old and new Testament (with devised additions that should give credit to his Doctrine and humor the hearers) which being divulged amongst the

³¹³ Ibid., p.10.

³¹⁴ See above, pp.109-110, n368.

³¹⁵ Raleigh, p.11.

³¹⁶ Ibid., pp.11-12.

Idoltrous people (who were easily caught) spread the poyson it contained over all the Arrabies³¹⁷

This shows Islam as a conscious and calculatated conspiracy between Muhammad and Sergius to gain political power in Arabia and Raleigh describes this as having been identified by some of Muhammad's contemporaries as he describes how:

[...] the wiser sort fearing (as they had cause) that the setling of a new Religion, might also draw with it a new forme of government; opposed themselves against it, calling Mahomet an Imposter, reproving his hypocrisie, and taxing his sensualitie and drunkennesse (of both which hee was guilty) and sent to apprehend him...³¹⁸

Once again, along with the highlighting of Islam as a political conspiracy, no opportunity to castigate the personal morality of Muhammad is missed.

Ross also describes a wise Sergius advising an ignorant Muhammad, as the 'subtile, as malicious' monk having observed Muhammad's predeliction for Christianity and Judaism and 'after some discourse concerning the two Religions, of both which he found him excellently ignorant', was able with 'no difficulty to distill into him the poyson of his Heresie and 'perswaded him' of various heretical opinions, including the vital matter of the divinity of Christ. Ross describes how Sergius informed Muhammad:

That Jesus Christ was but Man simply, that for the merit of his vertues he was held as Deified: that the sufferings of his death were but humane inventions; that he was transported from this life to an immortal, and glorious, by another way than that of Death; That there is but one God, in

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp.12-14.

³¹⁸ Raleigh, pp.14-15.

one Person; so that the Faith of the Christians is vain, and invented, and that of the Jews too loose, and lean, through their own obstinacy.³¹⁹

The element of religio-political maneuvering is also covered by Ross, as he describes Sergius advising Muhammad that in a situation where the Arabians ‘being a dull and ignorant people, inclining neither to the one nor the other [Judaism and Christianity], but all’ and where the Jews and Christians were ‘likewise enemies to each other’ and the ‘Christians at variance among themselves’, Muhammad would be able ‘in that juncture of affairs, assume the title of a Prophet sent from God, to disabuse the one, and the other, and save the World by another Law.’³²⁰ Ross’s account ends with Muhammad retiring to the cave while Sergius, as religious ‘spin doctor’, ‘proclaimed the vain perfections of his Life, and filled the ears of the people with the noise of his deservings.’

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A ‘forged and subtile deuse’: The Pseudo-Miracles of Muhammad in the Polemic Biographies

Another feature of the polemic biographies which consistently repeated during the medieval and early modern periods was that of the false miracles of Muhammad. These tricks, which feature a variety of trained animals including a dove, a camel and a bull, were mainly shown as being used by Muhammad to present the *Qur’ān* (which features as a wholly completed text) as the word of God to a credulous Arabian audience. Of course these tales have absolutely no roots in the *sira* and seem to have been entirely the

³¹⁹ Ross., *Alcoran*, v.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, v.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, v.

invention of Christian, and particularly Byzantine, authors such as Theophanes Confessor.

In William Caxton's edition of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1483) we are told of how Sergius, once he had fled to the East, 'drew to hym by his symylacyon moche peple' and eventually 'fonde machomete', whose ambition he appeals to by telling him that 'he wold make hym lord and chyef of alle the peple', once again highlighting the political nature of the inception of Islam.³²² The Caxton/de Voragine version then describes how:

[...] after he nourished a dowue and layed whete and other corne in the eerys of Machomete / and sette the dowue vpon his sholdre / and fedde hym out of his eer / and was so vsed and acustomed that alwey whan he sawe machomete he flewe on hys sholdre / and put his bylle or becke in his eer / and thenne this clerke called the peple and sayd that he wold make hym lord ouer them alle / On whome the holy ghoost shold descende in the lykenesse of a culuer or a dowue / And thenne he let the dowue flee secretelye / and he fledde vpon the sholdre of machomete which was emonge the other / and put his becke in hys eer / And whan the peple sawe thys thyng / they supposed that the holy ghoost had descendyd on hym / and had shewed vnto hym in his eere the worde of god ...

The passage concludes that 'thus deceyued machomete the sarasyns.'

³²² Jacobus de Voragine *Golden Legend* [*Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive, Lombardica historia*] (London: William Caxton, 1483), no page numbers.

In the version contained in Higden's *Polychronicon* we are told how Muhammad 'þe fals prophete and nigromancier, deceyvede the Agarenys [Hagarines]'³²³ and after his description of Sergius (whom Higden also makes responsible for the deception), Higden goes on to relate the story of Muhammad and the dove, in a version which is practically identical to the one found in Caxton's edition of the *Golden Legend*. Higden describes Sergius 'norischynge a doffe' and tells of how he 'putte cornes in the ere of Machometus, of whom þat doffe fed her ofte.'³²⁴ The clerk then tells the people that their ruler would be selected by the Holy Ghost 'in the likenesse of a doffe', and when the trained dove sat on Muhammad's shoulder and 'putte her bylle in his ere' he was made governor. This wholly apocryphal tale, with slight variations, occurs many times throughout the polemic biographies of Muhammad.

Higden also has Muhammad perpetrating another deception to justify his prophetic status, this time utilising a trained camel. He describes how Muhammad:

Havyng a camel of semely forme, usynge hym in secret places to his owne hond, hongenge that book Alcoranus, conteynyng the lawes in hit, abowte the necke of the camelle.³²⁵

The story then continues to relate how this camel was then released by Muhammad and 'not suffrenge to be towchid of any man', created 'rumor and fame', resulting in 'a grete multitudew of peple ... gedrede to see that beeste.'³²⁶ Similarly to the tale of the dove, the

³²³ Higden, *Polychronicon*, p.19.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.35.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.35.

camel ‘perceyvynge and seyng Machometus his norischer’ approaches him and licks his hand, resulting in the people crying out that Muhammad was ‘tru prophete of God’ and ‘preyenge hym that the booke scholde be openede with his holy hondes.’³²⁷ At this stage Muhammad is described as presenting the *Qur’ān* as ‘yours lawe, not written by the hond of man, but by the power of Godde, sende from hevyn’ and Higden then asserts that this day is the the root of Ramadan, describing how ‘that daye in whom these thynges wer doen, was made a holy day, and called the feste of the camelle, and the peple prevente that feste by abstinence of a monethe’.³²⁸

In the speech of Anima in Passus XVIII of the ‘C’ text of William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* a similar version is outlined, but this time, in keeping with Langland’s amalgamation of the figures of Sergius and Muhammad, with Muhammad himself being the renegade Christian, he makes Muhammad entirely responsible for the deception. Langland describes how Muhammad ‘souhte he in-to Surrye · and sotiled hou he myghte/ Beo mayster ouer alle tho men’ (ll.168-9) and, eventually ‘on this manere wroughte’ (l.169).³²⁹ Again this version stresses the political ambitions of Muhammad and his use of religion in a project of domination. Langland then goes on to relate the story of Muhammad’s deception employing the dove, describing how:

He endaunted a doue and day and nyhte here fedde;
 In ayþer of his eres priueliche he hadde
 Corn þat þe coluere eet (Passus XVIII, ll. 171-3)

³²⁷ Ibid., p.37.

³²⁸ Ibid., p.37.

³²⁹ William Langland, Walter W. Skeat (ed.), *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman: in Three Parallel Texts; Together with Richard the Redeless* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886). All quotations are from this edition.

The text then relates how when Muhammad ‘prechede and the peple tauhte’ (l.174), the dove would come to him and pick the corn from his ear. The effect of this trick is described as the texts goes on to tell of how:

When þe coluer cam thus then knelede þe peple,
For Machomete to men swear hit was a messenger of heuene
And sothliche þat god sulue in suche a coluere and lykness
Told hym and taught him how to teche þe peple.
Thus Macumeth in misbeleue man and woman brouhte (ll. 177-181)

The narrative voice then goes on to state that ‘on his lore thei lyen ȝet, as wel lered and lewed’ (l. 182), emphasising the powerful effect of Muhammad’s deception and its place at the root of Islamic belief into the poet’s own time, so drawing attention to falsity of Islam compared to Christian ‘truth’.

So far it is plain to see how closely these texts resemble each other in their relation of this aspect of the life of Muhammad. Indeed, it is only *Mandeville’s Travels*, of the medieval texts examined here, which makes no mention of the story of the trained dove being used to simulate the Holy Spirit, although it does suggest other deceptions on Muhammad’s part, particularly relating to his alleged epilepsy. *Mandeville’s Travels* exhibits less of the more virulent material contained in the polemic biographies than just about any text in English throughout the medieval early modern periods. The religion of the ‘Sarazines’ is generally described in the text in a neutral and even occasionally positive manner,

and this is also true in the case of Muhammad's revelations, as the narrator, the fictional English knight 'Mandeville', observes that:

The Sarazines ben gode and feythfulle, for thei kepen entirely the commandment of the holy book Alcoran that God sente hem be His messenger Machomet, to which, as thei seyn, seynt Gabrielle the aungel often tyme tolde the wille of God.³³⁰

There are no pejorative interjections or rhetorical flourishes against Islam and Muhammad in this statement, no trained doves or camels, but instead an accurate description of Islamic beliefs regarding the revelation of the *Qur'ān* in measured language, a stylistic direction found in few of the early modern polemic biographies when dealing with the matter of the revelation of the *Qur'ān*.

The versions of Muhammad's deceptive legitimization of the *Qur'ān* in early modern texts show very little development from those already recounted from their medieval counterparts. In the 1572 translation of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* the text shows Muhammad perpetrating a very similar con trick, albeit with a different trained animal, describing how:

[...] he brought vp and fed a certayne Bull whych was vsed only to take foode at the handes of Mahomet, he bounde a booke betwyxte hys hornes and the simple people lookynge aboute, with an highe voyce, he called the

³³⁰ *Mandeville's Travels*, M.C. Seymour (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.102.

Bull out of a secrete place, and when hee with hys bablyng tonge had vttered madye thyngs concerning hys lawes, sodenlye the Bull start forth and ouerthroweinge manye in hys hast ye comminges...³³¹

The interesting point in this version of the story, as with other similar tales, is the depiction of the ‘book’ (the *Qur’ān*) being delivered as a completed text authored by Muhammad, instead of the posthumously collected work recording his revelations over more than twenty years which it actually is, hence increasing the weight of the charge of fraud against him, the comic means of its delivery further undermining the claim to revelation. The text describes the bull laying down the book ‘in the handes of Mahumet as it had bene a gift sent from heauen,’ at which point Muhammad:

[...] he receiuing withe much honour, did immediatly interprete many thynges out of it to the people, and wyth this forged and subtile deuise, hee named hym selfe a Prince, and Sergius a prophete...³³²

Here again is a bizarre twist in the tale which stresses Muhammad’s desire for temporal power over religious status, as he makes himself the ‘Prince’ and Sergius the ‘prophete’. The text then describes how this trick is related to the previous deception with the dove which ‘had brought a paper about her necke written with golden letters, in this maner. Whosoeuer shal put ye yoke on the buls necke, let him be king.’ At this point Sergius brings the yoke to Muhammad who ‘did easly put it on ye bul, and by and by hee was called kinge of the simple people’ who had been tricked into ‘thinking these thinges to be

³³¹ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection...*, Fol.64.

³³² *Ibid.*, Fol.64.

done by Gods prouidence.³³³ Once again Muhammad is depicted as gaining secular power through fraud and the manipulation of religion.

The version found in Henry Smith's popular work *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593) describes the trick as being similarly geared towards the securing of political power and also presents the *Qur'ān* as a completed work authored by Muhammad. Smith mentions the trick with the dove, saying that Muhammad told his followers that 'the same Deue which hee taught to féede at his care, was sometime an Angell, and sometime the holy Ghost', mentioning also that 'He had thrée companions all of a confederacie, to deuisse and face out lyes with him.'³³⁴ Smith's text goes on to describe how:

When hee had framed his Alcoran, and bound it vp faire, he caused secretly a wilde asse to bée taken, and the booke to be bound about his necke, and as he preached vnto the people, vpon a sodaine hée stood amazed as if some great secrecie were reuealed to him from aboue, he brake out and tolde the people: Behold, God hath sent you a lawe from heauen, goe to such a desert, there yee shall find an Asse, and a booke tyed about his necke. The people ran in great hast, they found it so as hee had saide, they take the Asse, they bring the booke [...] they honour the Prophet³³⁵

Again Muhammad achieves success through the deception and is able to introduce his fully completed *Qur'ān* as the word of God, securing him 'honour' from the people.

³³³ Ibid., Fol.65.

³³⁴ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.K2.

³³⁵ Ibid., Sig.K3.

Joseph Wybarne in his *The new age of old names* (1609) evidently assumes the stories to be so familiar that he cuts his account very short, describing how Muhammad as:

Having taken the laws from a Bull, or (as some think) an Asse [...] with a booke of lawes tyed about his necke: this bEast he had taught to take bread from his owne hand, and these Lawes himselfe had framed, with the ayde of one John a Monk, and *Sergius* a Nestorian: this book at this day is called the *Alcheron*,³³⁶

concluding that ‘His other prankes I will not recite, as being at large repeated by *Fox*, *Smith*, and others’, evidently assuming that the reader will have encountered them in the popular works of John Foxe or Henry Smith, amongst other possible sources (indeed the stories are repeated throughout the texts I have analysed and so in this instance it is not necessary to look at each one). It is worth looking at Wybarne’s treatment of the story of the dove, as this does reinforce the political reading of Muhammad’s deception by the early modern commentators. Wybarne, as with the other texts, describes the training of the dove and Muhammad’s claim that it was ‘Holy Ghost in the likenesse of a Dove’, and then describes how ‘About the necke of this fowle he put a plate with golden letters, to this sense; Let *Mahomet* be King’ and then relates how:

[...] the simple Arabians which had lately revolted from *Heraclius* the Emperour of Greece, because his Muster-Master being demaunded paye, had rudely answered them, saying, we have not enough for our Greekes

³³⁶ Joseph Wybarne, *The new age of old names* (London: Printed [by John Windet] for William Barret, and Henry Fetherstone, 1609), p.95.

and Romanes, and shall these dogges crave their hyre, immediatly elected
Mahomet their king³³⁷

The depiction of Muhammad taking advantage of a revolt against the Byzantine Empire to secure his power was often repeated in the medieval and early modern texts, and will be examined in more detail in the context of Muhammad a warlord in the section on violence and Islam.

Muhammad's deception with the dove as an example of political manoeuvring through the manipulation and stage-managing of divine signs was compared in the 1594 translation of Louis Leroy's *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things* to classical examples of such chicanery. The text describes how:

[...] as Pythagoras had made an Eagle tame, which was used to come downe to him by a certain voice; as she flew in the aire about his head: and as he passed thorough the Olympian games, suffered his thigh to be seen, which seemed all of gold; and many such other deuises which are told of him, seeming to be miracles: So Mahomet had tamed and taught a pigeon, which came to eate corne out of his eare; which to deceiue the people, he said was the holie Ghost, who inspired him with these precepts.³³⁸

³³⁷ Ibid., p.95.

³³⁸ Louis Leroy, *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world and the concurrence of armes and learning, thorough the first and famousest nations: from the beginning of ciuility, and memory of man, to this present* (London: 1594), p.101.

This placing of Muhammad in a line of deceivers from classical history was picked up by George Sandys in his *A relation of a iourney* (1615). One of England's great classicists (the leading translator of Ovid, amongst other texts), Sandys rarely missed an opportunity in his descriptions of his travels to demonstrate his humanist credentials. In relation to the story of Muhammad and the dove, having told of how Muhammad had 'taught a Pigeon to feed at his eare, affirming it to be the holy Ghost, which informed him in his divine precepts', Sandys then states that this deception was:

[...] Not unlike to *Numa's* fained familiaritie with *Ægeria*; and *Pythagorus* his Eagle: whose policie perhaps he imitated: whereby as they the *Romans* and the *Crotonians*; so drew he the grosse *Arabians* to a superstitious obedience. For he had a subtile wit, though viciously employed...³³⁹

The comparison of Muhammad with Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome and founder of many of the religious institutions of the city, and his 'fained familiarity' with the water Nymph *Ægeria* draws Muhammad again into the arena of religious-political as a man who faked divine signs for the achievement of political power. Sandys can also be seen here to be acknowledging the intelligence of Muhammad, even while decrying his use of it.

In the version of the deceptions of Muhammad included in Alexander Ross's appendix to his *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649) he describes among the 'slights, which in sight of

³³⁹ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of AEGypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning* (London: Richard Field for W. Barrett, 1615), p.53.

the People, by Art or Sorcery, he performed, and they stupidly believed, and entertained as Miracles' the story of the pigeon and of an Ox which 'brought him a Chapter of the Alcoran upon his Horns, in a full Assembly', slightly modifying the earlier versions which have a completed *Qur'ān* produced through similarly dubious means.³⁴⁰ Ross also includes some other 'miracles', relating how Muhammad:

[...] likewise perswaded them, that being at dinner at the House of one that pretended to be his Friend (who had an intent to poyson him, or he at East was so informed) a shoulder of Mutton served in to the Table, forewarned him that he should not eat of it; and though many were present, none but he heard or understood the Language of the Mutton, and yet he permitted one of his dearest Friends to eat of it, and die impoisoned.³⁴¹

Here Ross is able to include not only a depiction of Muhammad's deceptions, but is also able to inject a suggestion of his disregard for human life. Ross concludes by stating that:

Such, and many of the like nature were his Miracles: As the bowing of Trees, shaken by some sudden gust of Wind; the howling of Wolves, and braying of Asses, which is their Language, desiring Mahomet to pray for them; and he Prophetically understanding, as religiously performed.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet, translated out of Arabick into French, by the Sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and resident for the French king, at Alexandria. And newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities. To which is prefixed, the life of Mahomet, the prophet of the Turks, and author of the Alcoran. With A needful caveat, or admonition, for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran* (London: 1649), xvi.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, xvi.

The suggestion of Muhammad's actions as faintly comic is once again shown in this comment, a feature which is, however, generally outweighed in these representations by the image of the prophet of Islam as a manipulative and ambitious politician who used religion for his own, very worldly, ends.

The figure of Sergius is featured alongside Muhammad himself in William Percy's *Mahomet and his Heaven*,³⁴³ a play which, as Matthew Dimmock comments, may 'flaunt its Qur'ānic roots' as in the opening speech of the 'Weather-Woman' who emerges on stage with '*an Alcoran under one arme*' and declares that 'A text out of the Alcoran we bring you' (Prologue, l.3), but relies for a great deal of its content on the tradition of polemic biography. Certainly the Sergius, the 'priest of Mahomet' who appears in this play, is familiar from the polemic biography, boasting of how:

I, who could adventure teach a Dove peck wheate furth
My Masters eare, then threape it was the holy Ghost that
Come on him from above...

(Act 4 (ii), ll.15-17)³⁴⁴

³⁴³ The dating of the play is uncertain. In his new critical edition Matthew Dimmock states that the play was written under Elizabeth and revised under James I, as evidenced by the author's inclusion of material seemingly derived from texts such as George Sandys' *A True Relation of a Journey* (1615), William Biddulph's *Travels* (1609), Fynes Morrisson's *An Itinerary* (1617) and even, possibly, Henry Blount's *A voyage into the Levant* (1636). See: 'Matthew Dimmock, 'Introduction' from *William Percy's Mahomet and his Heaven: A critical Edition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.6.

³⁴⁴ William Percy, Matthew Dimmock (ed.), *Mahomet and his Heaven* (Reading: Ashgate, 2006). All quotations are from this edition.

The well-worn story of deception involving the dove enters the drama unchanged and the Sergius of the play is further linked to this tradition as the source of Muhammad's prophecies the figure of Nabatha speaks of:

The glorious Fame that spreade of Sergius
In uttering Oracles never failing
Unto the seeking crewe of these Deserts

(Act 4, (x), ll.xxxxxx)

The play, interestingly for a text so openly boasting of its Qur'ānic basis, also repeats the representation of Sergius as the author of the *Qur'ān*, as in a prayer at the 'Meschit' addressed to 'Holy and gracious Father Mahomet' (Act 4, (x), ll.51-52), which places Muhammad in the position of God, or at least as semi-divine intercessor, there is a reference to 'great Sergius' as 'Sole builder of the Alcoran' (Act 4, (x), ll.71-72), a position which he often occupies in the polemic biographies.

‘Truthless Turks’: Perception and Representation of Islamic Perfidy in Early Modern English Texts

‘Fraud and deceit is a thing most proper to a Turke.’

Lozarro Soranzo.³⁴⁵

Just as an image of Muhammad as a deceiver and an opportunistic manipulator of circumstances emerged from the texts of early modern Britain, so there also emerged, in the newsheets, travellers’ reports and the figures on the London stage, an image of Muslims in general as dishonest, and of Islam as a religion as being either causative or permissive of this perfidy. An example from a news pamphlet of 1598, reporting the victory of Adolph of Swartzburg over the Turks at the Hungarian fortress of Raab, describes:

With what deceitfull craft, and false practices, (the outrageous Enemie of Christendome) the Turke a fewee yeeres past, through the permission of God, and for our sinnes, tooke in the strong and well defenced holde of Raab in Hungaria...³⁴⁶

This description combines its depiction of the ‘false practices’ and ‘crafty deceit of the enemie’ the Turks with the providentialist view of Turkish triumphs as a punishment from God for ‘our owne sinnes, whereby we daily provoke him.’ This trope of identifying

³⁴⁵ Lozarro Soranzo, Abraham Hartwell (trans.), *The Ottoman of Lazara Soranzo* (London: John Windet, 1603), p.33.

³⁴⁶ Anon, *True newes of a notable victorie obtayned against the Turkes, by the right honourable Lorde, Adolph Baron of Swartzburg, the 18. day of March last past, anno 1598 vvhen as he and his armie three houres before day, came before Raab, and tooke in that strong and well fenced hold and cittie* (London: I.R. for Richard Olive, 1598), Sig.A3.

the deficiencies in the behaviour of Christians as being the reason that God ‘suffereth the enemy to reign over us’³⁴⁷ will be examined in more detail later in the context of violence in early modern writing on Islam.

The accounts of British traders and captives amongst the Turks, North African ‘Moors’ and Arabs also provide depictions of Muslim dishonesty, along with further statements of providential explanation and justification. Records of two such incidents involving perceived Muslim double-dealing are to be found in the account of Thomas Sanders of a 1583 voyage to Tripoli aboard a ship named the *Jesus*, which was included in Richard Hakluyt’s *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation* (1599-1600),³⁴⁸ and also in two of the accounts which formed part of the extensive record of the 1610 voyages of the aristocratic merchant adventurer Sir Henry Middleton to Arabia. One account was written by Middleton himself and the other by Nicholas Downton, captain of the *Pepper-Corn*, one of the three ships which were part of Middleton’s East-India company voyage and both included in *Purchas his pilgrimes* (1625).³⁴⁹ All of these accounts, and particularly that of Sanders, take the form of

³⁴⁷ Ibid., Sig.A3.

³⁴⁸ Thomas Sanders, *The voyage made to Tripolis in Barbarie, in the yeere 1583. with a ship called the Iesus, wherein the aduentures and distresses of some Englishmen are trely reported, and other necessary circumstances obserued* in, Hakluyt, Richard, *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation made by sea or ouer-land, to the remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth, at any time within the compasse of these 1600. yeres* (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599[-1600]), pp.184-191.

³⁴⁹ Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimes In fiue bookes*, (London: Henry Fetherstone, 1625). The account by Middleton himself is entitled ‘Turkish treacherie at Mocha and Aden with the English’ (pp.251-254) and is included in the chapter entitled *The sixth Voyage, set forth by the East-Indian Company in three Shippes* (pp.247-274) and also the account by the captain of the ‘Pepper-Corne’ Nicholas Downton is entitled ‘Of Abba del Curia, Arabia Foelix, Aden and Moha, and the treacherous dealing of both places’ (pp.280-292), which is included in a chapter of Purchas’ work entitled *NICHOLAS DOWNTON Captaine of the Pepper-Corne, a Ship of two hundred and fiftie Tunnes, and Lieutenant in the sixth Voyage to the East-Indies, set forth by the said Company, his Iournall, or certaine Extracts thereof* (pp.274-314). In an article dealing with Middleton’s story in the context of English captivity narratives Nabil Matar notes that a second account of the narrative ‘by a companion of Sir Henry’ was not published until 1732; in fact, as

cautionary tales for potential travellers and demonstrate a perception of Muslim dishonesty which stretches beyond the immediate cases described into a more general condemnation of the Muslim as 'type'.

Sanders' account begins with a seemingly positive comment on the the people of 'Tripolis in Barbarie', observing that he and his shipmates had been 'verie well intertained by the king of that countrey, and also of the commons'³⁵⁰, and going on to identify the principal trade of Tripoli as being in 'sweete oiles' and telling how 'the king there is a merchant' who in order to secure the trade of the Englishmen for himself, over his own 'commons', requested that the 'factors' for the English ship 'traffique with him', promising that 'if they would take his oiles at his owne price, they should pay no maner of custome.'³⁵¹ Sanders describes the English factors buying 'certaine tunnes of oile' from the king and on afterwards discovering that 'they might haue farre better cheape notwithstanding the custome free', asking the King to 'licence them to take the oiles at the pleasure of his commons, for that his price did exceede theirs.'³⁵²

The King refuses this request, and instead promises to 'abate his price' and so secures the trade for himself, with the English traders taking the 'oiles' aboard their ship.³⁵³ At this point there is no hint of Muslim perfidy and, instead, Sanders first provides an account of the dishonesty of the 'French Factor' Romaine Sonnings (whose name and country of origin mark him as a Catholic), who having borrowed 'an hundred Chikinoes' from a

shown here, there is such an account in the same edition of Purhas in the form of Dowton's record. [Nabil Matar, 'English Accounts of Captivity in North Africa and the Middle East: 1577-1625, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol.54, No.2 (Summer, 2001), pp.565-568].

³⁵⁰ Hakluyt, p.184.

³⁵¹ Ibid., pp.184-5.

³⁵² Ibid., p.185.

³⁵³ Ibid., p.185.

Bristol trader called Miles Dickenson then attempts to pay him back a short amount in an exchange on the street. Sanders remarks of Dickenson that:

[...] hee doubted nothing lesse then falshoode, which is seldome knowne among marchants, and specially being together in one house, and is the more detestable betweene Christians, they being in Turkie among the heathen.³⁵⁴

This marking of the expectation of difference between ‘Christians’ and the ‘heathen’ presages the treatment which Sanders’ party will receive at the hands of the Muslims, and Sanders pauses in his narrative to exhort his readers to ‘beholde’ in Sonnings’ story ‘a notable example of all blasphemers, cursers and swearers, how God rewarded him accordingly’, adding that ‘many times it commeth to passe, that God sheweth his miracles vpon such monstrous blasphemers, to the ensample of others,’ adding an example of the providential tone which will run throughout his account.³⁵⁵

As Sanders’ ship is ready to depart he describes how the king ‘sent a boate aboard of vs, with three men in her, commaunding the saide Sonnings to come a shoare.’ When Sonnings arrives in the presence of the king Sanders describes how he ‘demaunded of him custome for the oyles’, a demand which prompts Sonnings to remind the king that he had waived all custom charges. At this point Sanders

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p.185.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p.185.

makes his first categorical statement of Muslim perfidy, describing how despite being reminded of his promise to waive the custom charges:

[...] the king weighed not his said promise, and as an infidell that hath not the feare of God before his eyes, nor regarde of his worde, albeit hee was a king, hee caused the sayde Sonnings to pay the custome to the vttermost penie,

going on to describe how the king then threatened that should these charges not be payed 'the Ianizaries would haue the oyle ashoare againe.'³⁵⁶

At this point of the account the situation of Sanders and his crewmates becomes far more serious. Sonnings returns to the ship bringing with him a fellow Frenchman called Patrone Norado, who has previously been described as being 'indebted vnto a Turke of that towne, in the summe of foure hundred and fiftie crownes' and who has been left by in Tripoli as a pledge for goods 'sent by him into Christendome in a ship of his owne, and by his owne brother.'³⁵⁷ This man wishes to flee Tripoli and return to France, an enterprise in which Sonnings has offered him assistance by hiding him on the *Jesus*.

Despite the protests of the ship's company, who sense potential trouble in the presence of the second Frenchman, the ship takes Norado on board. The king, alerted by the 'Turk' to whom the Frenchman owes money, tells them to stop their

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p.185.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p.185.

departure and demands that Sonnings come ashore, but they are exhorted by Sonnings to cast off, with Sonnings described as swearing that he 'would see the knaues hanged before he would goe a shoare.' Once at sea the *Jesus* is shot at by the king's pursuing ships, with Sonnings telling the crew that it is due to the Jannisseries wanting to take the oil back.

Sanders then describes how the 'Turkish gunners could not once strike vs', prompting the king to make an offer of 'a hundred crownes, and his libertie' to any Christian prisoner held in the 'Banio' (prison) if they can hit the fleeing *Jesus*. The offer is taken up by a Spanish captive called Sebastian who successfully manages, with his superior gunning skill, to cause the ship sufficient damage to make it come back in. Sanders then describes how:

This Sebastian for all his diligence herein, had neither his liberty, nor an hundred crownes, so promised by the said king, but after his seruice done was committed againe to prison,

concluding that this, once again, is an instance 'whereby may appeare the regard that the Turke or infidell hath of his worde, although he be able to performe it, yea more, though he be a king', moving once again from a particular case to the identification of such perfidy as a feature of any 'Turke or infidell.'³⁵⁸

Sanders now embarks on a description of the sufferings undergone by himself and his crewmates in Muslim captivity, including demonstrating the piety of his crew by

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.186.

describing the insistence of the master's mate that he be allowed to keep his Geneva *Bible* which had been taken from him by the 'kings chiefe gunner', himself a 'Renegado' Christian. Sanders describes how he ('hauing the language') argued the case with the king's treasurer on the grounds of Islamic religious toleration, requesting that the Muslim authorities 'should grant vs to vse our consciences to our owne discretion, as they suffered the Spaniards and other nations to vse theirs', a request which was granted.³⁵⁹

Eventually the crew of the *Jesus* is brought before king to be tried. The first to be sentenced are Sonnings and the ship's master Andrew Dier, both of whom are condemned to hanging for assisting Norado's escape. Sanders describes the sentence passed on Dier as causing their English factor Richard Skegs to beg for mercy and offer his own life in return, stating the ship's master is 'ignorant of this cause.' This action by Skegs, Sanders relates, won the admiration of the 'the people of that countrey' who 'besought the king to pardon them both', causing the king to declare to Skegs: 'Beholde, for thy sake, I pardon the Master', leaving the crew to celebrate his deliverance.³⁶⁰ But Sanders quickly reveals how 'our ioy was turned to double sorrow' as the king, realizing on advice from his council that 'vnlesse the Master died also, by the lawe they could not confiscate the ship nor goods, neither captiue any of the men,' reverses the verdict against Dier.

Sanders, once again, employs this discrete case as an exemplar to all Christians, declaring that:

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p.186.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p.187.

Here all true Christians may see what trust a Christian man may put in an infidels promise, who being a King, pardoned a man nowe, as you haue heard, and within an houre after hanged him for the same cause before a whole multitude: and also promised our Factors their oyles custome free, and at their going away made them pay the vttermost penie for the custome thereof.³⁶¹

Sanders then relates Sonnings attempt to 'turn Turk' to save his life, which demonstrates another betrayal, as Sonnings speaks 'the words that thereunto belong' (presumably the *shahada*) and is then told that 'Now thou shalt die in the faith of a Turke', being subsequently executed. Sanders describes how he and the rest of the crew are 'condemned slaues perpetually vnto the great *Turke*', again providing opportunity for the description of the crew's piety, as when sentenced they fall to their knees 'giuing God thanks for this sorrowfull visitation, and giuing our selues wholly to the Almighty power of God.'

Sanders then states how:

Here may all true Christian hearts see the wonderfull workes of God shewed vpon such infidels, blasphemers, whoremasters, and renegate Christians, and so you shall reade in the ende of this booke, of the like vpon the vnfaithfull king and all his children, and of as many as tooke any portion of the said goods.³⁶²

³⁶¹ Ibid., p.187.

³⁶² Ibid., p.187.

At the end of his 'booke' he does indeed 'returne to the kings plagues and punishments, which Almighty God at his will and pleasure sendeth vpon men in the sight of the worlde,' describing how the king is eventually killed by 'the souldiers of Tripolie.'³⁶³

Sanders was eventually released through a petition sent by his father through the Earl of Bedford to the Queen, who secured his release through the negotiations of the ambassador at Istanbul, Edward Barton, and he ends his account by praying for:

[...] the preseruacion of our most gracious Queene, for the great care her Maiestie had ouer vs, her poore Subiects, in seeking and procuring of our deliuerance aforesaide...³⁶⁴

This statement arises from a series of negotiations that underline Nabil Matar's identification of the ability of Elizabeth I to secure the release of captives 'by means of commercial and diplomatic treaties' with the Porte.³⁶⁵

The accounts of the 1610 journey of Sir Henry Middleton are not as explicit in their decrying of Muslim perfidy as the description of Sanders, and do not interpolate statements which draw attention to events as exemplars for other Christians. Yet they still set up a contrast between 'honest' Christian and 'deceptive' Muslim, which seems to express an underlying perception of this

³⁶³ Ibid., p.190.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p.191.

³⁶⁵ Matar, 'English Accounts of Captivity', p.560. I would however question somewhat Matar's conclusion that these narratives served 'a domestic rather than an international goal' (p.560), as the depictions of Muslims in these narratives would also seem vital in constructing the Muslim 'Other' in the period as deceptive, violent and avaricious.

opposition as a fact arising from religious difference. Middleton's own version of the events begins with him resident in Mocha and describes how 'One day past not, but I had some small present or other sent mee by the Aga, with commendations from him, to know if I lacked any thing', which he states left himself and his crew 'suspecting nothing of the present ensuing harme that did befall vs.'³⁶⁶

Middleton goes on to describe the arrival of a 'Janizary from the Aga to deliuer some message to mee,' which he understands through his interpreter to be that 'the Aga had sent me commendations, willing me to be merry, for that hee had receiued good newes from the Basha.' Middleton describes how a moment later, as the Jannissarie was about to speak again, 'my man returnes in great feare, telling vs wee were all betrayed: for that the Turkes and my people were by the eares at the backe of the House.'³⁶⁷ Middleton then describes how he was 'strooke vpon the head downe to the ground by one which came behind me' and relates that as he was led away:

[...] the Souldiers pillaged mee, and tooke from mee such money as I had about mee, and three gold Rings, whereof one was my Seale, the other had seuen Diamonds which were of good worth, and the third a Gimmall Ring...³⁶⁸

Nabil Matar provides a very different view of the actions of Middleton and draws attention to his account as an attempt to 'justify his handling, or rather mishandling, of the events at Mocha,'³⁶⁹ and describes the inclusion of this list of

³⁶⁶ Purchas, p.251.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p.251.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p.251.

³⁶⁹ Matar, 'English Accounts of Captivity', p.566.

‘pillaged’ items as a justification to East-India company investors of his losses.³⁷⁰

Matar draws attention to the scandal caused by Middleton’s actions at the time, with his problems beginning by his sailing ‘dangerously close to the Muslim holy cities of Makka and Madina, which were forbidden to Christians.’³⁷¹ Matar shows how even two years after the events took place the matter was still being discussed, and cites a letter of June 1613 between Samuel Calvert and William Trumbell as evidence of the enduring scandal.³⁷²

The letter describes how Middleton, while serving the East-India company, ‘through his own indiscretion and boldness’ receiving ‘some wrong at Tripoli’ which led to a ‘Bashaw’ capturing him at a feast and holding him prisoner. After his release the letter describes how he ‘took his course through the Red Sea and in revenge of three men slain, searched three Turkish ships, and satisfied himself out of goods and men,’ then describing how when the news of Middleton’s actions reached ‘the Chief Vizier Nassuff Bassa’ he:

[...] complained to our ambassador of the overthrow of their trade through the spoil on the Grand Signor’s subjects by English pirates, and threatened to dismiss all the English out of the country.

Matar concludes that the events of 1610 in Mocha were consequently ‘not the result of Turkish deceit but of Middleton’s piracy and aggression,’ and the

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p.568.

³⁷¹ Ibid., p.566.

³⁷² Matar does not identify these two men and they have no entries in the DNB, but presumably they were East-India company operatives. The section of the letter quoted here is reproduced in: Matar, ‘English Accounts of Captivity’, pp.566-567.

inclusion of the account in Purchas was ‘to rehabilitate the name of a man who, two years after the Mocha episode, was killed in the course of company business.’³⁷³

The behaviour of Middleton seems well established by Matar, yet this fails to comment on the method employed by him in his justificatory account (and that of his captain Downton), which was, in essence, an appeal to British perceptions of Muslim perfidy. The plausibility of this as a method of excusing Middleton must also have been perceived by Purchas, who in his attempt to ‘rehabilitate’ him reproduces the accounts. Middleton’s account describes the ambitions of ‘covetous Turkes’ who ‘would leaue no Villanie nor Treason vnattempted’ in order to secure the contents of his ships and describes the confusion of himself and his men when captured about ‘the reason or cause of this their villanous vsage of us.’³⁷⁴

Although Matar claims that ‘there is not a single [...] religious reference in the whole account’³⁷⁵, Middleton proceeds to describe how following ‘their first pretence of mischief’ and ‘not being satisfied with Christian blood, they aymed at our ships and goods’, observing, in a classic providentialist statement, that it was at this point that ‘it pleased God in mercie to looke vpon vs, and not to suffer any more Christian blood to be shed.’³⁷⁶ Here Middleton combines images of Muslim dishonesty with those of opposition between the faiths, going on to say of the successful defence of the ships from a Turkish attack that ‘God of his goodnesse and mercie deliuered our

³⁷³ Ibid., p.567.

³⁷⁴ Purchas, p.252.

³⁷⁵ Matar, ‘English Accounts...’, p.566.

³⁷⁶ Purchas, p.252.

ship and men out of the hands of our Enemies, for which his holy Name be blessed and prayed euermore, Amen.’³⁷⁷ This is a very clear religious statement, and one which fits with the providentialist tone of other early modern captivity accounts.

Middelton describes being brought before ‘Regib Aga’ the local ruler on two occasions, and being questioned particularly about sailing so close to Mecca. On the first occasion he describes how the Aga questioned him ‘with a frowning (and not his wonted dissembling) countenance’³⁷⁸ about his ship’s course and relates that his response was to place the blame entirely on the Aga, telling him that ‘it was not vnknowne vnto him wherefore I came thither, hauing long before certified him thereof’ adding that ‘I came not a-land but at his earnest intreatie with many promises of kind and good vsage,’ emphasising the treachery of the Aga himself over any fault of his own. When the Aga continues to insist that it is ‘not lawfull for any Christian to come so neere their holy Citie of Medina, this being the Port or Doore thereof’ and tells Middelton of the Sultan’s order to ‘captivate’ any Christians who do so. Middleton once again relates his answer as being to tell the Aga that that ‘the fault was his, that he had not told mee so much at the first, but deluded vs with faire promises.’³⁷⁹ In his description of his second interrogation by the Aga Middleton depicts himself as similarly defiant, and insists again on the incident being the result of the aga’s ‘Treason.’³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p.252.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p.252.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p.252.

³⁸⁰ Middleton gives this account of his second interrogation:

Regib Aga, Ismael (which was the Messenger from the Basha) and Iasfer Aga seated themselues. Regib Aga began to aske me how I durst be so bold as to come into that Countrey so neere their holy Citie, without a Passe from the Gran Senior? I answered, the King my Master was in league and amitie with the Gran Senior, and that in the Articles of peace, it was allowed vs free Trade in all his Dominions, and this being part of his Dominions there needed no passe. Hee answered, this was the doore of their holy Citie,

Captain Downton's account is very similar to that of Middleton, but with some embellishment. Downton prefigures the treachery at Mocha with a description of Aden, where he describes the 'the varietie of tricks, whereby from day to day they falsly deluded our people in their hand' and concluding that he could 'neuer conceit hope of trade or honest dealing amongst them.'³⁸¹ He acknowledges that from this point on his account is second-hand, having arrived at Mocha after Middleton's capture and hearing from Master Thornton, who was in charge of one of the pinnaces, that 'misfortue was befallen my Generall.'³⁸² Downton describes how when first approached by Regib Aga Middleton's party had trusted the Turks as 'men of humane feeling, being ignorant of what was against vs.' He then describes how all along the Aga was:

[...] laying the ground of his Treason, and drawing euery thing toward readinesse, for the effecting of his desired haruest, omitting nothing which might further his villanous purpose...

The actions of the Aga are described as including assembling soldiers and provoking their 'rigour and malice against vs [...] by scandalous reproches', which included the (seemingly truthful) accusation that 'wee were Pirats and *Christians*, (which they account as bad enemies to their holy Prophet *Mahomet* and his Lawes).'³⁸³ The Aga is also described as telling the soldiers that the Englishmen had come 'to discover how to ruinate

and therefore not lawfull for any Christian to come hither; Likewise, he asked me, If I did not know the Gran Seniors Sword was long; I answered wee were not taken by the Sword, but by Treason, and if I and my people were aboard, I cared not for the length of his or all their Swords... (Purchas, p.253).

³⁸¹ Ibid., p.282.

³⁸² Ibid., p.284.

³⁸³ Ibid., p.285.

and destroy the holy houses of their god, as *Meca* and *Medina*', telling them 'what service they should doe to God and their Country in destroying of vs', along with 'other deluding deuices, as seemed fit for such an action.'³⁸⁴ Meanwhile the account describes how 'our innocent distrustlesse men hired and fitted their house', unaware of the attack being planned against them.³⁸⁵ Downton's account then describes how they were told by the Turks that:

[...] all ships that came to this Towne in Trade, their Captaine, for their better assurance, as a pledge of good dealing, receiued the *Gran Segniors* Vest for their better securitie, which being once inuested in the view of the people, no man after durst offer them any wrong,

going on to tell them that 'vnlesse our Captaine doe come on land and accept [...] he should neuer thinke him the great *Turkes* friend, nor beleeeue his meaning was good.'³⁸⁶ Downton then describes how Middleton, 'notwithstanding the little trust he had in the faith and honesty of the Turkes in these forren places'³⁸⁷, decided to go ashore and went through the ceremony where 'a rich Vest of Cloath of Gold put on his back [...] as they pretended, the Badge of their friendship,' The ceremony is described as being conducted 'so solemnely, and with such protestation and shewes of kindnesse and friendship, as might deceiue any honest man, or which is not a deceiuer himselfe.'³⁸⁸

Downton describes how Middleton, convinced by 'the varieties of kind shewes by the Gouvernour toward him', orders his men ashore; but it is not long before Regib Aga 'his plot growing to ripenesse [...] effected his predeterminate trecherie with iron maces,

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p.285.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p.285.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p.285.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p.285.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., p.286.

knocking downe the Generall, Master Pemberton, and the Merchants, with all the rest that at that time were on shore,' commenting that the men attacked, 'by reason of their former fauours and shewes of kindnesse' had not expected 'any such treason to be intended towards them,' and were consequently 'naked without weapons to resist such vnexpected murtherers.'³⁸⁹ Downton ends his account of this portion of the voyage by describing the imprisonment of Middleton and the successful defence of the 'Darling' against the Turkish attack, which he, like Middleton gives a providential slant by stating that 'our mercifull God turned their pretended mischiefe toward vs, vpon their owne pates, and made them fall into the pit that they had made for vs', allowing the crew to fight off 'these vnexpected enemies.'³⁹⁰

Whatever the actual reasons for the assault on Middelton and his ships, it is clear that the defence of the activities of the voyage, in both accounts, rests on the plausibility of Turkish treachery against Christian merchants. The perception of this Turkish predisposition for deception can also be seen reiterated in a letter of 1611 sent to Middelton from one Gyles Thornton, during the time of his captivity. Thornton states, in the context of a discussion on his attempts to negotiate a release for Middelton and his men, how he '[...] Prays for Sir Henry's deliverance out of the hands of the truthless Turks, whose words and actions are as far different as black and white.' Thornton then goes on to say of the Turkish envoy with whom he has been conversing regarding the release of Middleton that 'he is a Turk, and therefore I do much doubt his honesty.'³⁹¹ The opinions displayed by

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p.286.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p.286.

³⁹¹ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, East Indies, China & Japan*, (London: Longman, Green, Longmand & Roberts, 1862), 517(213).

Thornton in this letter could be seen as going a long way to explaining Middleton and Downton's choice to defend their (possibly criminal) actions through accusing the Turkish Aga of 'treasons', as these accusations clearly chimed with opinion at home regarding the untrustworthiness of Turks in general.

'Make me not morall *Mahomet*': Islam, Atheism and Religion as Policy

The assumption of 'Turkish', or Muslim, dishonesty was also instrumental in the construction of the series of Turkish and Islam characters on the early modern stage who took the role of Machiavellian plotter and deceiver in the plays which feature them. Plays such as Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1592), George Peele's *The Battel of Alcazar* (1588), John Mason's *The Turke* (1610), Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612) and Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West* (Part I c.1597, Part II c.1630) all feature Muslim figures involved in deception, oath-breaking and Machiavellian plotting in order to deceive Christian characters. Both *Soliman and Perseda* and *The Fair Maid of the West* (Part II) depict situations in which Muslim leaders break their promises to protect and respect the persons of Christians in their domains.

In *Soliman and Perseda* the sultan Soliman, by creating a false accusation of treason against Erastus, violates his promise to the exiled Rhodian, who has sworn himself as 'Solimans adopted friend'³⁹² (III (i), l.100) and who Soliman has promised 'may have libertie to live a Christian' (III (i), l.96) in return for serving the sultan in his wars.

³⁹² Thomas Kyd, Fredrick S. Boas (ed.), *Soliman and Perseda* in: *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955). All quotations are from this edition.

Soliman also reneges on his promise to allow Persida to ‘live a Christian Virgin still/
Unlesse my state shall alter by my will’ (IV (i), ll.142-144) and goes back on his
subsequent marriage of the Christian couple, whom he has previously showered with
protestations of love and good faith. These actions lead Perseda to refer to him as
‘perjur’d and inhumaine’ (V (iv), l.40) and a ‘tirant’ (V (iv), l.46) who in killing
Erastus has ‘betrayde the flower of Christendome’ (V (iv), l.47).³⁹³ Mullisheg, the
ruler of Fez in *The Fair Maid of the West*, likewise uses clandestine means to go back
on his promise ‘by the mighty prophet’ that Bess ‘She shall live lady of her free
desires’ (V (i), ll.26-27), and, as with Soliman, also attempts to violate the ‘marriage’
he conducts between Bess and her Christian lover Spencer when they are reunited.³⁹⁴

Mohamed Hassan Abu-Bakr, in a discussion of the perceived treachery of Muslims,
notes a divide between Moors and Turks in early modern English dramas. He observes
that:

Whereas the Turks, though feared, were admired for their gallantry and military
prowess, the Moors were less admired and were more despised than feared for their
perceived disloyalty. In general, to the Elizabethan audience a Moor was black,
pagan, lustful, treacherous, barbarous and barely human³⁹⁵

I have found very little evidence for such a clear divide; indeed, as I have shown in the
examples of early modern English captivity accounts the Moor and the Turk seem to be
represented as equally treacherous in the writings of the period.

³⁹³ For a full discussion of the play see below, pp.266-273.

³⁹⁴ For a full discussion of the play see below, pp.273-282.

³⁹⁵ Mohamed Hassan Abu-Bakr, *Representations of Islam and Muslims in Early Modern English Drama from Marlowe to Massinger* (Unpublished Thesis: University of Glasgow, 1997), p.124.

Despite suggesting this divide in providing examples Abu-Bakr focuses his analysis on George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588) and Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1592). *The Battle of Alcazar*, in the malevolent Muly Mahamet, provides the first villainous Moor of the London stage (although it also features the honourable and honest Abdelmelec/Muly Molocco, who is also a Moor, despite the demphasizing of his colour); yet *Soliman and Perseda*, as I have mentioned, has as its repository of Muslim treachery not a Moor, but a fictionalised version of the Turkish Ottoman Sultan Suleyman I.

There was certainly no lack of treacherous Moors, whose duplicity reaches beyond Islamic identity, on the London stage following the pattern of Muly Mahamet (who uses classical religious terms rather than anything recognisably Islamic). Figures such as Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* and Eleazer in *Lust's Dominion* demonstrate that this treachery goes beyond the matter of Islamic identity (Aaron being a pre-Islamic figure and Eleazer a Christian convert) into the area of race. Yet given the confused sense of the Turks as 'race', and of the category of 'Turk' as a fluid identity (bearing in mind the perception of them as racially mixed through the foundation of a convert population), the deceitful nature of Turkish figures on the early modern English stage must arise from religious, rather than racial, identity.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of the connection between the treachery of a Turkish character and the matter of his religious identity occurs in John Mason's *The Turk* (1607). In the speeches of Mulleasses, the eponymous 'Turk' of the play's title, a clear link is drawn between his Machiavellian pursuit of his own advancement and the matter of his Islamic belief, and a parallel is also drawn in the play between the wicked nature of

Mulleasses' faith and the faithlessness of would-be traitor Borgias. The play, which has a rather tortuous plot, is set in Florence and places Mulleasses in the household of Borgias, where he has come in exchange for Borgias' son Julio 'to learne the language and fashions of the Countrey.'³⁹⁶

Borgias is the protector of his niece Julia, the young Dutchess of Florence, whom he plots to marry in order to gain the Duchy, once he has disposed of his wife Timoclea, killed his rival suitors (the Dukes of Ferrara and Venice) and received a dispensation from the pope. He then plans to use 'forty thousand Ianisaries/To be my guard, gainst forraigne outrages' (I (iii), 1.70-1), supplied by 'the Great Turke' through the mediation of Mulleasses to make himselfe King of Italy, in return for allowing the Ottoman emperor to 'land his force on this side Christendome' (Act1, 3, 1.73). Mulleasses, meanwhile, is having an affair with Borgias' wife, even though he has been offered the hand of his daughter Amada, and eventually develops a plan to marry Julia himself although she rejects him, stating that 'Our loves like our religions are at wars' (V (i), 1.42).

Labyrinthine plotting aside, it is the invocations and pronouncements of religion made by Mulleasses in the play which are of most interest for the purposes of this discussion. In a soliloquy at the beginning of the first scene of Act Two Mulleasses makes an appeal to 'Mahomet' to help him in his cause. Mulleasses calls on 'Mahomet' as the:

Eternall substitute to the first that mov'd
And gave the Chaos forme. Thou at whose nod

³⁹⁶ John Mason, Fernand Legarde (ed.), *The Turke* (Salzburg: Institut Für Anglistik Und Amerikanistik Universität, 1979), 'The Argument', pp.73-73. All references come from this edition.

Whole Nations stoopt...

(2 (i), ll.1-3)

Mulleasses then states that these nations:

...hold thee still a God

Whose holy-customd-ceremonies rites,

Live unprophan'd in our posterity...

(2 (i), ll.3-6)

In going on to call on Muhammad as 'God of *Mecha*, mighty *Mahomet*' (II (i), l.7)

Mulleasses' speech displays the sort of confusion about the status of Muhammad which is part of the inheritance of the medieval epics and romances. These texts commonly depicted Muhammad (as 'Mahon', 'Mahun' or 'Mahound')³⁹⁷ as a god or idol, a trope which I will discuss in more detail when I come to analyse the depiction of Islam in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays (which in this aspect *The Turke* also echoes). Mulleasses' speech proceeds to demonstrate that conceptions of Muhammad as both god and prophet could paradoxically occupy the same space, as he prostrates himself and calls on Muhammad as 'Great Prophet' (II (i), l.9).

It is the next section of Mulleasses' speech which is most interesting, particularly in view of the representations of Muhammad within the polemic biographies as an amoral deceiver who manipulates religion for his own ends. Mulleasses calls on 'Mahomet' to

³⁹⁷ For a discussion of the gods in the *chansons de geste* see: Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), pp.121-213.

‘let thy influence be free’ (II (i), l.9) and asks that he ‘mew not up my soule/ In the pent roome of conscience’ (II (i), ll.10-11), but instead prays:

Make me not morall *Mahomet*, coopt up
And fettered in the fooles philosophy,
That points out actions unto honesty.

(II (i), ll.12-14)

In this invocatory speech Muhammad, whom Mulleasses asks to ‘Give my plots fortune’ (II (i), l.15), occupies the position of a deity, or at least that of intercessor, the effect of whose ‘influence’ is to abrogate all morality and leave the way clear for ambition and deception. In this sense the ‘Mahomet’ who is appealed to here by Mulleasses seems to function as deified version of the figure of Muhammad found in the polemic biographies, with the ability, through his ‘influence’, to inculcate in his worshippers the same qualities of dishonesty and political machination demonstrated in medieval and early modern Christian accounts of the prophet’s life.

At the end of his speech, when told of a panic amongst the people following an eclipse, Mulleasses appeals to ‘Mahomet’ to ‘Make that ecllipse eternall’ (II (i), l.40) and places the ‘god’ within a hellish and racialised cosmology, appealing to the ‘mistie-footed Jades of night’ (II (i), l.41) to:

Draw your darke mistrese with her sable vayle,
Like a black Negro in an Ebone chaire,
Athwart the worlds eie: from your foggy breaths
Hurle an Egiptian grossenes through the ayre, 45

That none may see my plots.

(II (i), ll.42-46)

In this invocation Mulleasses places the 'god' Mahomet at the apex of a spiritual system which assists the deceptions and 'plots' of its ambitious adherents.

This appeal to 'Mahomet' as a god of immorality, deception and ambition is paralleled in *The Turk* with the atheistic speeches of Borgias. Borgias is shown to place the demands of religion, and indeed loyalty to his Christian identity, well below his pursuit of his own political ambitions. Borgias' abandoning of his Christian identity is commented on by his daughter Amada early on in the play, when he offers Mulleasses her hand in marriage.

Having commented that she would rather die than 'live to see those tapers burn/ That lead me to his bed' (I (ii), l.79-80) she goes on to ask 'where's sanctity?' and observes that:

Religion is the fool's bridle, worne by policy:

As horse weare trappers to seeme faire in shew

And make the worldes eyes dote on what we seem

(I (ii), l.81-83)

This idea of religion as a mere show, here in the context of her father's commitment of her to an inter-faith marriage with the 'infidell' Mulleasses, and as something to be set aside or manipulated in the interests of ambition, is echoed in Borgias' own speech relating his deal with the 'Great Turk' which he hopes will make him King of Italy. Having described his intention to give the sultan 'command upon the streights/ And land his force on this side Christendome' (I (iii), ll.73-74) he goes on to swear, ironically

given his intention to betray his religion, by his 'faith to God/ And loyalty I owe unto the
stars' (I (iii), ll.75-76) that:

Should there depend all Europe and the states
Christened thereon: Ide sink them all,
To gaine those ends I have proposd my aimes.

(I (iii), ll.77-79)

Borgias then goes on to present the image of religion as a curb to ambition and something
to be set aside in the name of political advancement:

Religion (thou that ridst the backes of Slaves
Into weake mindes insinuating feare
And superstitious cowardnesse) thou robst
Man of his chiefe blisse by bewitching reason.

(I (iii), ll.80-83)

And instead, in a speech echoing that of the traitor Edmund in *King Lear*,³⁹⁸ he commits
himself to 'Nature', stating that 'thou art my God' (I (iii), l.86). He goes on to observe
that if the gifts nature has given him, such as 'wit or art' (l.87) can help him achieve his
ends then he will stop at no obstacles, even if they were his 'childrens lives' or his
'dearest friends' (I (iii), l.90). He ends with a statement of the value of temporal power
and sovereignty to him above all other considerations, stating his belief that:

...al's vacuum above a crowne,
For they that have sovereignty of things,

³⁹⁸ 'Thou nature, art my goddess; to thy law/ My services are bound' (*King Lear*, I (ii), ll.1-2) in, William Shakespeare, Jay L. Halio (ed.), *The Tragedy of King Lear* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Do know no God at all, are none but Kings

(I (iii), ll.92-94)

The depiction of Borgias' rejection of religion in the name of ambition, and of his treacherous alliance with the 'Great Turk' in order to secure his goal of temporal power places him, alongside Mulleasses and his appeal to 'Mahomet' as a god of deception, immorality, treachery and political machination, within a continuum/nexus in which deception, atheism, Islam and political ambition intersect, overlap and parallel each other.

In the polemic biographies the depiction of Muhammad's manipulation of religion for political ends is displayed on numerous occasions, and in at least one text Muhammad is depicted as being an atheist himself. In Giles Fletcher's *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597)³⁹⁹ his account of Muhammad's prophetic career includes the depiction of a discussion between Muhammad and Sergius which centres on the political ambitions of the prophet. Fletcher describes how Muhammad and Sergius 'had many times private conference how, and by which means, Muhammad might make himself ways to rise in honour and estimation,' going on to relate that 'After much consulting and debating of the matter, the best course which they conceived to effect their purpose was to coin a new kind of doctrine and religion', with the simplicity of the Arab people and religion 'waxing cold' and being 'neglected' in the Byzantine Empire making it 'an easy matter to draw many followers unto them' and achieve their political goal of becoming 'great in

³⁹⁹ Giles Fletcher, *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (London: Iohn Windet for W[illiam] S[tansby], 1597). This account is repeated verbatim by William Biddulph in *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (London: 1609).

the eye and the opinion of the world.’⁴⁰⁰ The account then describes ‘these two hellhounds’ (Sergius and Muhammad) as, in Sergius’ case, being an ‘arch-enemy unto Christ and the truth of His religion’ and in the case of Muhammad as ‘a mere atheist or profane person, neither perfect Jew, nor perfect Christian,’ concluding that through ‘framing their opinions according to their own corrupt and wicked affections’, they had ‘brought forth a monstrous and most devilish religion, savouring partly of Judaism, partly of Christianity, and partly of Arianism.’⁴⁰¹

This depiction of Muhammad himself as a materialistic atheist motivated by ambition and temporal power fits well with the general usage of the term ‘atheist’ in the early modern period. David Wootton, in his analysis of unbelief in early modern Europe (which responds to the seminal work of Lucien Febvre on the subject), describes the amorphous nature of the term ‘atheist’ within the discourses of the period. Wootton describes Febvre’s position that ‘opponents of all persuasions were almost randomly accused of unbelief’, making this as much a political category as a religious one.⁴⁰² Wootton also describes the way in which the term ‘atheist’ was normally applied to those who:

[...] denied the existence of a law enforced by God – people who either directly denied the existence of a divine providence, or whose actions and belief were taken to imply such a disbelief.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ Fletcher, p.2 (Sig.B2); Biddulph, p.92.

⁴⁰¹ Fletcher, p. 2 (Sig.B2); Biddulph, p.92.

⁴⁰² David Wootton, ‘Lucien Febvre and the Problem of Unbelief in the Early Modern Period’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.60, No.4 (Dec.1988), p.700. Wootton points out that this observation also led Febvre to conclude that genuine disbelief may not have existed in early modern Europe, or that at least given the utility of the label ‘atheist’ as an accusatory mechanism in slandering one’s enemies, it did not necessarily actually exist were it was identified by the theologians attacking it.

⁴⁰³ David Wootton, ‘Unbelief in Early Modern Europe’, *History Workshop Journal*, (1985) Vol.20, p.86.

Under the terms of this definition the behaviour of the Muhammad of the polemic biographies, with his perversion of ‘true’ religion and employment of religion for political ends would certainly qualify. The behaviours of this Western version of Muhammad would also agree with Wootton’s observation that for the early modern theologian:

The quintessence of atheism was believed to be a combination of Epicureanism and Machiavellism: the pursuit of pleasure and power without fear of divine retribution...⁴⁰⁴

These qualities were the central matter of the early modern Christian depiction of Muhammad in the polemic biographies and, I would argue, also became central in the construction of representations of Muslim behaviour, including the behaviours of many Islamic characters on the English stage. Wootton also observes that during the period:

The link between atheism and immorality was believed to be so close that it was almost universally assumed that anyone who denied God’s providence must be immoral, and that, for the most part, immoral people were unbelievers – ‘practical atheists’ as they were called – for otherwise fear of punishment would restrain them from evildoing.⁴⁰⁵

The actions of Muhammad in the polemic biographies, and the subsequent depictions of the behaviours of Islamic characters in early modern drama, could

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p.86.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p.86.

also be seen as atheistic in an early modern conception as found in this definition. Mulleasses' prayer to 'Mahomet' in *The Turk* becomes in this sense an atheistic prayer, a prayer to remove morality in the name of ambition and the pursuit of such 'evildoing', and Islam becomes an inversion of the providential scheme of 'true' religion as viewed by Protestant theologians and, consequently an 'atheistic' faith.

The equivalence of the term 'atheism' with Islam in early modern England can be found in a tract of 1585, written by the anti-Catholic theologian and future master of St Johns College, Cambridge, William Whitaker. On the question of denial of the immaculate conception of Christ, Whitaker states that it is:

[...] flat Atheisme and Turkery [here meaning Islam] to denie that Chiste was borne of a virgine, I answere no Christiane can think otherwise but that it is indeed plain Atheisme⁴⁰⁶

Whitaker then goes on to say that if the 'Angels wordes rehearsed in *Saint Matthew*' (Matt I.v.23 '*Beholde a virgine shall conceive* ') cannot be used as a suitable proof then 'may Turkes, Iewes, Atheists and wicked heretickes indeed at their pleasure not onlie dispute against this article of faith, but also condemne it.'⁴⁰⁷

Whitaker's connection of 'Atheisme' and 'Turkery' in the matter of denying the immaculate conception demonstrates either his ignorance of the fact that belief in

⁴⁰⁶ William Whitaker, *An Answer to a certaine booke, written by Maister William Rainolds student of divinitie in the English College at Rhemes and intituled, A refutation of sundrie reprehensions, cauels, &c. By William Whitaker, professour of Diuinitie in the Uniuersity of Cambridge* (London: Eliot's Court Press, 1585), p.160.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.161.

the virgin birth of Jesus ('Isa' in Islam) is actually an article of Muslim faith, the degree to which 'Turkery' as term of general religious invective had become confused and paralleled with atheism, or more likely both.

The inclusion of Muslims within the category of unbelievers in early modern English Protestant thought can be seen in the title of Philip Sidney's translation of Philip de Mornay's *A woorke concerning the trewness of the Christian religion* (1587), which is described in its subtitle as being written 'against atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and other infidels.'⁴⁰⁸ In Henry Smith's very popular *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593) an entire chapter is devoted to proving 'the Religion of Mahomet to be a false and wicked Religion,'⁴⁰⁹ and concludes that Islam is 'a wicked, carnall, absurd, and false Religion, proceeding from a proud spirit, and humane subtill, and corrupt inuention,'⁴¹⁰ demonstrating once again that Islam fitted under the definition of atheism operating during the early modern period and that Islam as a religion had its roots in the political ambitions of the 'proud spirit' Muhammad.

This connection of Islam, atheism and Machiavellian politics can also be seen displayed in the sixth satire *Contra Saturnistam* in William Rankins' *Seaven*

⁴⁰⁸ Philippe de Mornay, *A vvoorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion, written in French: against atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and other infidels. By Philip of Mornay Lord of Plessie Marlie. Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding* (London: John Charlewood and George Robinson for Thomas Cadman, 1587), Title page.

⁴⁰⁹ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: John Danter, 1593), Title page. The enduring popularity of this text is attested to by its receiving reprints in 1604, 1609, 1611, 1614, 1617, 1622 and as late as 1656.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Sig.K4.

Satyres (1598). In the context of decrying Saturnian or melancholic types Rankins sites 'reaching Politicians'⁴¹¹ as an example and goes on to describe them as taking the atheistic position of 'Urging that nature all the world hath fram'd /Affirming God in things is needlesse nam'd.'⁴¹² Rankins proceeds to relate how these politicians are figures:

That take a pride in damned *Machiaule*,
And study his disciples to be thought:
Allowing all deedes be they neu'r so vile.
Such as haue hell-borne *Atheisme* taught,
Accounting scripture customes that are naught.

This rejection of scripture and embracing of the teachings of the atheistic 'Machiavile' is then related directly to Islam as Rankins concludes that 'Such as are earnest Turks, where is a Turke/ And call the *Alcharon* a godly worke.'⁴¹³ In this formulation, as in other texts examined here, Islam stands as a clear analogue of the atheistic and the Machiavellian, a status which I would argue derives from the perceptions of Muhammad found in the polemic biographies and which would form a vital factor in constructing the Machiavellian Islamic character of the early modern stage.

⁴¹¹ William Rankins, *Seauen satyres applyed to the weeke including the worlds ridiculous follies. True faelicity described in the phoenix. Maulgre. Whereunto is annexed the wandring satyre. By W. Rankins, Gent* (London: Edward Allde for William Ferbrand, 1598), p.16.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

‘Daring God out of Heaven’: The Turk as Atheist in Robert Greene’s *Selimus*

Critical examinations of the depiction of atheism on the early modern stage have frequently focused on the work of Christopher Marlowe, and in particular on the final scenes of *2 Tamburlaine* (1587-8). The famous description included by Robert Greene in *Peremides the Blacksmith* (1588) of Marlowe ‘daring God out of heaven with that Atheist Tamburlan’⁴¹⁴ and the numerous biographical details relating to Marlowe’s own atheism in contemporary documents have resulted in a series of readings, produced through the prism of authorial biographical details, combined with an ahistorical Islam and which have argued for Tamburlaine’s destruction of the *Qur’ān* and the other ‘superstitious books’ relating to ‘that Mahomet/ who I have thought a God’ (*2 Tamburlaine*, I (iii), ll.173-5), as analogues of an atheistic rejection of Christ, *the Bible* and providence in a Christian context.

In this thesis I will not be examining the *Tamburlaine* plays in this way. Instead, analysis of this scene of renunciation will be placed in a later section, where it will be read in the context of the perceptions of the role of divine providence in relation to Islam in the early modern period. Rather than focusing on what will later be discussed as the ambiguous and highly questionable statement of atheism in *2 Tamburlaine*, this section will examine instead, in the context of the relationship between atheism, Islam and the political use of religion, a play which depicts a Muslim figure making an unambiguous declaration of materialist

⁴¹⁴ Robert Greene, *Perimedes the blacke-smith* (London: John Wolfe, for Edward White, 1588), Sig.A3.

atheism: *The Tragedy of Selimus Emperor of the Turks* (pr.1594).⁴¹⁵ The play is usually attributed to Robert Greene,⁴¹⁶ the very man who accused Marlowe of ‘daring God out of heaven’ through the ‘atheistic’ speeches of Tamburlaine, and in the opening speech its eponymous anti-hero Selimus goes much further than *Tamburlaine* in placing a statement of atheism on the stage. This analysis will seek to determine the significance of the placing of this atheistic speech in the mouth of a Turkish figure and also to examine the significance of the materialist use of religion made by Muhammad in the polemic biographies as a frame to the location of this atheist analysis of religion in the speech of a Muslim character.

The play dramatises the rise of Selimus, based on the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (reigned 1512-20), and depicts, amongst other atrocities, the betrayal and murder of his father Bajazet (based on Bajazet I) and of his two older brothers Acomat and Corcut in order to secure the Ottoman throne for himself. In its Senecan form as a tragedy of blood and betrayal the play is conventional enough in its depiction of Turkish behaviour and as Matthew Dimmock observes, the play attributes to Selimus, and his brother Acomat, ‘conventional vices of the Ottomans’, in Selimus’ case ‘greed and betrayal.’ Yet *Selimus* also adds another vice to the character, perhaps even more unforgivable to an early modern audience, and

⁴¹⁵ All quotations in this analysis will be taken from the version included in: Daniel J. Vitkus (ed.), *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁴¹⁶ The play was originally attributed to Greene by A.S. Grosart, but there has been much controversy surrounding its authorship. For a discussion of attribution see: Peter Berek, ‘*Lochrine* revised, *Selimus*, and Early Modern Responses to *Tamburlaine*’, *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 23, (1980), pp.33-54; Irving Ribner, ‘Greene’s Attack on Marlowe: Some Light on *Alphonsus* and *Selimus*,’ *Studies in Philology* 52 (1955), pp.162-71. Daniel Vitkus, the most recent editor of the play, commented that, ‘I believe that Grosart and his supporters are correct. The play exhibits both a form and a content that is consistent with Greene’s other writings, and so I will assume that Greene is at least the main author of the play’ [‘Introduction’ in Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays*, p.17]. For the purposes of this discussion, where authorship is less vital than the content and context, I will also accept this attribution.

which would have connected and underpinned his other sins of worldliness and treachery in the minds of early modern English Christians: atheism.⁴¹⁷ In the decision to depict the career of Selim I Greene chose a highly recognisable figure from the Ottoman dynasty. Selim I, the great-grandfather of the Murad III, the reigning Sultan at the time of the play,⁴¹⁸ had been responsible for the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Middle East and North Africa, including the conquest of Egypt in 1517. This series of expansions had given the Turks control of Jerusalem and the Holy cities of Islam, making them the pre-eminent force in the Islamic world and possible contenders for the title of caliph or, at the very least, making them protectors of the Holy places of Islam.⁴¹⁹ Selim was also remembered for his cruelty and treachery, through the murder of his father and brothers. Greene seems to have taken for his sources Peter Ashtons's translation of Paolo Giovio's *Comentarii della cose de Turchi* (Florence, 1531) and Thomas Newton's translation of Augustino Curione's *Sarracenicæ Historiæ libri III* (Basle, 1567),⁴²⁰ and although subsequent historians have questioned the historical veracity of the play's events, including the murder of his father, the details of his betrayal of Bejazet II were not controversial in regards to the image of Selim I at the time. The introductory poem to the section on Selim I in Richard Knolles *Historie of the Turks* (1603) reiterates his infamy by describing him as

⁴¹⁷ Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.173.

⁴¹⁸ The play's subtitle mistakenly calls Selimus 'grandfather to him that now reigneth.'

⁴¹⁹ The adoption of the caliphal title has been disputed on the grounds that the Ottoman family had no blood tie to the prophet Muhammad and that the caliph al-Mutawakkil was also allowed to return to Cairo and continued his duties until 1543. See: Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 1 – The Empire of the Gazis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.85.

⁴²⁰ Peter Ashton, *A shorte treatise vpon the Turkes chronicles, compyled by Paulus Iouius byshop of Nucerne, and dedicated to Charles the. v. Emperour. Drawen oute of the Italyen tong in to Latyne, by Franciscus Niger Bassianates. And translated out of Latyne into englysh by Peter Ashton* (London: Edwarde Whitchurche, 1546); Thomas Newton, *A notable historie of the Saracens* (London: William How, for Abraham Veale, 1575). See Vitkus, p.18.

‘Selymus, in crueltie exceeding others farre’ who ‘His father, and his brethren both, destroyed with mortall warre.’⁴²¹

The speech which forms the core of this discussion of atheism in the play occurs in Scene 2 and introduces Selimus to the audience as a violent, devious and, most importantly, faithless, tyrant (both in a political and religious sense), achieving this effect, as Irving Ribner observed, by demonstrating that ‘he embraces a philosophy which is contrary to Elizabethan moral law’ and ‘accepts doctrines which the age considered to emanate from Satan.’⁴²² In a brief examination of the play in the context of the place of atheism and religious scepticism in early modern English thought, Jonathan Dollimore comments that the speech is ‘a fascinating discourse on atheism and one which takes up the debate on the ideological dimension of religion’, also observing that it contains a ‘parodic version of the dominant order’ of the time.⁴²³ As far as it goes this is certainly the case, yet neither Dollimore nor Ribner questions the placing of these concepts in the mouth of a Muslim figure *per se*. By ignoring Selimus’ religious identity as a Muslim ‘Turk’ these critics miss the possibility of relating of the speech’s expression of atheistic sentiments, which identify religion as a tool of policy, with the representations of Muhammad in the polemic biographies as a Machiavellian manipulator of religion in securing political power.

⁴²¹ Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes* (London: Adam Islip, 1603), p.498.

⁴²² Irving Ribner, ‘Greene’s Attack on Marlowe: Some Light on *Alphonsus* and *Selimus*,’ *Studies in Philology* 52 (1955), p.169.

⁴²³ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p.85.

The speech begins with Selimus encouraging himself to ‘Nourish the coals of thine ambitious fire’ (II, l.5) and advancing his opinion that ‘empire is most sure/ When men for fear thy tyranny endure’ (II, l.6-7). From this beginning Selimus commits himself to ‘seek with sword whole kingdoms to displace’ (II, l.11) and then enters into his attack on religion and conventional morality:

Let Mahound’s laws be locked up in their case,
And meaner men of baser spirit
In virtuous actions seek for glorious merit.
I count it sacrilege for to be holy
Or reverence this threadbare name of “good.”

(II, l.11-16)

a statement which led Irving Ribner to compare the figure of Selimus to John Milton’s Satan in *Paradise Lost*, in that he ‘accepts evil for his good’, producing an inversion of conventional Christian morality. Selimus goes on to reiterate his intent to advance himself ‘By slaughter, treason, or what else thou can’ (II, l.20) and to ‘scorn religion’ as something which ‘disgraces man’ (II, l.21), stating that against the arguments of his ‘schoolmen’ (II, l.69) and ‘their bookish ordinance’ (II, l.70) he will ‘arm my heart with irreligion’ (II, l.74). As Dimmock points out, ‘Theological refutations such as these remain ostensibly tied to the assumed Islamic nature – and hence – faithlessness – of the central protagonists,’ with Islamic identity providing the explanation of the atheistic sentiments of the character. Yet, as Dimmock observes, Selimus’ rejection of Muhammad removes ‘any specific anchor to such a context’; in other words Selimus is atheistic because he is a Muslim, yet his atheism erases this very religious identity.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁴ Dimmock, p.173.

Although Selimus, as Dimmock points out, actually rejects Muhammad, within the early modern Christian conception of the prophet of Islam contained in the polemic biographies it could be argued that he also echoes him. In the rest of Selimus' speech rejecting religion it is possible to identify echoes of the political manipulation of religion by Muhammad depicted in the polemic biographies, a factor which makes possible the expression of the ideas contained in Selimus' soliloquy in the context of the restrictions imposed upon such ideas on the Elizabethan stage. As Nicholas Davidson points out in his analysis of atheism in relation to Marlowe's work, government censorship of works dealing with religious themes was a serious restriction on the playwrights and publishers of the period. Soon after the accession of Elizabeth I in 1559 a royal proclamation dealing with 'common Interludes' instructed that all such performances be licensed by town majors and local officials and that none should be allowed 'wherin either matters of religion or of the gouernance of the estate of the common weale shalbe handled or treated.'⁴²⁵

Davidson relates how these restrictions were tightened during the 1570s and 1580s until a new licensing system for publications was introduced in 1586 which required that authors secure the approval of the archbishop of Canterbury or the bishop of London before going to press, and also describes a further complaint on 12 December 1589 that some theatrical companies had included in their plays 'certen matters of Divinytie and of State unfit to be suffred,' leading the Privy Council to rule that all plays should be reviewed through the offices of the Lord Mayor of London, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the

⁴²⁵ Cited in: E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol.IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p.263.

Master of the Revels who were to 'stryke out or reforme suche partes and matters as they shall fynd unfytt and undecent to be handled in plays, bith for Dininitie and State.'⁴²⁶

The first performances of *Selimus* are estimated by Vitkus to be in c.1588, soon after the first staging of the *Tamburlaine* plays in the winter of 1587-8, plays of which *Selimus* is stylistically a 'heavy-handed imitation.'⁴²⁷ *Selimus* was published in 1594, yet despite its incendiary atheistic content it passed the restrictions imposed on stage plays regarding religious and political content and this could well be due to the fact that the atheistic views expressed in the key speech are ventriloquised through a Turkish figure.

Continuing his justification for rebellion against his father in his opening speech Selimus does refer to a god as creator of earth as he describes, 'When first this circled round, this building fair, / Some god took out of the confused mass' (2, ll.75-6). But then he rejects any specific idea of god, and consequently any particular religion, with his addition of 'What god I do not know, or greatly care' (2, l.77). Selimus speaks of a time after creation, a Golden age such as that found in Hesiod's *Works and Days* or Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, when:

Everyone his life in peace did pass.
War was not then and riches were not known
And no man said, "This, or this, is mine own."

(II, ll.78-80)

⁴²⁶ Nicholas Davidson, 'Marlowe and Atheism' in: Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (eds.), *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), p.131.

⁴²⁷ Vitkus, 'Introduction' in *Three Turk Plays*, p.18.

Selimus goes on to describe the emergence of a social order with a demarcation of territory, the cultivation of the earth and the development of trade, referring to the 'bark' on the seas, highlighting a particular preoccupation of the early modern period - particularly in reference to the East.

In the period before the emergence of a social order Selimus' states that 'There needed them no judge, nor yet no law/ Nor any king of whom to stand in awe' (2, ll. 86-7), and marks the coming of 'Ninus, warlike Belus' son' (2, l.88), referring to the classical tale of the foundation of Ninevah, as the time when 'the sacred name of king' (2, l.90) had its foundation and consequently the need arose for a method fixing 'things that were as common as the day' to their 'set possessors' (2, l. l.91-2).

It is at this point that Selimus makes his definitive statement of the roots of religion, stating how, in his view the founders of the social order:

Established laws and holy rites
To maintain peace and govern bloody fights.
Then some sage man, above the common wise,
Knowing that laws could not in quiet dwell,
Unless they were observed, did first devise
The names of gods, religion, heaven and hell
And 'gan of pains and feigned rewards to tell

(II, ll.93-98)

In this statement relegating the underpinnings of religion to the status of a metaphysical 'carrot and stick' instituted for the purpose of social control, Selimus goes further in deconstructing and rejecting religion *per se* than Marlowe's Tamburlaine ever does. In the next line Selimus states that religion is meant to produce a system where people believe that there would be, 'Pains for those which did neglect the law; /Rewards for those that lived in quiet awe' (II, ll.100-1). Selimus rounds off his speech with a statement of his position that all the ideas of religion are 'mere fictions' and, in a show of theological bravado, that 'if they were not, Selim thinks they were' (II, l.103), and makes his definitive comment on religion as political tool of social control as he states that he considers:

...those religious observations

Only bugbears to keep the world in fear

And make men quietly a yoke to bear 105

So that religion (of itself a fable)

Was only found to make us peaceable.⁴²⁸

(II, l.103-107)

concluding of religion that it is 'but a policy/ To keep the quiet of society' (II, l.114-5). It is this vital point about the association of religion as 'policy' which connects the statements of Selimus in his atheistic speech to the Muhammad of the polemic

⁴²⁸ Selimus' rejection of religion also echoes some of the statements attributed to Marlowe by those who accused him of atheism, most strikingly those contained in the 'note' of Richard Baines against 'Marley and his blasphemeyes' in which he spoke of Marlowe's 'damnable iudgement of religion and scorn of Gods word', particularly the statement that Marlowe held the belief that, 'the first beginning of Religionn was only to keep men in awe' ; a position which seems clearly reproduced in Selimus's speech [Frederick S. Boas (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), cxiii].

biographies, and this includes the version contained in one of the play's sources: Thomas Newton's *A notable historie of the Saracens*.

In his analysis of the play Daniel Vitkus, as with Matthew Dimmock, is far more astute than earlier critics in recognizing the importance of Selimus' religious identity in the positioning of the contents of this speech. As Vitkus rightly observes:

For Elizabethan theatergoers, these lines would have been disturbingly transgressive, providing electrifying moments for the audience, who gasped to hear such fearless defiance of divine law, and became increasingly uneasy later in the play as Selimus' sins went unpunished.⁴²⁹

Although the play does not provide a providential 'payoff' for the character of Selimus (which was possibly planned for the never-produced sequel) Vitkus comments that, despite these anxieties, 'it was easier for an English audience to countenance the staging of such sin when it came from an Islamic character' given that 'The English stage had a long tradition of representing Middle Eastern tyrants who blustered and boasted of their wrongdoing.' Yet Vitkus also points out that in the case of Selimus 'his lack of moral principle were affiliated with a clear and present danger to Christendom' in the form of the Ottoman Empire and

⁴²⁹ Vitkus, 'Introduction' in *Three Turk Plays*, p.22. The transgressive nature of this speech may well account for the attribution of a practically identical speech to Walter Raleigh, under the title of 'Certain hellish verses', as evidence during his 1610 trial for treason, in which his atheism was made a factor in his treachery. See: Jean Jaquot, 'Raleigh's "Hellish Verses" and the "Tragicall Raigne of Selimus', *MLR*, Volume XLVIII, No.1, January (1953), pp.1-9.

so 'he could not be mocked as lightheartedly or dismissed as easily as a bogey from long ago and far away, such as Herod or a Canbyses.'⁴³⁰

Yet although Selimus does indeed resemble medieval models such as the Herod of the mystery plays (who also swore by 'Mahoun'), and also more recent violent 'Islamic' dramatic figures such as Marlowe's Tamburlaine, there is also a connection between Selimus' character, his observations about religion and the figure of Muhammad that emerges from the polemic biographies of the medieval and early modern period. As shown earlier, the polemic biographies almost uniformly depict Muhammad's creation of a new religion as being motivated by political ends, the whole construction of Islam being depicted as aiming towards eliminating dissent (often centering on the low social status of the prophet, his epilepsy or the forbidding of discussion of his 'law') or winning converts through the creation of a syncretic theological system. This view of the creation of Islam can be seen clearly stated in the version of the polemic biography included in Newton's *A notable historie of the Saracens*, one of the principal sources for

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p.22. Selimus' rejection of religion also does not follow the pattern of disappointed providential belief generally found in medieval depictions of Muslim rulers in medieval texts. Muslim leaders in the *chanson se geste*, *The Sowdowne of Babylone*, Greene's own Amuracke in *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* or, as I shall discuss later, Bajazet in *Tamburlaine* (Pt. I) reject their religion in defeat; Selimus is at the beginning of his ascent when his speech is given; as aspect of Tamburlaine's rejection of Islam which will be discussed later. Selimus 'daring' of 'God out of heaven' seems rather to stem from a materialist analysis of the origins of religion as a method of social control a statement which seems to uncannily prefigure Marx's comments from *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844) that:

The foundation of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man [...] But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man* – state, society. This state and this society produce religion.

[From: Joseph J. O'Malley (ed.), *Marx: Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.57.]

As Irving Ribner points out, Selimus' speech contains 'a catalogue of the ideas associated with Elizabethan atheism, free thought and pseudo-Machiavellianism.' [Ribner, p.169].

Selimus. Newton's version, having opened with its definition of Muslims as 'the professed enemies of Christianitie, ye contemners & destroyers of all humanitye, relygion and learning',⁴³¹ goes on to describe the 'first beginning and originall',⁴³² of Islam with 'their first péeuish prophet.'⁴³³ In his version Newton describes how Muhammad's 'ambitious and haultie mynde, gaped wythout measure. after promocion and authoritie' and proceeds to describe how this political ambition lead to him:

[...] consydering in hys mynde this great varietie of Sectes, hée was merueilously enflamed with a desyre to establishe and make one manner of religion, and to take vnto him as well the Soueraigntie of Empyre, as also of diuine honour.⁴³⁴

Newton then provides the standard diegesis in which Muhammad achieves all of these goals through his 'wit and towardnes',⁴³⁵ as well as a good measure of violence. This depiction of Muhammad's own materialist approach to religion has him occupy the role of 'practical atheist' even in the polemic biographies where he is not explicitly referred to as an atheist (as in the example of Fletcher's version discussed earlier).

In this version of the creation of Islam Muhammad can be seen to occupy position which replicates that of the 'sage man, above the common wise' (II, 1.95) in *Selimus*' atheist analysis of the origins of religion; just as the originator of religion in *Selimus*' speech creates religion as 'a policy/ To keep the quiet of society' (II, 1.1 14-5), so Muhammad in

⁴³¹ Thomas Newton, *A notable historie of the Saracens* (London: William How, for Abraham Veale, 1575), Sig.C.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, Title page.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5.

the diegesis of the creation of Islam in the polemic biographies institutes his own faith in order to achieve social control and to secure the obedience of his people. Given the multiple repetitions of this representation of the creation of Islam in the polemic biographies, this could well explain the diminution of the shock value of the atheistic content of *Selimus* by its placement in the speeches of a Muslim Turk, and a particularly notorious one at that. In this sense, although Selimus rejects Islam as part of his materialist analysis, he also echoes the intentions and actions of Muhammad in instituting the religion, as perceived in the Western Christian traditions regarding the prophet.

II

SEXUALITY AND GENDER

In the constructions of representations of Islam in the medieval and early modern periods, as indeed in many modern discursive formulations, the matters of sexuality and gender, and of Islam as a religion of the flesh which mistreated women, were central. In constructing this aspect of Muslim identity the themes of Islamic polygamy and divorce, homosexuality (both male and female) and the perceived worldliness of the Islamic paradise were centres of focus for Christian commentators. This perception of a 'seductive' and fleshly religion was a vital matter in the generation of Christian anxiety about the temptations of conversion, the possibility of Christians 'turning Turk.' As with the construction of other perceived aspects of Muslim identity and behaviour, many of these ideas about the place of sexuality within Islam and its cultures traced themselves back to perceptions and representations of Muhammad in the polemic biographies and ideas about the way in which Islam had initially been spread through appeals to the desires of the Arabians and its ideas formed through the lascivious disposition of Muhammad and his status as both sexual and religious 'seducer'.

‘Like Prophet like people, and like religion’: The Sensuality of Muhammad, Muslims and Islam

In the version of Muhammad’s life found in Trevisa’s translation of Higden’s *Polychronicon* there is a description of Muhammad as seducer in the account of his marriage to Khadija. Higden describes how Muhammad:

[...] com to þe lady of þe province Corogonia þe lady heet Cadygan and somdel wiþ spices þat he brought, wiþ wicchecraft, and wiþ faire wordes, he made þe lady so mad and so nyce þat sche worschipped hym as þe grettest prophete...⁴³⁶

Here Muhammad becomes the prototype of the Oriental seducer, using drugs, witchcraft and charm to win her over. In this version of the story of the ‘lady of Corozan’ the seduction of Khadija (Cadygan) is also given a political purpose, as it describes how ‘It is þe usage of þat province to be ruled also by wommen’, so that when he married ‘þe wymmen þat was quene’ he was able to become ‘lord of þe province.’ The political motivations of Muhammad’s rules on marriage are also made plain in Higden’s text as he describes how Muhammad ‘to brynge þe peple þat was bygiled þe faster in snarl’ legislated (or received revelations) which ensures that ‘what he knewe þat was most plesynge to manis likynge’ would be

⁴³⁶ Ranulf Higden, *The Universal Chronical...*, p.23. This accusation of seduction through witchcraft can be seen repeated exactly three hundred years later by Alexander Ross in the appendix to his *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649) where he states Muhammad had ‘insinuated’ himself :

[...] into the favour of his Mistris Ajissa, by Presents of rare Toys, procured in his Travels, by them, or through Sorcery (of which he was held guilty, and laboureth to purge himself in his Alcoran) so charmed her affection, that of her slave, he was advanced to be Lord both of her Person and Fortunes. (‘THE LIFE and DEATH OF MAHOMET, THE Prophet of the Turks, and Author OF THE ALCORAN’, iii)

This quotation is actually taken from the 1689 edition, showing that the story had an even longer shelf life.

‘ordeyned for lawe.’ Higden then describes the rule on polygamy, which takes a central place in the majority of the medieval and early modern texts, saying that Muhammad:

[...] ordeyned þat a man schulde have as many wifes and concubynes as he myght susteyne wiþ his catel. Also þat a man myghte have the wifes of his owne kynrede anon to þe noumbre of foure.⁴³⁷

Here, as in later texts, incest is added to the description of polygamy to create a more shocking effect for a Christian readership, as would the detail that men could ‘have as meny concubinus as a wolde’ of women who were prisoners.

The version contained in William Caxton’s 1483 edition of Jacobus de Voragine’s *Golden Legend* has Muhammad exploiting his status as prophet in order to pursue other men’s wives and, although not mentioning the names, seems to repeat the story of Zayd and Zaynab. The text describes how:

[...] machomete said that thaungel gabryel had shewed to hym that it was graunted to hym of our lord that he myght goo to other mennes wyues / for to engendre men of vertu and prophetes...⁴³⁸

then relating how ‘one of hys seruauntes had a fayre wyf’ who he ‘defended and forbadde’ from speaking to Muhammad. When the ‘servant’ finds his wife talking

⁴³⁷ Higden, p.27.

⁴³⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, William Caxton (ed.), *Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive, Lombardica historia* [Golden Legend] (London: William Caxton, 1483), No page numbers.

with Muhammad the text describes how he ‘put hyr from hym’, and goes on to relate that ‘machomete receyued hyr and sette hyr emonge hys other wyues.’ The text then goes on to suggest scandal, as it tells of how Muhammad ‘doubted the murmure of the peple’, at which point he:

[...] fayned that a wrytyng was sente to hym fro heuen / in whiche was wryton yf ony man repudyed his wyf / that he that receyued hir shold haue hyr to hys wyf / whyche thyng the sarasyns kepe for a lawe vnto thys day...

A statement which demonstrates the perception of Muhammad’s opportunistic employment of prophecy to fulfil his own sexual desires.

The association of Islam with worship of Venus, as seen in the work of John of Damascus, discussed above, was another technique which survived into later medieval and early modern texts as a means to connote the sexual profligacy of Islam. Higden in his *Polychronicon* begins his account, in the version from MS. Harl. 2261, locating ‘Machometus the fals prophete’ in the reign of ‘Heraclius’ and going on to comment that:

The fader and moder of Machometus dedde, he was norischede in his infancy by his uncle, servynge ydolatry with the peple of Araby, ȝiffen specially to the synne of lechery.⁴³⁹

The Trevisa translation of the same text states that the Muhammad ‘yaf him specialliche to worshippe Venus’, here using the Roman goddess of love to suggest the sensuality of the foundations of Islam, and Muhammad as a man especially given over to ‘synne of lechery.’ Both translations agree with John of Damascus that this is the reason for the Muslim holy day being a Friday, which was in Roman religious tradition the day devoted to Venus.

The Caxton edition of the *Golden Legend* is almost identical in locating Muhammad as being ‘vnder the gouernaunce of his vncler / and by longe tyme adoured thydolles with the peple of arabye’ and repeats the idea found in Higden that:

Al the peple of arabye wyth machomete worshypped Venus for a goddessse / & therof cometh it / that the sarasyns holde the fryday in grete honoure / lyke as the Iewes doon the satyrday / and cristen men the sonday⁴⁴⁰

This observation once again manages to highlight the idolatrous background of Arab people, and, of course, of Muhammad, and at the same time suggests their

⁴³⁹ Higden, *Polychronicon*, in: John Taylor (ed.), *The ‘Universal Chronicle’ of Ranulf Higden* (London: Clarendon Press, 1966), p.21. Ironically the Trevisa version of Higden translates this comment on Muhammad’s idolatry by saying that ‘he worschipped *mawmetrie* [my italics]’, using a common term from idolatry which actually derived from Muhammad’s name.

⁴⁴⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive, Lombardica historia* (London: William Caxton, 1483), Sig. Y.

lustful nature, through imputing to them the worship of Venus; both of these can be found almost unchanged in early modern versions of the polemic biography.

An example of this survival can be seen in Meredith Hanmer's *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586). Hanmer states that the Muslim Holy day is a Friday 'in honour of Venus, the Goddess of Arabia' and goes on to present Muhammad, once again acting in the interests of increasing his political power, as instituting this day for worship 'thereby the rather to win that country people', and concluding with a comment on the fitting nature of this selection, commenting that 'so it may verie well be, for most of his religion standeth upon venerie.'⁴⁴¹ Hanmer later repeats this version of the reason for the Muslim holy day when he comments that:

The Arabians received and learned of the Indians, to worship the Goddess Venus, Mahomet confirmed the same with a lawe so that in the honour of Venus, the Saracens, to this day [...] keepe Friday for their Sabbath.⁴⁴²

He concludes with another salacious accusation regarding the attire of Muslim pilgrims during Ramadan, stating that that Muhammad commanded:

[...] Men and women yearely to worship in the Temple at Mecha all naked, excepting a brieche or apporne to cover that which nature commanded to be kept in secrecy.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586), Sig.C2.

⁴⁴² Ibid., Sig.C6-7.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., Sig.C7.

John Foxe in *Acts and Monuments* describes how ‘This devilish Mahomet’ had ‘seduced the people’⁴⁴⁴, using the sexualised metaphor to describe the deceptive methods of Muhammad in securing the spread of Islam, a metaphor which, as I will show, was repeated many times. George Whetstone in *The English mirror* (1586) also describes how Muhammad’s ‘wicked law tollerated al carnal vices without controlement’ and goes on to describe how ‘he was strengthened with the multitude, and such as were seduced with his false perswasions’, observing also that ‘there ioyned with him all the vicious and carnal men.’⁴⁴⁵ General descriptions of the concupiscent nature of Islam and its prophet can be found in comments such as that in the John Pory translation of Leo Africanus’ *A geographical historie of Africa* (1600) where the religion is described as ‘permitting all that which was plausible to sense and the flesh’ and goes on to describe how it ‘looseth the bridle to the flesh, which is a thing acceptable to the greatest part of men.’⁴⁴⁶ This version of Leo Africanus also makes reference to Avicenna who ‘though he were a Mahumetan’ (as indeed was Leo originally):

[...] writeth thus of such a law: *Lex nostra* (saith he) *quam de dit Mahumeth, &c.* that is to say, *Our Law, which Mahumet gaue vs, regardeth the disposition of felicitie or miserie, according to the body.*⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

⁴⁴⁵ George Whetstone, *The English mirror* (London: 1586), p.58.

⁴⁴⁶ Leo Africanus, John Pory (trans.), *A geographical historie of Africa*, (London: 1600), p.381. This statement is repeated in almost identical terms in Edward Grimstone’s translation of Pierre d’ Avity’s *The estates, empires, & principallities of the world* (London: 1615), where it describes Islam as ‘allowing all that was pleasing to the sence and flesh’ (p.1067) and as giving ‘libertie to the flesh wherein most men take delight.’ (p.1067).

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.381.

Relating how Avicenna also observed that:

[...] *there is another promise, which concerneth the minde, or the soule: which wise Diuines had a farre greater desire to apprehend, then that of the body, which though it be giuen vnto them, yet respect they it not, nor hold it in any estimation, in comparison of that felicitie which is a coniunction with truth.*⁴⁴⁸

Here there seems to be a double appeal to authenticity as the Muslim convert to Christianity Leo cites the Muslim philosopher Ibn Sina (known on the West as Avicenna) in support of the reasoned and ascetic spirituality of Christianity against the sensual, physical and sexual preoccupations of Islam.

Other early modern polemic biographies dwell more specifically on the sexual incontinence or deviance of Muhammad himself. Henry Smith in *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593) presents what is undoubtedly the one of the most extreme representations of Muhammad's sexual behaviour in any in the early modern texts examined here.

Opening with an observation that, 'like Prophet like people, and like religion',⁴⁴⁹ Smith places the roots of Islamic sensuality firmly in the figure Muhammad himself. Smith then goes on to describe how:

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p.381.

⁴⁴⁹ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.K1.

[...] Mahomet himselfe was such a fleshly fellow, as that though modest eares are both to heare, yet because the filthines of this Prophet may not bée concealed, I must vtter it: hée committed buggerie with an Asse...⁴⁵⁰

This is undoubtedly the most outrageous of all the claims made in the early modern polemic biographies that I have examined, and it seems to have no precursors (besides a vague association in the ‘animal tricks’ connected with revelation), although Smith credits the unlikely candidate of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* amongst his sources.

Having delivered this shocking overture to his commentary Smith moves on to more familiar ground as he describes how:

[...] hee committed adulterie with an other mans wife, that vppon displeasure was from her husband, and when hée perceiued the murmur of the people, he feigned that hée had receiued a paper from heauen, wherein it was permitted him so to doe, to the ende hee might beget Prophets and worthie men...⁴⁵¹

Here Smith refers to the controversial hadith story of Zaid and Zaynab, which was also included in the Caxton translation of de Voragine’s *Golden Legend*.⁴⁵² Smith goes on to describe the prodigious sexual appetite of Muhammad as he describes how:

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., K1.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., Sig.K1.

⁴⁵² See, Appendix I (p.457) for a version of this story included in the work of early commentator John of Damascus and above p.209-10 for the Caxton/de Voragine version; the story also reccurs in George Sandys’ *Relation of journey* (1615).

[...] Mahomet [...] had fortie wiues, and further he gloryed of himselfe, that it was giuen him from aboue to excéde tenne men (saith Cleonard) fiftie men (saith Antoninus) in carnall lust and venery.⁴⁵³

Here Smith connects vastly exaggerated figures for Muhamamd's number of wives⁴⁵⁴ to his lustful nature and then goes on to repeat the citing of Avicenna found in Pory's translation of Leo Africanus regarding Muhammad's ignoring of 'the wise and sages of old' in privileging the happiness over the body over that of the soul, concluding that 'his paradise & doctrine is such, as there séemeth smal difference betwéen Epicurism, Atheisme, & Mahometisme.'⁴⁵⁵

In *The preachers trauels* (1611) John Cartwright, who would have had the opportunity to discover the truth first-hand during his time in the East, is content to repeat the calumnies of the past as he describes how Muhammad:

[...] himselfe in his Alcoran confesseth himselfe to be a sinner, an idolator, an adulterer, and inclined to women aboue measure, and that in such vnciuil termes, as I am ashamed to repeate.⁴⁵⁶

He is not so ashamed as to desist from elaborating on his point, however, and he goes on to describe how Muhammad's 'promises to all such as call vpon him faithfully, are meere carnal and earthly, such as I am ashamd to name, being fit for none but

⁴⁵³Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists*, Sig.K1. I was unable to identify the Cleonard refered to as a source here, but Antoninus is probably Antoninus of Florence, a fifteenth century Cistercian who wrote a history of the World. See: 'Antoninus of Florence', David Hugh Farmer (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴⁵⁴In fact Muhammad had eleven or thirteen wives, depending on different authorities.

⁴⁵⁵Smith., Sig.K2.

⁴⁵⁶John Cartwright, *The preachers trauels*, (London: 1611), p.103.

Heliogabalus, and Sardanapalus.⁴⁵⁷ His being 'ashamd' does not curb him as he then describes how:

His precepts are indulgent to periury, giuing leaue to haue as many wiues as a man will, to couple themselues not only with one of the same sex, but with bruit bEasts also: to spoile one anothers goods, and none to be accused vnder foure witnesses.⁴⁵⁸

Here Cartwright manages to include unlimited polygamy, dishonesty, homosexuality, bestiality (as with Smith) and violence as central precepts of Islam; and this from a man who had actually visited the Islamic world and had contact with Muslims, which must suggest the extent to which his account would have been seen as authentic by readers at home, and also how little experience through travel had altered the prejudices he brought with him from the domestic traditions.

Other typical descriptions of Muhammad and of Islam include those of Peter Haylyn in *A little description of the great world* (1625) where he describes among 'The causes of the deplorable increase and continuance of his irreligious Religion' the 'sensuall liberty allowed of hauing variety of wiues.'⁴⁵⁹ Haylyn also provides a short portrait of Muhammad himself, which unites physical repulsiveness with spiritual and moral degeneracy, describing him as having been:

⁴⁵⁷ The references to these two figures connect Muhammad to classical Eastern figures renowned for dissolute lifestyles. The Syrian born Roman emperor 'Heliogabalus' (Eglabalus), who was also the worshipper of a black stone which represented the Pheonicean Sun-god ('Heliogabalus', M.C. Hawatson and Ian Chilves (eds.), *The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)) and the mythical Syrian king Sardonapalus, also known from his wealth and sensuality ('Sardonapalus', Elizabeth Knowles (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)).

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p.104.

⁴⁵⁹ Peter Haylyn, *A little description of the great world* (London: 1625), p.617.

[...] of low stature, schald-headed, euill proportioned, and as euill conditioned; being naturally addicted to all villanies, infinitely theeuish, and insatiably leacherous.⁴⁶⁰

Once again in Haylyn's description it is possible to see the combination of villainy, dishonesty and sexual voracity which would mark so many stage 'Turks' in the early modern period, marking once again the importance of Muhammad as a proto-type, or as Daniel Vitkus termed it, 'Ur-Moor', for the production of these dramatic representations of Islamic figures.

In *A relation of a iourney* (1615) George Sandys, another man who had traveled extensively in the Muslim domains, relates a version of the polemic biography of this issue as similarly unregenerate as that of Cartwright. Sandys describes how Muhammad 'His new religion by little and little [...] divulged in *Mecha*; countenanced by the powerful alliance which he had by his sundry wives,' again presenting the link between Muhammad's sexual behaviour and his ambition, which does in some way link to the Muslim belief in Muhammad's multiple marriages and of polygamy in general as matters of cementing political alliances and social policy respectively. He then goes on to describe how Muhammad secured 'the following of many of the vulgar, allured with the libertie thereof, and delighted with the noveltie,'⁴⁶¹ repeating the common trope of relating the success of Islam to its granting of sexual licence. Sandys then alludes to the

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p.617.

⁴⁶¹ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of AEGypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning*, (London: Richard Field for W. Barrett, 1615), p.53.

story of Zaid and Zaynab, which was discussed in detail earlier in relation to John of Damascus' contribution to the polemic biography and also reoccurred in the version in Caxton's *Golden Legend* and in Henry Smith's *Gods arrow against atheists* (which is probably the more likely source for Sandys). Sandys describes Muhammad as 'Being naturally inclined to all villanies' and then claims that:

[...] amongst the rest [of his 'villanies'], so insatiably lecherous, that he countenanced his incontinency with a law: wherein he declared it, not only to be no crime to couple with whomsoever he liked, but an act of high honor to the partie, and infusing sanctitie.⁴⁶²

Here Sandys repeats the standard Christian interpretation of this story, which has Muhammad legislating and receiving revelation to satisfy his own carnal urges, a reading which, in this case, also seems to have occurred within Islam to some degree. Sandys, in his conclusion to his section on Islam, describes the '*Mahometan* religion' as:

[...] being derived from a person in life so wicked, so worldly in his projects, in his prosecutions of them so disloyal, treacherous, & cruel; being grounded upon fables and false revelations, repugnant to sound reason, & that wisdom which the Divine hand hath imprinted in his workes; alluring men with those enchantments of fleshly pleasures, permitted in this life and promised for the life ensuing [...] that neither it came from God [...] neither can bring them to God who follow it.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² Sandys, *Relation*, p.53.

⁴⁶³ Sandys, *Relation*, p.60.

This is as comprehensive a summary of early modern attitudes towards Islam and its prophet as any I have found in the texts I have examined.

‘What is more against nature than such lawes?’: Reactions to Islamic Rules on Polygamy, Divorce and Concubinage

The matter of polygamy is brought up with obsessive repetition in medieval and early modern polemic biographies, and is always intimately connected to the sensuality of Muhammad and subsequently of all Muslims and almost always referring to the passage from Sura 4 (*Al Nisa’*, Women) or the *Qur’ān*, in which the matter of concubinage is also almost always a matter of deprecatory comment.⁴⁶⁴ The matter of divorce, and in particular the perceived ease of Muslim divorce, was also made a central feature in the attack on what Martin Luther described as the Muslim ‘disregard of marriage’, as were the stringent penalties within the *Shar’iah* for adultery, which often seemed to the Christian commentators to conflict with the liberty they perceived elsewhere in regard to sexuality. As Karen Armstrong has pointed out, Western Critics have tended to see the ‘condoning of polygamy as a piece of pure male chauvinism’, going on to comment that:

⁴⁶⁴ The Sura reads:

If you fear that you cannot deal justly with the orphans, then marry such of the women as appeal to you, two, three or four; but if you fear that you cannot be equitable, then only one, or what your right hands own. That is more likely to enable you to avoid unfairness.
(Sura 4:3, *Al-Nisa’*, Women)

Translator Majid Fakhry notes that ‘this verse permits polygamy under special circumstances, but does not enjoin it. No less important is the fact that this verse was revealed following the Battle of Uhud in which seventy Muslim fighters were killed, leaving many widows and other dependants without a provider for them.’ (*The Qur’ān: A Modern English Version*, p.51).

[...] Popular films like *Harem* give an absurd and inflated picture of the sexual life of the Muslim sheikh which reveals more about Western fantasy than it does about reality...⁴⁶⁵

However, it did not take until the era of cinema for these ideas to develop, and this type of thinking in regards to Muslim laws on marriage is strongly represented in the texts of the medieval and early modern eras. Armstrong suggests that these laws were ‘a piece of social legislation’ intended to provide for orphans and widows and that given ‘a shortage of men in Arabia’ there was ‘a surplus of unmarried women who were often badly exploited.’⁴⁶⁶ Tariq Ramadan points out that ‘Polygamy was the norm in Arabia then, and the Prophet’s situation was the exception, since he remained monogamous for twenty-five years.’⁴⁶⁷ Of course, any attempt to contextualize the development of Muslim marriage laws was far from the thoughts of the commentators of the medieval and early modern period and they instead took what they perceived in Muslim polygamy to be a permission of sexual profligacy to be confirmation of the falsity of Islam as a religion.

In Caxton’s translation of Jacobus de Voragine’s *Golden Legend* (1483) the text describes how in Muslim law:

⁴⁶⁵ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (London: Phoenix Press, 1991), p.190.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.190.

⁴⁶⁷ Tariq Ramadan, *The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p.75.

Eche man myght haue foure wyues wedded attones and refuse & repudye thre tymes / and take them ageyn but not the fourth tyme / and he myght haue nomore than foure wyues lawfully / but he myght haue concubynes and suche wymmen as many as he may bye & as many as he myght kepe and them he may selle but yf she be wyth chylde...

This is the classic statement which is found in most of the texts of the medieval and early modern period. The Caxton/de Voragine text also makes the much-repeated, and inaccurate, observation that ‘it is graunted to them that they may haue wyues of their owne lynage / that their kynrede may be the strengre emonge them in frend shyp’; the accusation of incest was frequently included, although Islam had strict rules on this (yet in the story of Zayd and Zaynab Muhammad seems to have fallen foul of this accusation).⁴⁶⁸ The text also says that in cases of adultery the accuser ‘must haue wytnesses to preue his demaunde / and the defendaunte shal be byleuyd by his othe’, then observing that ‘whan they be founde in aduoultrye they be stoned bothe to gyder / & whan they doo fornycacion they shal haue four score lasses’, which is, in fact an accurate description of the Qur’ānic statement on the matter.

Mandeville’s Travels, as it does with so many other areas in describing Islamic belief, manages to relate the Muslim law on marriage without any comment or invective. The text simply states that:

[...] Machomet commanded in his Alkaron that euery man scholde haue ii. Wyfes or iii. or iiii., but now thei taken unto ix. and of lemmanes als manye as he may susteyne. And yif ony of here wifes mysberen hem

⁴⁶⁸ See the discussion of John of Damascus in Appendix I, p.457.

ayenst hire husbonde, he may caste hire out of his hous and departe fro hir
and take another, but he schalle departe with hire of his godes.⁴⁶⁹

There is no mention of incest here or of the sexual behaviour of Muhammad although, of course, Muhammad is seen as the author of the law, denying any possibility of its divinity.

Early modern texts on the matters of Muslim law on marriage and divorce are far more aggressive than the medieval versions examined here. They almost all mention the allowing of four wives and the ease of divorce, but also add polemic commentary to these observations. In his comment in *Acts and Monuments* John Foxe draws attention to what he plainly believes to be the inconsistency of Muhammad as he comments that:

He greatly commendeth also John, the son of Zachary, for a virgin, when he himself permitteth a man to have four wives, and as many concubines as he is able to find⁴⁷⁰

The basic detail of the permission for four wives and for unlimited concubines taken from prisoners of war or slaves is repeated, with very little variation, in most of the early modern texts commenting on Muslim laws of marriage and so it is more interesting to examine the comments on the law within these texts, which demonstrate

⁴⁶⁹ *Mandeville's Travels*, M.C. Seymour (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.99.

⁴⁷⁰ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

the early modern Christian view of Islam and of Muhammad's intention in creating its laws, than to list each occasion when this basic description occurs.

In the Thomas Roger's translation of Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) the text is more vague, commenting that Muhammad 'permitteth men to haue manie wiues', giving no actual number and also comments that 'He aloweth diuorcement for a trifeling cause, and receauing againe vpon smal occasion.' The text then asks a rhetorical question of its reader:

Nowe, I prairie you, what is more against nature than such lawes, if theie maie be caled lawes which peruert the lawe of nature, that is common to all men? ⁴⁷¹

Here the laws of Islam can be seen as in opposition to the 'natural' laws of the Christian world, which are universalised to include all of humanity. In Meredith Hanmer's *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586) he includes the charge of incest as he describes how Muslims are permitted 'by this law to have fowre wives, though they be of nigh kin', adding that they marry them as virgins. In the matter of concubinage he states that Muslims are permitted 'to take beside as many, emptitias & captivas. *Of them bought and taken captives*, as their ability will serve to maintaine' concluding that this arrangement is 'contrary to the ordinance of God, there shall be two in one flesh.' ⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.83.

⁴⁷² Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turke* (London: 1586), Sig. C4. This description, as with other areas of discussion, is included verbatim in Henry Smith's *Gods arrowve against atheists* (London: 1593), where he uses it to prove 'the vanitie and falshood of this Religion' by showing that 'the Religion of

Hanmer goes on to demonstrate the Muslim law of divorce as being rooted in the story of Zayd and Zaynad, describing how Muhammad:

[...] committed adultery with another man's wife, which was upon displeasure from her husband, & fearing a murmur of y people, he fained he received a paper from heaven, wherein it was permitted him to do so, to y ende he mighte beget prophets and worthy men.⁴⁷³

Hanmer then goes on to describe how 'hereupon the foolish law of divorce used this day among the Saracens, is grounded', stating that in this law 'a man may put away his wife three times, and so many times receive her again, after that she hath been so many times known by another man', which completely confused the Islamic rule.⁴⁷⁴

In *The new age of old names* (1609) Joseph Wybarne shows incredulity towards the gap between Muslim laws of marriage and divorce and the laws on punishing adultery as he discusses how 'they teach *Polygamie* to be lawfull, and punish Adulterie with death.' Wybarne then ironically expresses his confusion, stating that 'I now not whether they doe better in the latter, or worse in the former, but sure it agrees with reason', adding the somewhat comic conclusion that:

Mahomet is fleshly, consisting in natural delights and corporal pleasures, which shew that man, & not the diuine spirite of God, is the author therof.' (Sig.K1).

⁴⁷³ Ibid., Sig.C5. For an early Christian version of this story see the discussion of John of Damascus in Appendix I, p.457.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., Sig.C5.

If a man have fower wives, and as many concubines as he can keepe, for so much is allowed by that law, if yet hee will commit Adulterie, hee is not worthy to live.⁴⁷⁵

Wybarne concludes that if a man is not able to contain himself under such liberal conditions, he probably deserves any sentence handed down to him.

The translation of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (1572) also includes the accusation of incest, stating that Muhammad 'graunted to euery man four wiues of his own kinred', and also comments on concubinage and divorce, describing how 'but concubines and bond women bought it is lawfull for euery man to haue as manye as he can kepe' and also that 'they maye forsake them and make a diuorce as often as they list.'⁴⁷⁶ The text related this law to the political ambition of Muhammad in describing how the Islamic laws on polygamy, concubinage and divorce 'was done to drawe the common sort and rude multitude vnto him more easly', through teaching that 'the pleasures of the bodye did not hinder the happye lyfe to come.'⁴⁷⁷ Through stressing the carnal attractions of Islam to its early and subsequent adherents, the translation of Münster's text also highlights one of the central anxieties of Christian commentators in the matter of apostasy and conversion to Islam, of 'turning Turk'. This anxiety also found expression on the early modern English stage, as I will show shortly when I examine this feature in Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke* (1621) and Philip Massenger's *the*

⁴⁷⁵ Joseph Wybarne, *The new age of old names. By Ios. Wib. Master of Artes of Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge* (London: Printed John Windet for William Barret, and Henry Fetherstone, 1609), p.96.

⁴⁷⁶ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection and compendious extract of the strau[n]ge and memorable things, gathered oute of the cosmographie of Sebastian Munster* (London: 1572), Fol.65.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Fol.65.

Renegado (printed 1630), both of which hinge on the link between sexual attraction and apostacy.

‘Mahometan paradise’: The Muslim Vision of Heaven in Medieval and Early Modern Polemic

There is nothing more frequent in all our stage-plays (as all our play-haunters can abundantly testify) than amorous pastorals or obscene lascivious love-songs, most melodiously chanted out upon the stage [...] to please the itching ears, if not to enflame the outrageous lusts of lewd spectators, who are oft-time ravished with these ribaldrous pleasing ditties and transported by them into a Mahometan paradise, or ecstasy of uncleanness.

William Prynne, *Histriomastix: The Player's Scourge* (1633), p.262⁴⁷⁸

This quotation from the militant puritan and anti-theatrical campaigner William Prynne, included among the 1,005 page rant which formed his *Histriomastix*, shows the way in which the concept of the Muslim heaven as a fleshly and ‘unclean’ place had entered the consciousness of English writers at a level which made it proverbial for all that was sexually permissive and shockingly erotic. Indeed, in representing Islam as a religion of the flesh there was no more important matter in medieval and early modern texts than that of the delights of the Muslim paradise, which was presented as a confirmation of the Muslim preoccupation with worldly pleasures and of the Machiavellian intent of Muhammad to ‘seduce’ people into converting to his religion. In fact, the representations

⁴⁷⁸ Cited in: Tanya Pollard (ed.), *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Sourcebook* (London: Blackwell, 2004), p.293.

of the Muslim paradise found in medieval and early modern texts follow very closely the descriptions found in the *Qur'ān*, although obviously their conclusions regarding the significance of its contents were vastly different, and plainly Christian commentators felt no great need to embellish the original, possibly considering what they found there to be sufficiently shocking in comparison to their own conception of the afterlife.

The first description of paradise found in the *Qur'ān* is found in Sura 55 (*Al-Rahman/ The All-Compassionate*) and includes a description of virgins of paradise, the 'houris', so often included in modern discourse about the motivations of Islamist suicide bombers.

The verses describe the faithful:

Rejoicing in what their Lord has given them; and their Lord shall guard them against the punishment of Hell, [saying]:
“Eat and drink merrily, for what you used to do.”
Reclining on ranged couches, and We shall wed them to the wide-eyed houris.

(52:18-20)

In Sura 56 (*Al-Waqi'a*, The Happening) there is a far more detailed description of what the faithful can expect to find in the next world as it tells of how:

[...] Allah will guard them against the evil of that day and give them radiance and joy.

And reward them for their forbearance, with a garden of silk.

Therein, they shall recline upon couches, and they shall see therein neither [blazing] sun nor bitter cold.

And its shades shall be close to them and its fruit-branches shall be brought down.
And cup-bearers shall go round them with vessels of silver and goblets of glass,
Goblets of silver which they measure exactly.
And they are given therein to drink a cup whose mixture is ginger.
A spring therein is called Salsabil.
And there go round them immortal boys; when you see them, you will think they are scattered pearls.
If you look there, you will see bliss and a vast kingdom.
Upon them are green silk garments and brocade; and they will have been adorned with silver bracelets, and their Lord has given them a pure potion.

(76:11-21)

As I will show, these descriptions are followed closely in both the medieval and early modern descriptions of the Muslim heaven, but with very different inferences being drawn by the Christian commentators.

The description of the Muslim heaven found in Caxton's version of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1483) demonstrates the proximity of the medieval descriptions to those found in the *Qur'ān*. The text describes how Muslims affirm that:

[...] our lord hath promysed paradys to them that kepe thyse lawes and other / that is to wyte a gardyn or a place of delyces enuyronned with rennyng water / In whiche paradys they shal haue setys pardurable / ne they shal haue neyther / ouermoche hete ne colde / & they shal vse & ete

al maner metes / what someuer they desyre they shal anone fynde redy tofore them / they shal be clad in clothes of sylke of al colours / they shal be conioyned to right fayr virgyns / & alwey they shal be in delices / & thaungels shal come as botyllers with vessels of golde & syluer / & shal gyue in them of golde mylke / & in them of syluer wyn / and they shal saye to them ete & drynke in gladnes / & machomete sayth they shal haue thre flodes or ryuers in Paradyse that one of mylke / that other of hony and the thyrd of ryght good wyne wyth ryght precyous espyces / And that they shal see there ryght fayre aungellys and so grete that fro that one eye to that other is the space of a day iourneye⁴⁷⁹

This text seems to take very literally the idea of ‘wide-eyed houris’, but otherwise there is no comment made on this vision of Paradise and the text merely concludes by demonstrating the inverse side of Muslim eschatology by relating that ‘unto theym that byleue not to god and machomete as they afferme / is ordeyned the payne of helle wythout ende’, again an accurate statement of Muslim belief. This reasonably correct description of the Muslim paradise without comment is also found in *Mandeville’s Travels* where it is stated that when Muslims are asked ‘what Paradyse thei menen’ they reply that:

Paradys that is a place of delytes, where men schulle fynde alle maner of frutes in alle cesouns and ryveres rennyng of mylk and hony and of wyn and swete water; and that thei schulle haue faire houses and noble, euery man of his dissert, mad eof precious stones and of gold and of sylver; and that euery man schalle have iiii. Wyfes alle maydenes, and schalle haue

⁴⁷⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend [Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive, Lombardica historia]* (London: William Caxton, 1483), No page numbers.

ado euery day with hem, and yit he schalle fynden hem alleways
maydenes.⁴⁸⁰

This, as with other descriptions of Muslim belief in *Mandeville's Travels*, is not accompanied by any polemic comment, being allowed to stand as it is. It is of course possible that the medieval authors did not find it necessary to provide extra comment, and that they considered description of a paradise so different from the abstract spiritual state of Christian theology would be sufficient to illicit a reaction in the reader. Yet this is not the case with the early modern authors, who almost always find it necessary to add their own polemic gloss and conclusion to the descriptions of the Muslim paradise contained in their works.

The descriptions of the Muslim paradise found in early modern texts are, on the whole, very similar to each other and so it would not really prove useful to provide the examples from each text *in toto*. Instead this section will limit itself to the interpretations which were drawn from the details of the Muslim paradise possessed by Christian commentators at the time. In the Thomas Roger's translation of Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) he states that 'The Paradise that Mahomet promiseth to his folowers, is more meete for swine then for men created after the likenes of God', going on to describe how in this Muslim version of heaven 'they shal neuer make an end of eating, and colling wenches.'⁴⁸¹ Hemmingsen relates this version of heaven directly to the political machinations of Muhammad as a war leader, describing how 'This knaue knewe

⁴⁸⁰ *Mandeville's Travels*, M.C. Seymour (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.96.

⁴⁸¹ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.90.

how these things would like foolish soldiers right wel, which are neuer satisfied with wine and women’, making it clear that in his view this Muslim heaven was just another of Muhammad’s inventions designed to better control his followers.

Meredith Hanmer in *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586) relates the Muslim vision of heaven back to the fleshly preoccupations of Muhammad himself, stating that ‘The paradise this prophet devised for his people, bewraieith his lewd disposition’, making sure to note the inclusion in this vision of heaven of the faithful having ‘most beutiful women to accompany them, maidens & virgins with twinkling eies’ and concluding that ‘[...] Thus fleshly people have a fleshly religion, & a fleshly paradise to inhabite.’⁴⁸²

In the translation of Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* (1572) there is a description of how Muhammad:

[...] promised to the obseruers of his lawe, a paradise & garden of al pleasures, wherein they shoulde se their most desired ioyes and all kinde of pleasures, as maydens most beautiful adorned, and the embracings of Angels and al other kindes of pleasures that any man would desire...⁴⁸³

Here there seems to be a suggestion that the Muslim heaven will actually include sexual contact with angels (presumably confusing these with the ‘houris’) and the text also

⁴⁸² Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586), Sig. C5. As with representations of other areas of Muslim belief this description and conclusion is included verbatim in Henry Smith’s *Gods arrowe against Atheists*, (London: 1593), Sig.K1.

⁴⁸³ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection and compendious extract of the strau[n]ge and memorable things, gathered oute of the cosmographye of Sebastian Munster* (London: 1572), Fol.37.

comes to the conclusion that this version of heaven is the invention of Muhammad ‘with the which subtil craftines, be ledde the people flexible of their owne nature whyther hee woulde, because he promised al kind of libidinous pleasures’, once again highlighting the political cunning of Muhammad and the worldliness of those who follow Islam. The Münster version also includes a detailed description of the paradise, including the ‘yong and beautifull maydes, at their owne wil and plesure’ and also presents the possible alternative as it states that ‘Contrarye wise to those yt breake these lawes, they threaten the daunger of hell and euerlasting destruction’, but allows for further licence in the statement that:

This also they beleue, that how great offences soeuer a man hath committed, if he wyll beleue onely in God and Mahumet when he dyeth, he shall be safe and happye.⁴⁸⁴

This seems to make the suggestion that Muslims are allowed any excess whatsoever, and provided they maintain their faith in God and Muhammad at death, all will be forgiven for them.

In its comments on the Muslim heaven George Sandys’ *A relation of a iourney* (1615) demonstrates once again that travelling into Muslim lands was no guarantee of securing a different attitude towards aspects of Islamic belief. He opens his discussion with a statement that ‘Their opinions of the end of the world, of Paradise, and of hell; exceede the vanity of dreames, and all the old wives fables’, immediately demonstrating what his

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., Fol.39.

attitude towards Muslim eschatology will be.⁴⁸⁵ Sandys' text makes the assertion that Muslim women will be excluded from this paradise stating that 'as for women, poore soules be they never so good, they have the gates shut against them', relating that they will be 'consigned to the mansion without, where they shall live happily' with another place 'replete with all misery' for those condemned to hell.⁴⁸⁶ Sandys then goes into the usual description of the Muslim paradise, but in keeping with his status as an eminent humanist makes a comparison between the paradise of the *Qur'ān* and that of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Sandys' version also includes the description of 'amarous vurgins' who, he tells the reader, 'shall alone regard their particular lovers.' Sandys goes on to describe the 'houris' as being:

[...] not such as have lived in this world, but created on purpose; with great black eyes, and beautiful as the Hyacinth. They daily shall have their lost virginites restored: ever young, (continuing there, as here at fifteene, and as men as at thirty) and ever free from naturall pollutions.⁴⁸⁷

Perhaps surprisingly, given the fixation with the practice of homosexuality amongst Muslims found in early modern texts, Sandys is one of the few to describe the 'Boyes of divine feature' who will serve in Paradise, as described in the *Qur'ān*. This would have seemed to have been one of the first aspects which an early modern commentator would latch onto, given the representation of the practice of homosexual acts elsewhere in

⁴⁸⁵ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of AEgypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning* (London: Richard Field for W: Barrett, 1615), p.58.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.59.

accounts of the behaviours of Muslim, and yet it is present in very few of the texts examined in this thesis.

Sandys also uses the example of 'Avicen' (Avicenna) in his exposition and critique of the Muslim paradise, describing him as 'that great Philosopher and Physician, who flourished about four hundred and fifty years since, when *Mahometisme* had not yet utterly extinguished all good literature' and states that in the respect of the afterlife he 'teacheth a far different doctrine.'⁴⁸⁸ Sandys says of Avicenna that 'although as a *Mahometan* he extolleth *Mahomet* highly, as being a *seale* of divine *lawes*, and the *last of the Prophets*' he also in his works sees 'bodily pleasures to be false and base.' Sandys goes on to describe how Avicenna in *De Anima* and *De Almahad* excuses the Qur'anic presentation of 'sensuall felicities in the life to come' as 'merely allegoricall, and necessarily fitted to rude and vulgar capacities', arguing that:

[...] if the points of religion were taught in their true forme to the ignorant dull *Jewes*, or to the wilde *Arabians* employed altogether about their Camels; they would utterly fall off from all beleefe in God...⁴⁸⁹

Sandys sees this excuse as 'so favourable & large, that it may extend as well unto all Idolators, and in briefe to the justifying of the absurdest errors' and that in the case of Avicenna, 'it is a point of doctrine so contrary to his own opinion as nothing can be more.'⁴⁹⁰ In this examination of Avicenna's opinion Sandys is able to present the deliberate nature of Muhammad's construction of his religion who, he says, 'by

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.59.

sensuall doctrine sought to draw the rude world to follow him', also to present a voice of reason from the Islamic world which is struggling against the restraint of discussion of doctrine in order to present a critique of the worldiness of Islam and to preempt any argument based on its allegorical nature aimed at defending the Muslim vision of the afterlife.

The representation of the Muslim heaven on the English stage is limited to one example from a fairly obscure source, William Percy's unpublished play *Mahomet and his Heaven*.⁴⁹¹ Despite the name of the play and the fact that many of its scenes take place in what is presumably a Muslim heaven there is no actual performance of the vision of Paradise as described in the *Qur'ān* or in subsequent medieval and early modern texts. Instead, the depiction of the contents of the Muslim heaven is limited to a comic and scatological discussion regarding judgement between the figures of Belphegor, Whisk, Pyr, the Fryar and the Lawyer.

As Dimmock points out, all of these charcters in the play display English traits and references in their conversations and in the case of Belpheghor, whose name is taken from a Moabitish deity mentioned in Acts 25:3,⁴⁹² Dimmock observes that the figure is 'thus associated with licentiousness, disorder and had idolatrous and satanic connotations' and so, as with the figure of Balaam in the play,

⁴⁹¹ For a note on the dating of the play see, p.163 (n343) .

⁴⁹² 'And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.'

‘translating discredited gods and false prophets into ‘Mahomet’s’ heavenly followers immediately discredits Islam and, of course, Muhammad himself.’⁴⁹³ In this respect it is interesting that it is Belpheghor, in the role of ‘porter’ of paradise, who provides the description of the Muslim paradise in this scene.

The scene opens with Belpheghor assuring the Fryar and the Lawyer that they will not be allowed to depart the ‘Lodge’ where they are being held before Muhammad, who is described as ‘the viceregent of olympus’ (V (vi), l.7), holds his ‘Quarter session’ (V (vi), ll.3), or judgement, at which it will be decided ‘whither’s the arraunter/ villaine of the two’ (V (vi), ll.4-5). Pyr then asks Belpheghor about the conditions that the Fryar and the Lawyer will experience and:

[...] what sollace shall the poore soules, Sir, have in the meane tyme. So to be pen tup in the compasse of a Lodge, feeding but on Beife and on Bacon, whereas in the continent below they have been nourished with the best selected and delicate morsels...

(V (vi), ll.30-34)

Belpheghor now goes into a description of the Muslim heaven, familiar from the medieval and early modern texts examined earlier, each point of which is the prompt for a satirical comment from Pyr and Whisk. Belpheghor begins his description with the women of heaven, the so-called ‘houris’, and then moves on to the drinks available:

⁴⁹³ Dimmock, n188-9.

Mary, First and Imprimis, Tyme there they shall have wenches
with eyes as bigge as egges, to administer unto them,
in vessels of Gold, and of sylver all, Mylk and honey, also
wynes off all manner kind of grapes, I wusse.

(V (vi), ll.46-9)

This description of the wines of heaven prompts Pyr to comment that this is

[...] that they want in the terrestriall orbe belowe, For
in lieu of wyne there, they drink a compound of sugar
and of Raisons...

(V (vi), ll.40-42)

a comment in which Pyr evidently refers to the Muslim prohibition of alcohol.

From this description of women and wine Belpheghor goes on to describe the
luxurious clothing which will be worn, describing how 'they shall be clad in
vestures of sylk, and of Tissewe all' (V (vi), l.44) which will be so fine and costly
that if:

[...] of the shreds, if that they shall but
laye them by, they shall be able to maintaine thereby, an
armie of a forty thousand soules, in ready paye Against
the stubborne Jewe, as also against the unrelenting Christian

(V (vi), ll.45-48)

This obviously sets Islam in military opposition to other faiths and provokes a comment from Whisk that such wealth will:

[...] save Mr Chiause, so much of that coyne
that he shall but have gathered together in his steele-barred
Trunk, since he hath been of the occupation...

(V (vi), ll.49-51)

suggesting here either the corruption of the local ruler, or that what money he has gathered would be used for military purposes.

Finally, Belpheghor describes the food of 'Mahomet's Heaven' which is 'called in our olympick/ Tongue Albehut' (V (vi), ll.56-57) and from which those in paradise 'shall feele such a savour arising thereof/ They shall suppose them to be in a field of Spices and Roses' (V (vi), ll.57-58), adding the comic and scatological comment that:

...Also
they shall never be troubled with sent of any Excrementall savour,
nay not even yet, thenceforth shal they neede stickt Paper to
wipe their polluted Fundaments therewith, thereby.

(V (vi), ll.58-61)

satirically suggesting that however else the Islamic heaven might satisfy physical need, it will not require the carrying out of certain, less pleasant, bodily functions, provoking Whisk to comment that all of this is grand deception, or 'a Lye with a Latchet' (V (vi), l.62) as he puts it. In eager reaction to this the Lawyer states that he will 'trye the utmost

of those joyes you speake' (V (vi), l.71-72) and vouches for his 'soules health' (V (vi), l.72), while the Fryar comments that:

[...] now I do consider it, it will be a stop to those good Tydings I shall bring unto them belowe, if that I shall but omit take coppie of sayd joyes besayd to be in heaven, when I shall be let down...

(V (vi), ll.74-77)

The Fryar seems to suggest the efficacy of the promise of this form of heaven in the preaching of Islam and also masks his own lechery and greed with concern for his 'Parishioners', amongst whom he states he will 'smell lyke unto a Musk-catt [...] by the infection of those Spices you talk' (V (vi), ll.85-86). In total, the effect of this scene is to mock and belittle the Islamic paradise through the interplay between the playful and demonic figures of Belpheghor, Pyr and Whisk, and to expose once again, in the reactions of the Fryar and the Lawyer to the pleasures on offer, the perceived motivations of seduction behind the creation of this 'Lye with a Latchet' in the first place.

'Jealous Turks'⁴⁹⁴: Representations of Muslim Treatment of Women in Early Modern Texts

In *Traffic and Turning* Jonathan Burton highlights the central role of sexual desire in the processes of conversion in the early modern Turk plays. Burton sees in the representations of encounters between Muslim men and Muslim women, and

⁴⁹⁴ This title comes from a speech by the female Muslim character Donusa in Act 1, Scene 2 of Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (Printed 1630) in: Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays*.

between Muslim women and Christian men, a situation wherein the plays ‘enact a fantastic recuperation of imperilled English masculinity by situating heterosexual desire at the center of Anglo-Islamic relations.’⁴⁹⁵ English masculinity, in this conception, is seen as imperilled by the twin forces of Islamic ascendancy abroad and female empowerment at home, both of which are then conflated and made to interact with the ‘Turk plays’. Indeed, the majority of the ‘Turk plays’ investigate inter-faith desire to some extent, and through this explore possible motives for ‘turning.’ As Burton observes, this is usually in the form of a Christian man converted through desire for a Muslim woman, as with Ward in Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turn’d Turk* or of the Muslim woman converted through desire for a Christian man, as with Donusa in Massinger’s *The Renegado*.

Burton cites the absence of Christian women in travellers’ accounts, and in accounts of captivity, and states that ‘Turkish plays enlist Christian women to perform the compromising roles filled by overpowered English men in travellers’ narratives’⁴⁹⁶ and that they also use the actions of Muslim women ‘to restore to Christian men the dominant position from which they are dislodged not only by Muslim men but also by the forceful, Christian women.’⁴⁹⁷ Yet in focusing on the absence of the experiences as women as travellers only, with experiences which parallel those of the men in early modern travel narratives, Burton ignores the multiple representations of the *harem*, and particularly the *harem* found in the seraglio of the ‘Great Turk’ in Istanbul. I will argue that it was the institution of

⁴⁹⁵ Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, p.93.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.93.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.93-94.

the *harem* which, in the early modern imagination, functioned as the main site in which abducted Christian women were seen to be threatened by Muslim men and through which Christian women entered travellers' narratives, and subsequently the fictions of captivity and seduction which marked the experience of Christian women on the early modern stage.

The representation of Muslim women in early modern Britain, as indeed often in modern discourse, hinges largely on the matters of their sequestration (particularly the use of the veil), restraint of liberty and subjection to the control and sexual demands of Muslim men. This treatment was symbolized most powerfully in the Western mind by the institution of the imperial *harem* and the treatment of the Sultanic concubines. The *harem*, as the perceived epicenter of Muslim polygamy and sexuality, was the subject of a prurient interest no less for early modern travellers than it would be for orientalist texts of the next four centuries. At the very centre of this representation was the figure of the abducted Christian women, often represented as the victim of mistreatment and cruelty.

Such women can be found in texts such as William Painter's 'Hyrenee the Faire Greeke' from *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7) and in Thomas Goff's *The Couragious Turk* (printed 1632). Yet these abducted women, both in the plays and in travellers' accounts and the descriptions of political writers, can also act as potentially the source of a powerful political influence over Muslim males, through figures such as Rosa/Rossa, based on Hurrem, the wife of Süleyman, in Painter's 'A Cruell Fact of Soltan Solyman' from *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566-

7) and Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1609). As Burton points out, the influence of these women is 'Unlike their male coreligionists' as in these plays and narratives 'Christian women have no power to convert the Muslims who prey on them' and are left with only 'the ability to resist Muslim seduction with chastity and devotion to Christian men.'⁴⁹⁸

The common misreading of the *harem* as a sort of imperial sexual playground meant that the Ottoman Sultan, and indeed other Muslim leaders, were seen as central figures in continuing the lustful traditions of Muhammad's 'law'. The proverbial nature of the sultan as a figure for licentiousness can be seen in Edgar's words in *King Lear* where, speaking of his dissolute and libertine life, he describes himself as being 'one that/ Slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it' (Act III (iv), ll.81-2) and so as being a man who 'in women/ out-paramoured the Turk' (Act III (iv), ll.82-3).⁴⁹⁹

The figure of the lustful Turk desperately pursuing the resistant, sexually chaste Christian women can be found in a series of plays from this time and, I would argue, the prototype for these behaviours is to be found in the representations of the sexual career of Muhammad within the polemic biographies, making the Sultans and Muslim leaders in these texts the literary and behavioural, as well as the literal, *khalifas* (successors) of Muhammad in the Western imagination. Figures such as Sultan Soliman in *Soliman and Perseda* (1592), usually attributed to Thomas Kyd, Mullisheg the King of Fez in Thomas Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West* I (c.1597) & II (c.1630) and Asambeg in Philip

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., p.109.

⁴⁹⁹ William Shakespeare, Jay L. Halio (ed.), *The Tragedy of King Lear* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Massinger's *The Renegado* (printed 1630) all enter into obsessive courtships of Christian women and this figure of the enamoured and lustful Muslim man pursuing an unattainable woman (although in this case not a Christian) is even worked into the representation of Muhammad himself in William Percy's *Mahomet and his Heaven*⁵⁰⁰ where the prophet is shown to adore and be humiliated by the imperious Epimenide, who rejects him and demands that he kiss her 'cul' (V (iii), l.7).

Before arriving at a discussion of the representations of inter-faith desire in these plays I will look more generally at the accounts of Muslim treatment of women in some of the travellers' accounts of the early modern period. In the English translation from the Italian of the Nicholas de Nicolay's *the Navigations, perigrinations and voyages* (1585) there is a description of the *harem* as holding 'The wives & concubines of the great Turk, which in number are above 200, being the most part daughters of Christians.'⁵⁰¹ Here is the important mention of the women of the harem as being Christian captives, which would indeed have largely been the case for the slave concubines, the enslavement of co-religionists being forbidden by Islam. It is always the sheer scale of the *harem* which comes through in the early modern descriptions, as in John Wither's translation of the description of the sultan's seraglio in the Topkapı Palace by the Venetian bailo (ambassador) Ottaviano Bon. Bon describes how 'within the third gate, called the king's gate' (the location of the women's quarters) there are:

⁵⁰⁰ The date of Percy's play is uncertain, but in the the introduction to his new critical edition Matthew Dimmock states that Percy 'wrote *Mahomet and his Heaven* in Elizabeth's reign and revised it under James' [Matthew Dimmock, 'Introduction' in William Percy, Matthew Dimmock (ed.), *Mahomet and his Heaven: a Critical Edition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.6.

⁵⁰¹ Nicholas de Nicolay, T. Washington (trans.), *The Navigations, perigrinations and voyages* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1585), p.53.

[...] about two thousand persons, men and women; whereof the women (old and young, one with another; what with the King's concubines, old women, and women servants) may be about eleven or twelve hundred.⁵⁰²

He goes on to describe how 'those which are kept up for their beauties, are all young virgins taken and stolen from foreign nations' who 'after they are instructed in good behaviour, and can play upon instruments, sing, dance, and sew curiously; they are given to the *Grand Seigneur*, as presents of great value.'⁵⁰³ This description of the Muslim treatment of women as property was in keeping with the more general perception of Muslim marriage, as exemplified by the comment by William Buddulph in *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (1609) where in his section dealing with Muslim women he comments on how:

Here wives may learn to love their husbands, when they shall read in what slavery women live in other countries, and in what awe and subjection to their husbands, and what liberty and freedom they themselves enjoy⁵⁰⁴

In this observation, addressed directly to Christian women, Biddulph highlights what has been identified by Jonathan Burton as one of the central functions of the depiction of the Muslim treatment of women in the 'Turk plays', that of providing 'male figures

⁵⁰² Ottaviano Bon, John Withers (trans., 1625), *The Sultan's Seraglio* (London: Saqi Books, 1996), p.46.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p.46.

⁵⁰⁴ William Buddulph, *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (London: 1609), p.85 The description of Turkish marriage customs included by Biddulph is repeated almost verbatim by the Scottish traveller William Lithgow, once again demonstrating the citationality of travellers' accounts, in his *A most delectable and true discourse, of an admired and painefull peregrination from Scotland, to the most famous kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Affricke With the particular descriptions (more exactly set downe then hath beene heeretofore in English) of Italy Sycilia, Dalmatia, Ilyria, Epire, Peloponnesus, Macedonia, Thessalia, and the whole continent of Greece, Creta, Rhodes, the Iles Cyclades ... and the chiefest countries of Asia Minor. From thence, to Cyprus, Phaenicia, Syria ... and the sacred citie Ierusalem, &c.* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1619), pp.56-58.

answerable for the disenfranchisement and mistreatment of women, while exonerating English men of the same charges.⁵⁰⁵

Biddulph goes on to describe how the Muslim 'seventh Commandment is concerning marriage: that every man must of necessity marry, to increase and multiply the sect and religion of Muhammad,' presenting the institution of marriage in Islam as itself a threatening breeding programme based on the purpose of spreading the faith. Biddulph goes on to describe how:

[...] Their custom is to buy their wives off their parents, and never to see them until they come to be married; and their marriage is nothing but enrolling in the Cadi's book. And it is lawful for them to take as many wives as they will, or as many as they are able to keep. And whenever he dislikes any one of them, it is their use to sell them or give them to any of their men-slaves.⁵⁰⁶

In terms of the treatment of Muslim women and their duties within the *harem* the translation of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographie* (1572) relates how 'Maydens that are verye comelye and beautifull, are chosen to be their concubines' and others 'of the meaner sort' are used as 'matrones to wait vpon them', then going on to describe how in this position:

⁵⁰⁵ Burton, p.111.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p.85. Much of this description is repeated in Peter Heylyn's *A little description of the great world* (London: 1625) where he describes how:

[...] whereas in most or all other countries, fathers giue some portion with their daughters, the Saracens giue money for their wiues: which being once payed, the contract is registred in the Cadies booke, and this is all their formality of marriage. (p.614).

[...] they haue some suche filthye seruices and functions, that they cannot be named with honesty, for they are compelled to folow them with a vessell of water when they go to discharge the belly, and those partes.⁵⁰⁷

Although nothing described here would seem to be any worse than what could be expected by a domestic servant in Britain at this time.

Others, such as that of Ottaviano Bon or Thomas Dallam, who at IEast had visited the Imperial palace, describe a less sordid and humiliating existence. Dallam, an organ maker sent by Elizabeth I to the court of Sultan Murad IV to build an instrument as a present to the ‘great Turk’ describes, in an account of his visit to the ‘privie Chambers’,⁵⁰⁸ of the Topkapı, how he is ushered by his guide to a point where:

Through the graite I did se thirtie of the Grand Sinyors’ Concobines that weare playinge with a bale in another courte. At the firste sighte of them I thoughte they had bene yonge men, but when I saw the hare of their heades hange done on their backes, platted together with a tasle of smale pearle hanginge in the lower end of it, and by other plaine tokens, I did know them to be women, and verrie prettie ones in deede.⁵⁰⁹

Dallam was evidently entranced by this scene, much to the annoyance of his guide, and describes how:

⁵⁰⁷ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection and compendious extract of the straunge and memorable things, gathered oute of the cosmographie of Sebastian Munster* (London: 1572), Fol.49.

⁵⁰⁸ Thomas Dallam in: Evo Kamps and Jyotsna G. Singh (eds.), *Travel Knowledge: European Discoveries in the Early Modern Period* (London: Palgrave, 2001), p.56.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.57.

I stood so longe loukinge upon them that he which showed me all this kindness, began to be verrie angrie with me. He made a wrye mouthe, and stamped with his foute to make me give over looking; the which I was verrie lothe to dow, for that sighte did please me wondrous well.⁵¹⁰

Ottaviano Bon also describes the sexual duties of the young women, relating how the Sultan only sees the women of the seraglio when they are first presented to him or ‘in case he desire one of them to be his bedfellow’ and goes to describe how ‘when he is prepared for a fresh mate, he gives notice to the [...] *Kahiya Cadun* [the old women in charge of the girls] of his purpose’ and who then ‘bestirs herself like a crafty bawd, and chooseth out such as she judgeth to be the most amiable, and fairest of all.’⁵¹¹ The application of the brothel term ‘bawd’ to the ‘*Kahiya Cadun*’ demonstrates how the disapproval of the Christian observer still creeps in, even in the Venetian’s generally even-handed account.

The metaphor of prostitution is extended as Bon describes how when in the morning the sultan wakes up in the room in the women’s quarters ‘set apart for that business only’ he changes his clothes and leaves ‘those which he wore to her he lay withal, and all the money in his pockets, were it never so much.’ Bon then describes how after the sultan has returned to his lodgings ‘he sendeth her immediately a present of jewels, money, and vest of great value, agreeable to the satisfaction and content which he received from her that night’ and states that ‘In the same manner he deals with all such as he maketh use of in that kind’ and concluded by telling of how the sultan is likely to

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p.57.

⁵¹¹ Bon, p.48.

pay more to a women 'as his humour, and affection towards them increaseth, by their fulfilling of his lustful desires.'⁵¹²

The lives of Muslim women more generally are also detailed by Nicholas de Nicolay who describes the Turks as 'observing of the ancient custome of their ancestors' who the text tells us 'kepte theyr wives & daughters closed up in the backsides of their houses', which results in 'Turkey women being shut up without permission to go abroad, nor to appear in the streets openly except it be-going to the bathes.'⁵¹³ At this point the text describes how these women:

[...] under the colour of goying to bathes, they resort to other places where they think good to accomplish their pleasures, & come home again in good time without the knowledge or perceiving of their husbands.⁵¹⁴

De Nicolay goes on, in the most febrile of terms, to describe these 'pleasures', which centre on lesbianianism between Turkish women. De Nicolay describes how these women, while in the Baths 'Do familiarly wash one another, whereby it cometh to passé that amongst the women of Levan, there is very great amity'⁵¹⁵ and goes on to tell of how through this close physical contact they:

[...] sometimes become so fervently in love the one of the other as if it were with men, in such sort that perceiving some maide or woman of excellent beauty they wil not cease until they have found means to bath

⁵¹² Ibid., p.49.

⁵¹³ Nicholas de Nicolay, *Navigations*, p.60.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p.60.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p.60.

with them, & to handle & grope them every where at their pleasures, so full are they of luxuriousness & feminine wantonnes⁵¹⁶

This description of the lascivious nature of Turkish women is borne out by the behaviour of several of the Muslim women in the Turk plays. In the case of Voada, the woman who seduces the English pirate Ward into converting to Islam in Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, there is even the inclusion of lesbianism as she is attracted to the Christian woman Alizia in her disguise as Fidelio. On seeing Alizia/Fidelio for the first time Voada remarks that 'It is a lovely boy, rare featured! Would he were mine!' (Scene 6, ll.93-4), going on to comment ironically that 'I have not seen so much of beauty in a man' (Scene 6, l.96) and she then betrays her reckless and uncontrollable sexuality by declaring that 'I must enjoy his love, though/ Quenching of my lust did burn the world besides' (Scene 6, ll.100-101), a trait which Ward will discover to his cost.

William Biddulph goes on to describe other restrictions placed on their wives by Turkish men. He relates how the Turks 'although they love their women never so well' do not allow their women to sit at table with them when they eat but have them instead 'wait at table and serve him' and then 'when he has dined, they dine in secret by themselves, admitting no man or mankind amongst them, if he is above 12 years of age.'⁵¹⁷ He then repeats the description given by de Nicolay of how 'they never go abroad without leave of their husbands; which is very seldom, except it is either to the bannio (or hot bath),' adding that they may also be allowed out 'once a week to weep at the graves of the dead;

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p.60.

⁵¹⁷ Biddulph, *The Travels*, in: Parker, *Early Modern Tales of Orient*, p.95.

which is usually on Thursday, being on the eve before their Sabbath, which is Friday.⁵¹⁸

Biddulph's description then goes on to record how:

If their husbands have been abroad, at his entrance to his house, if any one of their women is sitting on a stool, she rises up, and bows herself to her husband, and kisses his hand, and sets the same stool for him whereon they sat, and stand so long as he is in presence.⁵¹⁹

In fact Biddulph is heartily approving of most of the Turkish treatment of women, as he understands it, and comments that:

If the like order were in England, women would be more dutiful and faithful to their husbands than many of them are. And especially if there were the like punishment for whores, there would be less whoredom.⁵²⁰

He then describes these rather stringent punishments for 'whoredom' of which he approves, relating how:

[.] there, if a man has 100 women, if any one prostitute herself to any man but her own husband, he has the authority to bind her, hands and feet, and so cast her into the river with a stone about her neck, and drown her. And this is a common punishment amongst them,⁵²¹

a punishment which Biddulph takes no pains to criticise.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p.95.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., p.95.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p.95.

⁵²¹ Ibid., p.95.

‘Veiled and guarded’: The Depiction of Muslim Women in Massinger’s *The Renegado*

The restriction of Turkish women is complained of by Donusa, the niece of the Turkish Sultan in Philip Massinger’s *The Renegado* (printed 1630), in a scene which also satirises what is evidently perceived as the contrastingly excessive freedom of women at home in England. In a conversation with her Eunuch Carazie, a converted Englishman, Donusa mentions how:

... I have heard
That Christian ladies live with much more freedom
Than such as are born here. Our jealous Turks
Never permit their wives to be seen
But at the public bagnios or the mosques,
And even then, veiled and guarded.⁵²²

She then asks Carazie about his homeland of England, demanding to know ‘What’s the custom there/ Among your women?’ (I(ii), ll.21-22). At this point Carazie delivers a speech in which he describes how ‘Women in England/ for the most part, live like queens’ (I (ii), ll.27-28), relating how ‘country ladies’:

Have liberty to hawk, to hunt, to fEast,
To give free entertainment to all comers,
To talk, to kiss; there’s no such thing known there

⁵²² Philip Massinger, *The Renegado* (I, (i), ll.16-21) in: Daniel Vitkus (ed.), *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp.241-339.

As an Italian girdle. Your city dame,
Without leave, wears the breeches, as her husband
As much at command as her 'prentice, and if needs be
Can make him cuckold by her father's copy.

(I (ii), ll.29-35)

This contrasting of the sexual liberation of English women is continued as Carazie relates of the luxurious life of the 'court lady', describing how she:

Knows nothing but her will; must be allowed
Her footman, her caroché, her ushers, pages,
Her doctor, chaplains...

(I (ii), ll.37-39)

He then goes on to say of the court ladies that 'They're grown of late so learned that they maintain/ A strange position [...] which their lords with all/ Their wit cannot confute.' (I (ii), ll.40-42) and goes on to describe how these women are arguing that:

...it is not only fit, but lawful,
Your madam there (her much rest and high feeding
Duly considered) should, to ease her husband,
Be allowed a private friend.

(I (ii), ll.43-45)

This idea of women being allowed to cuckold their husbands is then given the potential force of law as Carazie describes how the court ladies:

...have drawn a bill
To this good purpose and, the next assembly,
Doubt not to pass it.

(I (ii), ll.46-48)

In reply Donusa regretfully states of the position of Turkish women, saying that:

We enjoy no more
That are of the Ottoman race, though our religion
Allows all pleasure.

(I (ii), ll.48-50)

Jonathan Burton sees this statement as ‘characteristic of the period’s antifeminism that figured women’s protests as not only unnatural but also unchristian,’⁵²³ yet it seems strange here that Donusa, who has previously bemoaned her sequestration and lack of liberty, should say that she has an equal scope with these Christian women, hence making their actions ‘unchristian’. Certainly the rest of the play does not display her as being allowed similar sexual freedom and, rather, seems to contrast the restriction of the sexual behaviour of the Turkish women with the sexual liberty allowed to the Turkish men under Islam, the religion which in Christian eyes ‘Allows all pleasure’, but only to one sex, a point which becomes the central argument in Donusa’s speech against Islam at her trial. The behaviour of Paulina, the only Christian woman in the play, is, in contrast, an example of chastity and Christian devotion, which would seem in this instance to make a Venetian Catholic more virtuous than the English women described by the English Eunuch Carazie. The implication of this speech in the context of the whole action of this play would seem to suggest that the behaviours of the English ladies is being presented as

⁵²³ Burton, *Traffic*, p.107. This scene is also discussed in, Nabil Matar ‘The Representation of Muslim Women in Renaissance England’, *The Muslim World*, Vol.86 (1996), pp.50-61.

absolutely Christian and English, albeit subject through this speech to gentle satirical reprimand.

Donusa during the course of the play is depicted as testing and challenging the limitations imposed on Muslim women as she enters into a sexual relationship with the Christian Vitelli, in a sequence which also highlights the perception in the West of Muslim women as being highly sexually charged through the restraint of their activity. Before he first meets Donusa Vitelli is conversing in the marketplace in Tunis with the Jesuit Francisco who, as with all other Catholic characters in the play and unlike the representation of Jesuits elsewhere in early modern English, represents a figure of virtue in opposition to the behaviour of the Muslim figures. Francisco warns Vitelli about the dangers of Muslim women, observing that 'You are young/ And may be tempted' (I (iii), ll.7-8), and goes on to describe how:

...these Turkish dames
(Like English mastiffs that increase their fierceness
By being chained up), from restraint of freedom,
If lust once fire in their blood from a fair object,
Will run a course the fiends themselves would shake at
To enjoy their wanton ends.

(I (iii), ll.8-13)

Here the image of the sequestered Muslim women as figures possessing violent libidinal energy, who will go to any lengths to achieve their sexual gratification, seems to bring them in line with the image of the lustful Muslim men found in other early modern texts.

Vitelli, however, is too concerned with the abduction of his sister by the renegado Venetian pirate Grimaldi to be interested in such temptations, telling Francisco:

...I am too full of woe to entertain
One thought of pleasure, though all Europe's queens
Kneeled at my feet and courted me,
(I (iii), ll.14-16)

going on to assert that if he is not tempted by the most alluring of Christian women he is tempted:

...much less
To mix with such whose difference of faith
Must of necessity (or I must grant
Myself neglectful of all you have taught me)
Strangle such base desires.
(I (iii), ll.16-20)

Here Vitelli marks the clear boundary he perceives regarding inter-faith relationships and possibly also hints at the dangers of behaving in a transgressive manner within a powerful alien culture in which he only allowed 'free trading' under sufferance, a situation which has caused him earlier in the play to warn his servant Gazet to 'meddle not with the Turks/ Their manners, nor religion' (I (i), ll.47-48).

In his meeting with Donusa, Vitelli begins by showing her his wares, which include paintings which he tells her are of 'The rarest beauties of the Christian world/ And nowhere to be equalled' (I (iii), l.132-3). Donusa replies that Vitelli is 'partial' and that

she could show him a beauty 'to theirs/ not much inferior' (I (iii), l.136-137) and when Vitelli replies that he is 'incredulous' she makes the gesture on which her career within the play turns and unveils herself, asking Vitelli 'Can you match me this?' (I (iii), l.140), to which he in surprise exclaims 'What wonder look I on!' (I (iii), l.141). The 'wonder' in what Vitelli sees here can be seen to potentially have a double meaning; on a basic level it relates to the beauty of the unveiled Donusa, but could also be seen to relate to the the 'wonder' of the unveiling *per se*. The veiling of Muslim women as a symbol of their sequestration and oppression was commented on by Nicholas de Nicolay where he describes how Turkish women 'Goe with their faces covered' in order to 'bringe their jelous husbands out of suspition, which continually so keepe them under subjection and closed in',⁵²⁴.

This description is repeated, with a slightly more positive slant, in William Lithgow's *A most delectable and true discourse* (1619) where he speaks of Turkish women 'alwaies couering their faces, very modestly with white or black maskes, which are neuer vncouered, till they returne to their houses.'⁵²⁵ Given this perception of the enforcing of the veil, the act of Donusa in unveiling herself to Vitelli has a huge significance. Vitelli himself places two possible interpretations on the gesture by the sultan's niece, describing how:

I have heard among the Turks for any lady
To show her face bare argues love or speaks
Her deadly hatred,

⁵²⁴ Nicholas de Nicolay, *Navigations*, p.60.

⁵²⁵ William Lithgow, *A most delectable and true discourse*, p.58.

(I (iii), l.170-172)

both of which suggest a possible double danger to the Christian male in Muslim lands - the physical threat of violence and the moral threat of seduction by the sexually voracious Muslim women. In the progress of the play Vitelli is to encounter, and overcome, both dangers.

Donusa herself is immediately aware of the transgressive nature of her act and of the danger inherent in her desire for the Christian Vitelli. Once back in her rooms at the palace she asks 'What magic hath transformed me from myself?' (II (i), l.23), going on to ask what has become of her 'virgin pride' (II (i), l.24) and also how she has lost her 'boasted freedom' (II (i), l.25), presumably referring to her freedom from the attractions of the opposite sex. She then makes a statement which, once again, demonstrates the idea of the pent-up libidinal energy of the sequestered Muslim woman as she asks herself:

What new fire burns up
My scorched entrails? What unknown desires
Invade and take possession of my soul,
All virtuous objects vanished?

(II (i), l.25-28)

Here, as elsewhere in the play, Donusa is marked as being otherwise virtuous and chaste, a status challenged only by the arrival of the Christian man Vitelli. Vitelli's visit to Donusa at her rooms in the Viceregal palace marks another transgressive act as, being both male and Christian, his entry into her room breaks the rule regarding the

sequestering of Muslim women. The visit also demonstrates the Christian fantasies of the opulent and sensual nature of the *harem* as when Vitelli enters there is a stage direction describing ‘*A table set forth with jewels and bags upon it. Loud music.*’ Vitelli reacts to the opulent and sensual scene by questioning:

Is not this Tempe? Or the blessed shades
Where innocent spirits reside? Or do I dream,
And this a heavenly vision?

(II (iv), 1.5-7)

This is a reaction which immediately connects the space of the *harem* to paradisiacal classical locations familiar to an early modern audience, and which also seems to suggest depictions of the Muslim paradise in Western writing. Vitelli declares it a ‘sight to glorious to behold/ For such as wretch as I’ (II (iv), 1.8-9) and praises the name of Donusa which, as a password, has brought him ‘safe to this forbidden place/ Where Christians yet ne’er trode’ (II (iv), 1.32-33). The inviolate nature of Donusa’s rooms has been stressed earlier when her own fiancé Mustapha, who is also described as her ‘vassal’ (I (ii) 1.58), arrives to visit her and having removed his shoes describes how:

The place is sacred; and I am to enter
The room where she abides, with such devotion
As pilgrims pay at Mecca when they visit
The tomb of our great prophet.

(I (ii) 1.59-62)

Here Mustapha displays a reverence which marks strongly the transgression constituted by the entry of the Christian Vitelli into Donusa's private rooms.

There is also a gender-reversed replication of the sultan's gifts to his favourite as Donusa, in return for the glass she smashed at Vitelli's stall as a pretext for his coming to the palace, offers him 'bags stuffed full of our imperial coin' (II (iv), l.83) and 'gems for which the slavish Indian dives' (II (iv), l.85), or if that is not enough she offers 'any honor in my gift/ (Which is unbounded as the sultan's power)' (II (iv), l.88-89) and finally makes 'tender' of herself (II (iv), l.102-103). She then declares her love for Vitelli and eventually kisses him and leads him to a 'private room the sunbeams never enter' (II (iv), l.130) and he follows her, declaring that 'virtue's but a word, and no sure guard/ If set upon by beauty and reward' (II (iv), l.136-7), citing two of the chief temptations provided for Christian for conversion to Islam as perceived by early modern commentators: wealth and sex.

This transaction between Donusa and Vitelli will eventually lead him to see her as a type of moral poison and eventually return the gifts she has given to him, using the language of sexual servitude, in other words of prostitution, as he does so. First of all Vitelli returns the 'casket [of jewels]', which he describes as 'the price/ And salary of your lust' (III (v), ll.48-49) and then his 'cloak and doublet' which he calls 'sin's gay trappings, the proud livery/ Of wicked pleasure' (III (v), ll.50-51) and which he describes as 'but worn and heated/ With the fire of entertainment and consent' (III (v), ll.51-52) which has torn off 'flesh and reputation both together' (III (v), ll.54). This description of the gifts with which Donusa has showered her lover seems to echo the descriptions of the sultan's

rewarding of his concubines, but with the vital inversion of the gender of the parties to the transaction; it can also be seen as a classic case of the financial allure of ‘turning Turk’, so often cited as a cause of conversion in early modern texts.

Here Vitelli seems to have come perilously close to the dangers of conversion through sexual attraction, as well as through the receipt of material reward, and has started to manifest the features of conversion outlined by Daniel Vitkus where he describes the ‘The Flesh, the Church of Rome, and the Turk’ as ‘material means for the Devil to achieve his ends’ and identifies conversion to Islam or Roman Catholicism as ‘a kind of sexual transgression or spiritual whoredom.’⁵²⁶ Yet Vitelli’s defiance is clearly stated as, when he is captured by Assambeg and Mustapha and he declares that ‘What punishment/ So’er I undergo, I am still a Christian (III (v), l.95).

The reaction of Donusa’s fiancé Mustapha to what has happened between her and Vitelli is shown as he questions Asambeg how she, as ‘the wonder and amazement of Her sex, the pride and glory of the empire’ (III (iii), ll.66-67), who has ‘distained you, slighted me, and boasted/ A frozen coldness which no appetite/ Or height of blood could thaw’ (III (iii), ll.68-70), could:

...now so far

Be hurried with the violence of her lust,
As in it burying her high birth and fame,
Basely descended to fill a Christian’s arms
And to yield her virgin honor up –

⁵²⁶ Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p.78.

Nay, Sue him to take it

(III (iii), ll.69-75)

This fury displayed by Muslim characters at the idea of a sexual relationship between a Muslim woman and a Christian man can be contrasted with the Western Christian perception of the Muslim taking of Christian women (including in *The Renegado* Paula, the sister of Vitelli) which will be examined in the next section, creating a further impression of Muslim hypocrisy. Yet it is not just the fact of Vitelli's religion which offends Mustapha, but also his social status. Mustapha describes how Vitelli is 'No Prince disguised; no man of mark, nor honor/ No daring undertaker in our service' (III (iii), ll. 79-80) but rather is 'one whose lip her foot should scorn to touch/ A poor mechanic peddler' (III (iii), ll.81-82). Asambeg reacts to this information by stating that 'Never yet/ This flesh felt such a fever' (III (iii), ll.91-92) and concludes that:

... should our Prophet
(Whose name I bow to) in a vision speak this,
'Twould make me doubtful of my faith!

(III (iii), ll.93-95)

This provides an example of Muhammad as guarantor of truth which would have seemed ironic to a Christian audience, for whom, as shown earlier, he would have stood as a symbol of deceit and perfidy. The arrest of the two lovers then provokes Donusa to demand imperiously 'Under what law/ Am I to fall, that set my foot upon/ Your statutes and decrees?' (III (v), ll.7-9), to which Mustapha replies that 'The crime committed/ Our Alcoran calls death (III (v), ll.10-11), setting up the situation in which Donusa must seek

to convert and marry Vitelli or die and which eventually results in her trial and conversion to Christianity.

‘Our loves like our religions are at warres/ And I disclaim all peace’⁵²⁷: Muslim Men and Christian Women

The words of Julia to the devious and ‘lustfull Turke’ Mulleasses in John Mason’s *The Turke*, quoted in the title above, sum up as well as any other statement the relationship between Muslim men and Christian women in the ‘Turk plays.’ In *Traffic and Turning* Jonathan Burton says of the inter-faith relationships which these plays depict that Christian men ‘frequently experience desire for Muslim women and possess the exclusive power to redeem Muslim people and lead them to conversion’ and are ‘repeatedly threatened with religio-moral corruption, ostensibly culminating in circumcision and conversion.’ Burton also observes that ‘Christian women, on the other hand, are threatened almost exclusively in terms of the body’ and that ‘The lustful Muslims, both male and female, who pursue them show no interest in their conversion’, while they in turn:

[...] Unlike their male coreligionists [...] have no power to convert the Muslims who prey on them. Their only power lies in the ability to resist Muslim seduction with chastity and devotion to Christian men.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷ John Mason, Fernand Legarde (ed.), *the Turke* (Salzburg: Institut Für Anglistik Und Amerikanistik Universität, 1979), Act V (iii), ll.42-43.

⁵²⁸ Burton, *Traffic*, p.109. Burton also points out that there are also women in the Turk plays who succumb to the allure of Muslim men, as with Timoclea in John Mason’s *The Turke* (1610). These women, Burton observes, usually becoming involved in a situation where ‘She willingly betrays her Christian ethics for a Muslim lover who typically spurns or manipulates her’ (p.118).

This is generally the case in the Turk plays, yet there are occasions when the situation is reversed. As I have already shown in the case of Vitelli in *The Renegado*, the threat posed to him is certainly partly physical, although with the usual overtones of the ‘religio-moral’, as he replicates the dangers of entry into the seraglio for Christian women in a role-reversal brought about through his feminised relation to Donusa and in the case of Paulina, as I will show, the threat is certainly perceived as partly ‘religio-moral’.

Generally, however, Burton’s observation that in the Turk plays ‘Christian women are generally imagined as devoted to Christianity and repulsed by Muslim men who threaten it’ holds true and his further point that ‘In their contrived encounters with Muslim men, they are provided with a site in which they may exercise their strength without posing a threat to Christian patriarchy’⁵²⁹ also holds true for most of the relationships in these plays. Yet these women often also seem to represent Christendom itself and the idea of their ‘conquest’ by the Muslim men is tied to anxieties of Muslim conquest of Christian lands, while their resistance (which in one case becomes a military resistance) also seems to underline the resistance of Christian nations to the spread of Islamic empire and of Islam as religion.

In constructing these ‘lustful Turks’ the image of the concupiscent Muhammad found in the polemic biographies is always in the background; indeed, in a scene of Mason’s *the Turke*, Julia has the following interchange with Mulleases:

Jul: Heathen prophane.

Mul: Be gentle Madam.

Julia: If thou beest gentle and leave me *Mahomet*

⁵²⁹ Burton, *Traffic*, p.109.

(V (iii), ll.39-41)

Here Julia is clearly seen to associate the lascivious nature of Mulleases with that of Muhammad and this, along with the theme of Muslim conquest and violence, which, as I will discuss in the next section of this thesis, is also heavily indebted to the Muhammad of the polemic biographies. It is the depiction of women as representatives of Christian resistance to the dual Islamic threats of sexuality and violence which are central to the construction of the relationships between Muslim men and Christian women in the Turk plays and the plays place Christian women in a symbolic relationship to their homelands and religion. In order to examine the permutations in these inter-faith/inter-gender relations I will examine the events in Thomas Kyd's *Soliman & Perseda* (1592), Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West* (I (c.1597-1604) & II (c.1630)) and Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (Printed 1630).

'Persida growes resolute': Thomas Kyd's *Solimon & Perseda* (1592)

The sultan Soliman's desire for the Rhodian maiden Perseda is, as with the actions of the sultan in Painter's 'Hyrenee the Faire Greeke', seemingly symbolic of his desire to conquer her homeland and indeed by the end of the play it will be Perseda herself who, dressed as a 'Gentleman', will physically combat Soliman in defence of the island. At the beginning of the play the sultan, who is an ahistoric representation of Süleyman the Magnificent (in this case without his Machiavellian wife Roxellana), manifests his desire for conquest of the island in a scene which also depicts demonstrates perception of the

violence of the Ottoman court by having Soliman's brother Amurath kill the other brother Haleb, after which Soliman kills Amurath.⁵³⁰

Erastus, the Christian man to whom Perseda will remain faithful during the play, is presented as a valiant and honourable knight who is described by the Turkish warrior Brusor. In his description to Solimon of Erastus' performance at an international (and interfaith) tournament at Rhodes, Brusor tells the sultan how 'I never saw, except your excellence/ A man whose presence more delighted me' ⁵³¹ (III (i), ll.20-21), going on to declare that 'had he worshipt Mahomet for Christ/ He might have borne me through out all the word' (III (i), ll.23-24). The play has previously shown Erastus being exiled from Rhodes and when he arrives at the sultan's court he is welcomed and promises to become '*Solimans* adopted friend' (III (i), l.100), under the conditions that he 'may have libertie to live a Christian' (III (i), l.96) and also that he not be forced to assist in the conquest of Rhodes and 'sheath my slaughtering blade/ In the deare bowels of my countrimen' (III (i), l.124-125). Instead he asks to be employed in 'forraine wars' (III (i), l.130) against 'Persians, or the barbarous Moore' (III (i), l.131-132), Islamic enemies against whom it is acceptable for him to fight.

Perseda is presented to Soliman as 'Part of the spoile of Rhodes' (IV (i), l.66) after the island has fallen to the Turks. Erastus has already given a speech bemoaning this conquest in which he laments that his home is:

...is lost, or els destroyed;

⁵³⁰ This scene is dealt with in later in the section on violence.

⁵³¹ From: F.S. Boas (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

If not destroyed, yet bound and captivate;
If captivate then forst from holy faith;
If forst from faith, for ever miserable:
For what is misery but want of God?
And God is lost, if faith be overthrown.

(IV (i), ll.19-24)

This is a classic statement of the Christian fear of the consequences of Muslim conquest and also of the nature of Islam as alienated from the 'true' God. Soliman's first sight of Perseda is typical of the Muslim ruler's first sight of his Christian beloved in the Turk plays, as he states that 'This present pleaseth more than all the rest' (IV (i), ll.68) and he embarks on an enraptured soliloquy in which Perseda is anatomised in a series of classical metaphors and similes (IV (i), ll.68-87), concluding with the statement that 'A sweeter creature nature nevr made/ Love never tainted *Soliman* till now' (IV (i), ll.89-90).

When Soliman requests to hear Perseda speak, her first words immediately announce the beginning of her resistance as she states that she can speak of nothing but 'griefe and death' (IV (i), ll.91). As Soliman attempts to seduce her, gently at first, his approaches are rebuffed. When he asks her 'how dooth they heart admit/ The pure affection of great Soliman?' (IV (i), ll.97-98), she replies, indicating the strength of her resolution, that 'My thoughts are like pillars of Adamant/ Too hard to take a new impression' (IV (i), ll.99-100). At this point Soliman changes his technique and moves into the arena of threats and power displays, observing that 'my stooping makes her proud' (IV (i), ll.101) and that as she is his 'vassaile' he will 'commaund' (IV (i),

ll.102) instead. He threatens Perseda, asking her ‘Coye Virgin, knowest thou what offence it is/ To thwart the will and pleasure of a king?’ (IV (i), ll.103-104) and observing that ‘thy life is done, if I but say the word’ (IV (i), ll.105), provoking Perseda to reply that death is ‘the period that my heart desires’ (IV (i), ll.106).

At this point of the play there are echoes of the cruelty of the sultan in the story of Hyrene the ‘Faire Greeke’, but with a very different purpose and outcome, as the following exchange takes place:

Soliman: And die thou shalt, unlesse thou change thy minde.

Perseda: Nay then, Perseda growes resolute:

Solimans thoughts and mine resemble
Lines parallel that never can be joined.

Soliman: Then kneele thou downe,

And at my hands receive the stroake of death,
Domde to thy selfe by thine owne wilfulness.

(IV (i), ll.107-114)

Yet in this instance Soliman is unable to carry out his threat, describing how:

[...] Her milke white necke, that Alabaster tower
Twill breake the edge of my keene Semitor,
And peeces flying back will wound my selfe

(IV (i), ll.122-124)

He gets Brusor to cover her face so that he cannot be distracted by her beauty, but at this point Perseda cries out 'O Christ, receive my soule' (IV (i), ll.127-128), causing Soliman to lose his resolve as he declares, 'she calls on Christ/ I will not send her to him' (IV (i), ll.128-129). Soliman now tells Perseda that 'Love would not let me kill thee' (IV (i), ll.133) and makes a symbolic surrender to her:

Though Majestie would turn desire to wrath.
There lyes my sword, humbled at thy feete;
And I myself, that governe many kings,
Intreate a pardon for my rash misdeed.

(IV (i), ll.134-137)

At this point the influence of the Christian Perseda seems to have brought about an act of contrition and surrender in the Muslim ruler, yet this never approaches the potential for conversion. In fact at this point Perseda admonishes Soliman, telling him that in enacting surrender he 'wrongs his imperiall state' (IV (i), ll.138) and works quickly to exploit his declaration of love to request the 'boone' that she be allowed to 'live a Christian Virgin still/ Unlesse my state shall alter by my will' (IV (i), ll.142-144), seemingly enforcing on Soliman a prohibition on her conversion or rape. Soliman accepts and observes that 'What shoud he doe with crowne and Emperie/ That cannot governe private fond affections' (IV (i), ll.145-146), a statement which seems to echo, in far less sanguinary terms, the story of the sultan and the fair Greek. Soliman asks Perseda to give him 'leave in honest sort to court thee' (IV (i), ll.147), but at this point Erastus enters and he and Perseda reaffirm their love: Perseda has passed the test and

is seemingly rewarded by being fortuitously reunited with the Christian man to whom she has remained faithful.

In the opening section of the play the threat, as proposed by Burton's formula, is to Perseda's body rather than to her religious and moral identity, and, although her request to remain a 'Christian Virgin' does seem to hint at the potential of conversion, there is no attempt made by Soliman to persuade her into accepting anything except his advances. Soliman seems to give Perseda and her lover, the ideal Christian knight Erastus, his blessing, observing at their reunion that 'I well perceive/ That heavens and heavenly powers do manage love' (IV (i), ll.169-170). He goes on to state that as he loves them both he will 'joyne their hands whose hearts are knit already' (IV (i) ll.173-174), and marries them.

Yet the type of the jealous and insatiable Muslim tyrant immediately reasserts itself as immediately after the ceremony he states that 'I now repent/ That ere I gave away my hearts desire' (IV (i), ll.108-109/, and goes on to describe how 'I shall love her still, and lack her still,/ Like ever thirsting, wretched *Tantalus*' (IV (i) ll.217-218).

Eventually he finds means to contrive the death of Erastus, whom by that time he has made Lord Governor of Rhodes, through the false accusation of treason for which he is sentenced by the judge to be 'strangled as our Turkish order is' (V (ii) ll.84).

Soliman expresses regret for having to kill Erastus, but puts the blame on his uncontrollable desire, stating:

Ah that Perseda were not half so faire,

Or that Soliman were not so fond,
Or that Perseda had some other love,
Whose death might save my poore Erastus life.

(V (ii) ll.8-11)

Here the uncontrollable nature of the Muslim leader's passion is made the root of his treachery as he turns on his friend and takes his life through deceitful means, recalling the perfidious natures and underhand plotting of the Islamic characters discussed earlier in this thesis.

The death of Erastus leaves Pereda to face Soliman alone as he comes to Rhodes to take her. By this time she is described as the 'cheiftaine' (V (iii), l.85) of the island and when Soliman arrives she puts up a literal physical resistance to the 'great Turque' (V (iii), l.84) and challenges him on his arrival, having introduced herself in male disguise as 'a Gentleman, and thy mortal enemies' (V (iv), l.24), telling him how:

...in Erastus name ile combat thee;
And here I promise thee on my Christian faith,
Then will I yield *Perseda* to thy hands,
If that thy strength shall over match my right,
To use as to thy liking shall seeme best.

(V (iv), ll.29-33)

Here there is a seeming inversion of the patriarchal order which Burton observes Christian women as defending in the Turk plays; Perseda as 'chieftain' certainly is not a female figure constructed to 'perform the compromising roles filled by overpowered

English men in travellers' narratives,⁵³² nor is she an example of Burton's contention that in their 'contrived encounters with Muslim men' Christian women in the Turk plays were 'provided with a site in which they may exercise their strength without posing a threat to Christian patriarchy.'⁵³³ Instead she seems to occupy the traditionally male role of military, and not merely moral, defender of Christianity, or of the Christian state. By occupying the role of military commander Perseda does not seem to defend the existing patriarchal order, but rather to subvert it.

There is an echo, in this presentation of a woman as occupying the traditionally male military role of the speech of August 9 1588 by Elizabeth I at Tilbury before the arrival of the Spanish Armada, where the Queen stated to her soldiers that she was 'resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live and die amongst you all' and 'to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people mine honour and my blood even in the dust.'⁵³⁴ Elizabeth's claim, despite having 'the body but of a weak and feeble woman', to have the 'heart and stomach of a king and of a King of England too,'⁵³⁵ and her stated intention to defend her kingdom personally and physically also situated her in the traditional 'patriarchal' role, highlighting the performability of this supposedly male position. Eventually Soliman kills Perseda in hand to hand combat and in her final ironic 'yielding' of a kiss she outwits the sultan, having placed poison on her lips, an end which seems to suggest that a Christian woman should defend herself even to the death against the sexual predations of a Muslim man.

⁵³² Burton, *Traffic*, p.109.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p.109.

⁵³⁴ Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller & Mary Beth Rose (eds.), *Elizabeth I: the Collected Works* (London & Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.326.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.326.

'Elizabeth' in Fez: Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West*

The echoes of Elizabeth I are even stronger in Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West*, the first part of which was written c.1597 at the end of Elizabeth's reign, although the sequel was produced some thirty years later c.1630.⁵³⁶ The title character is a young English virgin named Bess (Elizabeth) and is, in fact, the only English, as opposed to simply Christian, woman to be pursued by a Muslim man in the 'Turk plays' examined in this thesis - *Soliman & Perseda*'s Perseda is a Rhodian and Paulina in *The Renegado* a Venetian. As Nabil Matar points out in *Britain and Barbary*, there were significant links between British women and North Africa in the early modern period. In the second half of the seventeenth century Matar states that Tangier alone 'boasted two hundred wives of [Christian] soldiers and traders and seventy widows and single women.'⁵³⁷ Matar also describes the way in which 'The lives of women were changed as a result of the captivity of their kinsmen in the Barbary region' which meant that 'women had to acquire agency in order to conduct their affairs independently of patriarchal authority.'⁵³⁸

The women that Matar describes exercised agency through the petitioning of the monarch and parliament to negotiate the release of their menfolk, whereas in the *Fair Maid of West* Bess goes one step further by organising and commanding her own mission to Fez in order to recover (as she thinks) the body of her lover Spencer, consequently going even further than the politically active female petitioners in assuming a traditionally male role.

⁵³⁶ The dating of both plays is controversial; for a discussion of dating see: Robert K. Turner, 'Introduction', Thomas Heywood, *The Fair Maid of the West: Parts I and II* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1968), xi-xiv. All quotations are from this edition of the play.

⁵³⁷ Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary (1589 -1689)* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2005), p.78.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.78.

Matar also provides accounts of English women living in the harems of North Africa, including the remarkable story of Balquees, a captive English woman who had risen to become ‘the “great” (*odima*) Sultana of Morocco’ during the reign of Queen Anne and who maintained a correspondence with English monarch on an equal footing as a ‘queen’ in her own adoptive land.⁵³⁹

Yet, as Matar points out, ‘In regard to the condition of women in captivity, Heywood evidently did not have much of a clue when he created the fantastic portrait of Bess’, with his stage representation being ‘quite different from the Mediterranean reality.’⁵⁴⁰ Matar states that captive Christian women, including those from England were ‘confined in the boudoirs of Muslim rulers, husbands and masters and were not à la Bess, dominating the courts and hearts of Moorish kings.’⁵⁴¹ Yet given the clear parallel made between Bess and Queen Elizabeth I in the plays there seems to be in *The Fair Maid of the West* the construction of a fantasy in which the Virgin Queen of England is able to dominate the monarch of a North African state, a concept borne out by the praise lavished on the English queen by the character of Mullisheg in his discussion of the virtues of the ‘other’ Bess’s name.

The echoes of Elizabeth I in the character of Bess go far beyond her name, nationality and virginal status, as she is very much the leader of the men aboard her ship the ‘*Negro*’ on their mission to rescue her lover Spencer from the Kingdom of Fez, which has her displaying an agency far in excess of that displayed by female relatives of British

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p.101.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p.93.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., p.93.

captives at the time. As the character Roughman, one of the two devoted 'gallants' who accompany her, states in support of her status as leader:

May that man die derided and accurs'd
That will not follow where a woman leads

(IV (iv), ll.17-18)

The Muslim man who will fall in love with Bess, again at first sight, is Mullisheg, the King of Fez, and from his first appearance he is given the standard features of the lustful Muslim ruler, evidenced by his words on his entry following his victory over 'all Barbary (IV (iii), l.7):

...But what's the style of king
Without his pleasure? Find us concubines,
The fairest Christian damsels you can hire
Or buy for Gold

(IV (iii), ll.27-30)

Mullisheg's Pasha Joffer also comments that 'Who else are worthy to be libertines/ But such as bear the sword?' (IV (iii), ll.35-36), connecting lustfulness with the violence also perceived to be an inherent feature of Islam. Mullisheg also gives Muhammad as the justification for his desire to create a 'terrestrial heaven' (IV (iii), l.38), observing that 'our god shall be our pleasure/ for so our Meccan prophet warrants us' (IV (iii), ll.39-40).

It is worth noting that the selection of Fez as the location for the play is in itself significant, given the friendly relations between England and Morocco, and indeed with the Ottoman Turks, during the reign of Elizabeth. The crucial nature of the relationship between England and Morocco during the reign of Elizabeth may go some way to explaining the reason that in Part One of *The Fair Maid of the West*, written during Elizabeth's reign, Mullisheg and the other inhabitants of Fez are seen to behave generally honorably. Though still fulfilling the role of the 'lustful' Muslim, Mullisheg's lust is not acted upon, and presents no real threat to Bess and Spencer. In the sequel, however, written thirty years later during the reign of Charles, a monarch, like his father James I, driven less by pragmatism and more by Islamophobia in his relations with the Muslim world, the situation alters and the Muslim figures display a more threatening and actively deceitful and lustful aspect.

In Part One of the play Mullisheg is introduced to Bess through the description given to him by Joffer, and tells the Pasha how 'Thou hast inflam'd our spirits' (V (i), 1.3). The scene then turns into one where negotiations and diplomacy vie with sexual desire, as Bess presents herself to the king. Before her appearance Goodlack follows ahead and asks the king to give an assurance that Bess will be 'free from violence' (V (i), 1.25).

Mullisheg assents to this request and states:

...by the mighty prophet we adore,
She shall live lady of her free desires;
'Tis love, not force, must quench our amorous fires

(V (i), ll.26-28)

This oath of non-molestation is honoured by Mullisheg during the first part of the play and, similarly to Soliman in *Soliman & Perseda*, Mullisheg is actually responsible for marrying Bess to her Christian lover Spencer on their reunion. Yet Mullisheg is still sexually obsessed with Bess and on his first sight of her seems to compare her to one of the women of the Islamic heaven, stating:

I am amazed!
This is no mortal creature I behold,
But some bright angel that is dropp'd from heaven
Sent by our prophet.

(V (i), ll.33-36)

At the least this statement shows that a sexually alluring woman is evidently considered by Mullisheg as something that might be provided by the prophet of Islam, as evidenced by the Western perceptions of the status of the *houris* discussed earlier. Mullisheg has never seen an English woman before and his impression of what England must be like, created by Bess, once again has him make a seeming allusion to the Muslim heaven as he observes that 'That English earth may well be term'd a heaven/ That breeds such divine beauties' (V (i), ll.43-44) as the 'beautious English virgin' (V (i), l.49) now in his presence and asks that she 'Make me sure/ That thou art mortal by one friendly touch' (V (i), ll.44-45).

At this point Bess goes into a defensive mode, warning Mullisheg to 'Keep off' (V (i), l.46) and stating that she 'will have no commerce with Mullisheg' until her demands are met, but instead will 'leave [...] as I came' (V (i), l.47). There is a possible sexual

undertone to Bess's use of 'commerce' here and this is reinforced by what seems to be an allusion to maintaining her virginity in the statement that she will leave 'as I came' unless Mullisheg accedes to her wishes, yet this is also a statement which underlines the nature of English activity in 'Barbary' at the time of the play. Bess now sends Goodlack forward to read a series of demands which take a form very similar to those found in the correspondence between Elizabeth I and the Ottoman Sultan Murad III negotiating English trade 'privileges'; these demands include free passage and safe conduct, freedom from violence and permission to reprovision, all of which are standard demands of an early modern trade treaty.⁵⁴² When Mullisheg has agreed to all her demands Bess grants him a kiss, stating 'Tis no immodest thing/ You ask, nor shame for Bess to kiss a king' (V (i), ll.65-66).

After this sexually loaded piece of diplomatic negotiation there is a discussion of Bess's name, which draws further comparison between the figure of the English virgin in the play and that of Elizabeth I. On finding out that Bess's full name is Elizabeth, Mullisheg comments that:

⁵⁴² In her 1592 Letters Patent to the merchants of the Levant company Elizabeth lists the concessions which her representatives, including the first ambassador to the Porte William Harborne, have won from the 'Grand Signior', namely the 'amitie, safetie and freedom for trade and trafficke of merchandize to be used and continued by our subjects within his sayd dominion.' (*The second letters Patents graunted vy the Queenes Maiestie to the Right worshipfull companie of the English Marchants for the Leuant, the seuenth of Ianuarie 1592*, in: Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, X, Ch.73).

The basic contents of these concession seem to be echoed by Bess's demands in the *Fair Maid of the West*, which in full read as:

First, liberty for her and hers to leave the land at her pleasure.
Next, safe conduct to and from her ship at her own discretion.
Thirdly, to be free from all violence either by the king or any of his people.
Fourthly, to allow her mariners fresh victuals aboard.
Fifthly, to offer no further violence to her person than what he seeks by kindly usage and free entreaty.

(V (i), ll.51-58)

There's virtue in that name.
The virgin queen, so famous through the world,
The mighty empress of the maiden isle,
Whose predecessors have o'errun great France,
Whose powerful hand doth still support the Dutch
And still keeps the potent King of Spain in awe,
Is she not titled so?

(V (i), ll.88-94)

The opportunity for a little post-Armada jingoism is taken here, as well as reinforcing Bess's connection to the other Elizabeth as both virginal and English. Bess modestly denies the comparison, calling Elizabeth 'the only phoenix of her age' and 'The pride and glory of the Western Isles' (V (i), ll 99-100) and then assents to Mullisheg's request that she herself 'let your presence beautify our throne' (V (i), l.106) at his court sessions. From this point on to the end of Part One of *Fair Maid of the West* Mullisheg behaves honourably towards Bess.

It is in the Caroline sequel that Mullisheg begins to display the duplicity and sexual voracity more usual in the figures of Islamic leaders on the English stage, as indeed does his queen Tota, who decides to seduce Bess's beloved Spencer as revenge for her husband's obsession with the English girl. Part Two opens with Tota making a speech stating her thirst for revenge for becoming 'A mere neglected lady here in Fez' (I (i), l.3) as Mullisheg pursues his obsession with 'the English stranger' (I (i), l.8), on whom Tota does not want revenge because, as she says, 'there's no apprehension/ That can in thought pollute her innocence' (I (i), l.9-10). Tota decides that as 'Moors are treacherous' (I (i), l.28) she will have to use one of 'the English lady's train' (I (i), l.42) in order to carry out

her plans and after a comic exchange with the tapster Clem settles on Roughman whom she bribes and flatters. Her behaviour makes Roughman think that ‘This queen’s in love with me’ (I (i), l.128) and when he tries to kiss her she asks him:

Thinkest thou I could love a monkey, a baboon?
Know, were I mounted in the height of lust
And a mere prostitute, rather than thee
I’d embrace one

(I (i), ll.152-155)

This comic misreading by Roughman of the queen’s intentions seems to stem from an Englishman’s expectation of the ‘lustful’ Muslim women who cannot resist the Christian, particularly English, man. Yet until the end of the play Tota shows little interest in passion or love, and pursues Spencer simply to carry out her revenge on Mullisheg in a ‘like-for-like’ cuckolding of the king.

Mullisheg enlists the other gallant Goodlack to assist him in his attempt to seduce Bess, slipping him a note which reads ““To make Bess mine, some secret devise/ To thine of height and heart I’ll make thee rise” (I (i), ll.309-310). Goodlack reacts angrily to this attempt to suborn him, calling the ink of the letter ‘the blood of basilisks’ (I (i), l.311) and going onto to state that:

...’Tis unparallel’d
To strumpet a chaste lady, injure him
That rates her honor dearer than his life;
T’employ a friend in treasons ’gainst a friend

(I (i), ll.320-323)

Here the view of Muslim men as deceitful procurors of women is restated, an image to which Goodlack adds a further racial element by asking:

Who but a Moor,
Of all that bears man's shape likest a devil,
Could have devis'd this horror?

(I (i), ll.328-330)

The situation is resolved as Goodlack and Roughman engineer events so that Mullisheg and the queen, under cover of darkness, end up sleeping with each other while thinking themselves with their Christian lovers, consequently avoiding the exposure of Bess and Spencer to the 'dangers' of inter-faith sexuality and allowing the Christian couple to flee the country.

**'Mewed up in his seraglio and in danger/ Not alone to lose her honor, but her soul':
the Captivity and 'Conversion' of Paulina in *The Renegado***

In Philip Massinger's play *The Renegado* (printed 1630) the captivity of Paulina, the sister of the Christian merchant Vitelli, by the Muslim 'viceroy of Tunis' Asambeg suggests danger to more than the bodies of Christian women, although this perception lies in the observations of a Christian man. At the opening of the play Vitelli and the Jesuit Francisco discuss the abduction of his sister and the danger which she is in. Francisco mentions the 'shame of Venice' (I (i), l.105), the 'perjured renegade' (I (i), l.106) Antonio Grimaldi (the 'renegado' of the title), at which point Vitelli states that 'His name/ Is poison to me' (I (i), l.105-106). The cause of this violent antipathetic reaction is

then clarified by Francisco as he discusses with Vitelli how Grimaldi is ‘The thief that ravished your fair sister from you,/ The virtuous Paulina’ (I (i), l.112-113) and goes on to describe how Grimaldi has:

Sold to the viceroy a fair Christian virgin;
On whom, maugre his fierce and cruel nature,
Asambeg dotes extremely.

(I (i), l.115-117)

Vitelli immediately knows that this is his sister and swears revenge, saying that he will ‘with this poniard, before his face,/ Dig out Grimaldi’s heart’ (I (i), l.126-127). The classic set-up for the encounter between Muslim man and Christian woman has been established; she is captive of a Muslim man who now ‘dotes’ on her. Yet the concern of Vitelli in this play extends to more than just Paulina’s physical wellbeing. When Francisco seeks to calm Vitelli, asking him if his thirst for revenge is ‘religious’, the young man replies:

Would you have me tame now? Can I know my sister
Mewed up in his seraglio and in danger
Not alone to lose her honor, but her soul...

(I (i), l.128-130)

Here Vitelli is clearly concerned about Paulina being forced into apostacy, a matter which is not an explicit concern in relation to women in any of the other Turk plays, although the reiteration of protestations of devotion to Christianity by the women in these plays

possibly alludes to such a perceived danger. Vitelli goes on to describe how he cannot be calm while Paulina's captor Asambeg:

... by force and flattery, compels her
To yield her fair name up to his foul lust,
And after, turn apostate to the faith
That she was bred in.

(I (i), l.136-139)

Here Vitelli explicitly parallels the risk to Paulina's body with the risk to her soul and the matter of conversion (or the at least the promise of conversion and the desire of the Muslim male to secure it from a Christian women) has vital relevance to Paulina's action later in the play.

In her relationship with her male Muslim captor Asambeg, Paulina displays the classic resistance of the chaste Christian women to the obsessive and besotted Muslim admirer. She is described as 'the Christian captive/ The great basha is so enamored of' (I (ii), ll.1-2) and in the first scene depicting Paulina and Asambeg alone a by now familiar pattern can be observed. Firstly Asambeg showers Paulina with hyperbolic praises of her beauty as 'Of al perfection' (II (v), l.120), going on to say how:

...Any simile
Borrowed from diamonds or the fairest stars,
To help me express how dear I prize
They unmatched grace, will rise up and chide me

For poor detraction.

(II (v), ll.120-124)

She then gives a defiant reply as she tells him how 'I despise thy flatteries/Thus spit at 'em and scorn 'em' (II (v), ll.124-125) and tells him how she is 'armed/ In the assurance of my innocent virtue' (II (v), ll.125-126) and against

... all doubts, all fears, all tortures
Thy barbarous cruelty (or what's worse, thy dotage,
The worthy parent of thy jealousy)
Can shower upon me.

(II (v), ll.127-130),

concluding with a parallel rejection of the man and his religion as she tells Asambeg 'Thou art false/ Falser than thy religion' (II (v), ll.135-136). This scene evidently does not show Asambeg as having any interest in the conversion of Paulina, which agrees with Jonathan Burtons's contention that the 'lustful Muslims, both male and female, who pursue them show no interest in their conversion.'⁵⁴³ Yet in a later scene, following the apostacy of Donusa and the sentencing of her and Vitelli to death, it is Asambeg's interest in Paulina's conversion that provides the diversionary tactic which allows the couple to escape.

As soon as Donusa has made her declaration of apostacy with her cry of 'False prophet!/ Imposter Mahomet!' (V (iii), ll.132-133) and is sentenced to death by

⁵⁴³ Burton, *Traffic*, p.109.

Asambeg, Paulina is heard to laugh. When Asambeg questions her about her laughter she explains that no woman could 'hold her spleen'(V (iii), l.139) when 'two contrary effects/ Spring up upon a sudden' (V (iii), ll.142-143). She goes on to explain that:

That which hath fooled her in her death, wins me,
That hitherto have barred myself from pleasure,
To love in all delight.

(V (iii), ll.145-147)

It is now that Asambeg shows his pleasure in what she seems to be saying, commenting that 'There's music in this' (V (iii), l. 146) and Paulina continues to describe to him how she will:

...run as fiercely to your arms
As ever longing woman did, borne high
On the swift wings of appetite.

(V (iii), ll.147-148)

In her reply to this statement her brother Vitelli, who knows nothing of her plan, calls her a 'devil' (V (iii), l.150). It is now that Paulina explicitly states what she promises as she tells Asambeg that 'there shall be no odds betwixt us: I will turn Turk'(V (iii), ll.151), drawing a comment from the servant Gazet which demonstrates the proverbial linking of conversion to Islam with prostitution as he comments aside 'Most of your tribe do so/

When they begin in whore' (V (iii), ll. 152-153).⁵⁴⁴ Asambeg now asks Paulina if she is serious and she tells him that if he will:

...satisfy me in a suit
That to the world may witness that I have
Some power upon you,
(V (iii), ll.154-156)

Then she will put 'Whatever's in my gift [...] At your dispose' (V (iii), l.157), seeming to mean her conscience and her body, provoking Gazet to comment that this statement is 'ever the subscription/ To a damned whore's false epistle' (V (iii), l.158). It is now that Paulina requests a twelve-hour stay of execution for her brother and Donusa, during which, she tells Asambeg, she wishes to 'triumph o'er this wretched woman' (V (iii), l.164), declaring that 'For one night a sultana is my slave' (V (iii), l.173) and causing Donusa's former fiancé Mustapha to call her 'A terrible little tyranness' (V (iii), l.174) as Asambeg displays his joy by stating that he was 'Till now ne'er happy!' (V (iii), l.176).

In this scene, although the 'conversion' is not instigated by Assambeg his reaction seems to demonstrate that the conversion of the Christian woman is certainly something which he devoutly desires: the reactions of Vitelli and Gazet, demonstrate the plausibility and anathematic nature of such a conversion. The fact that Paulina's promise of conversion is merely a ruse to allow the escape of her brother and his newly Christianised wife has no

⁵⁴⁴ On the use of the term 'turning Turk' as a euphemism for prostitution in the early modern period, see: Danel Vitkus, 'Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol.48, No.2 (Summer, 1997), pp.157-9.

bearing on the reactions of the other characters in the scene, who at the moment of her making it consider it to be a reality, although the subsequent revelation of its falsity confirms once again the power of the virtuous Christian woman to resist her Muslim captor, and even the rectitude of the use of such a seemingly blasphemous deception in securing an escape from Muslim captivity.

Echoes of ‘the Sultanate of the Women’: The Machiavellian Wife of Süleyman

Ironically, the early modern period was a time when the position of women within the Imperial family of the Ottoman Empire was in the ascendant. The influence of the women within the Ottoman royal household increased so much during this period that the era from c.1534 (when Sultan Süleyman married his *haseki* (favourite) slave concubine Hurrem, known in the West as ‘Roxelana’), through to 1651 and the death of the powerful *valide sultan* (Sultan’s mother), Kösem Sultan is commonly known by historians of the Ottoman Empire as ‘the Sultanate of the Women.’⁵⁴⁵ In this period when the position of Ottoman women ran from that of close advisor, as in the case of Hurrem, to being *de facto* ruler of the empire in the case of Kösem Sultan first during the Sultanate of her husband Ahmed I and subsequently as mother of sultans Murad IV and Ibrahim and grandmother of Mehmed IV, all of whom she dominated and controlled. There are a few clear suggestions of the potential power of Ottoman women in some of the

⁵⁴⁵ For a detailed description of this period and of the place of the institution of the *harem* within Ottoman imperial politics, see: Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

plays of the early modern period, most particularly in ‘A Cruell Facte of Soltan Sulyman’ from William Painter’s *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7), which was the source for Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha* (1609), in which the wife of Solyman/Soliman (Süleyman) Rossa (based on Hurrem) is seen to dominate and manipulate the besotted Sultan, eventually persuading him to kill his son Mustapha and leave the way clear for her own son to accede to the throne.⁵⁴⁶

The version of this story in Painter’s *Palace of Pleasure* introduces its central character, the Sultan Süleyman, as ‘the disnaturall part of that late Furiose Enemy of God, and his Sonne Christ’ and then goes on to state that the story will be told in order that:

[...] it continue in man’s remembraunce thereby to renue the suncient detestation, which we have, and our Progenitors has against the horrible Termagent, the Persecutor of Christians...⁵⁴⁷

Here, as with the polemic biographies, is a clear statement of polemic purpose in the relating of a story centred on an Islamic figure. The text goes on to describe how Süleyman:

This Hellysh Champyon hys owne Sonne, of hys owne Seede, Naturally conceived within hys mother’s Wömbe, unnaturally in his owne presence moste Myserably did kill.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ An almost identical version to that of William Painter also appears under the title ‘The horrible and wicked offence of Soltan Soliman Emperour of the Turkes, in murthuring his eldest sonne Mustapha, the yeare of our Lord 1553’ as an appendix to Hugh Gough’s *The Ofspring of the house of Ottomano* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1569), an English translation of Bartolomej Georgijevic’s Latin history of the Ottoman Turks.

⁵⁴⁷ William Painter, Joseph Jacobs (ed.), *The Palace of Pleasure, Vol. 1* (London: David Nutt, 1890), p.395

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.395.

The reasons for the Sultan's actions are soon made clear as the text describes how 'The care of God, and Christe was so farre out of his Sichte as hee subverted Nature' due to the fact that 'The libidinous lustes of this Lecherous Infidell, so surmounted the bounds of reason, as the fire thereof consumed his owne flesh', the Sultan ('This enemy of Christe') being 'so bewitched as the dotage of his infidelity consented to murder.'⁵⁴⁹ The image of the Muslim tyrant unable to control his libidinal impulses is further developed as Painter describes how:

[...] as tyranny like a Lord possessed his Brayne in huntinge after the bloud of Christians, so Tiranny like an Enchaunter with Sorcery of Feminine adulation shed the bloud of his owne begotten.⁵⁵⁰

The description directly parallels the bloodlust of the Sultan and his lust for women as explanations for his horrific behaviour.

The text goes on to describe Mustapha as a 'yonge Whelpe' who was 'no lesse a shedder of Christian Bloud' than his father and as being 'No doubt a very forward Impe, and a towarde champion for the diuel's Theatre', also describing the boy as 'so goodly a yong man in Stature and other externe qualities of the body, as Nature could not frame a better.'⁵⁵¹ Indeed, it is from this description of the strength and potential of Mustapha that Painter draws his providential moral for the whole story, stating in the conclusion, seemingly in opposition to his earlier decrying of Süleyman's cruelty, that:

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p.396.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p.396.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p.396.

[...] we have good cause to reioyce for the death of this thys cruell enemy that should have raygned, and to thinck the slaughter of him not to be done without God'd speciall providence, who in this sorte hath provided for us.⁵⁵²

In this sense the story is about a Sultan of the Ottoman Empire weakening his own state through the pursuing of his own private sexual obsessions.

The text describes how Solyman had had Mustapha 'of a certayne bonde Woman' who had then been sent away with her son when he was made goverenor of 'Amasia' and goes on to describe how:

[...] This Mustapha, with his Mother being placed in the sayd Countrey, it chaunced that the Kynge his Father was beyonde measure wrapt with the beauty of another of his Concubins called Rosa.⁵⁵³

The text now dedicates itself to a lengthy description of the Macchiavellian methods used by Rosa to secure her advance within the Ottoman court, a narrative element missing from Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1609), which instead situates her as the wife of the sultan from the play's beginning. Rosa is described as 'perceiving hir selfe before others to be beloved of the Kinge' and then deciding 'under the Cloake of devotion' to declare to the 'Mughty [Mufti] (which is the chief Bishop of Machomet's religion)' her desire and 'Godly zeale' to 'builde a Temple, and Hospitall for straungers, to the chief God, and

⁵⁵² Ibid., p.415.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., p.400.

honour of Machomet.⁵⁵⁴ She is told that this type of endeavour is best left to the sultan and not to a 'Bondwoman', after which she complains to Solyman who eventually 'manumised hir and made hir free.'⁵⁵⁵ At this point the text tells of how Solyman 'without measure being incensed with the desire of the sayd Rosa' recalls her to court at which point 'The crafty Woman, unskilful of no policy' returns Solyman's messenger with a 'subtile aunswere,' telling him that:

[...] he should admonish the King hir Lord and Soveraygne, to call to his remembraunce aswell the lawe of honesty, as also the precepts of his owne lawes, and to remember she was no more a Bondwoman and yet she could not deny but hir life remained at the disposition of his majesty, but touching Carnall copulation to be had again with his person, that could in no wise be done, without committing of sinne most heinous.⁵⁵⁶

Here Rosa is shown to manipulate skilfully the Islamic marriage laws to her own advantage: as a manumised woman she is now no longer available as a concubine and she refers the king to the mufti for judgement on this matter. The text describes how this 'aunswere of repulse, so excited the inflamed affections of the Kyng, as setting all other businesse a part he caused the Muchty to be sent for,'⁵⁵⁷ of whom he demands to know 'whether his Bondwoman being once manumised, could not be known carnally without violation of the lawe' to which the mufti answers that 'in no wise it was lawfull, unlesse before he should with hir contract matrimony.'⁵⁵⁸ At this point the

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p.401.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p.401.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p.401.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.401-2.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p.402.

sultan's desire, intensified by Rosa's withholding of her sexual favours, overcomes him and the text describes how:

The difficulty of which Lawe in sutch sorte augmented the Kyng's desires, as being beyond measure blinded with Concupiscience, at length agreed to the marriage of the said manumysed woman...⁵⁵⁹

It is now that the text describes, quite accurately, the unorthodox nature of Süleyman's decision to marry Rosa (the historical Hurrem), the Ottoman dynasty usually reproducing itself through slave concubines:

[...] it was done contrary to the use of the Ottoman Ligneage. For to eschew Society in government, they marry no free or lawfull Wyves, but in their steades to satisfy theyr owne pleasures, and libidinous Appetites (wherein most vilely, and filthily above any other Nation they chiefly excel) they chose out of divers Regions of the World the most Beautifull, and fairest of Wenches...⁵⁶⁰

This description of slave concubinage, with its superlatives applied to Turkish libidinousness, also includes a description of the training of these women within the 'Sarai' in very similar terms to that of Ottaviano Bon's account,⁵⁶¹ describing how the women are instructed in 'honest, and civile maners', but not neglecting to mention that the women 'also they use to accompany by turnes, as theyr pleasure most lyketh.'⁵⁶² The text also describes accurately the status of any *haseki* who became mother to one of the

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p.402.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p.402.

⁵⁶¹ See above p.273.

⁵⁶² Painter, *Palace*, p.402.

sultan's children, telling how 'If any of them do conceive, and bring forth childe, then she above all other is honoured, and had in reverence, and is called the Soltanes most worthy.'⁵⁶³

It is after this description of Rosa's cunning use of Islamic marriage laws, and particularly of the withholding of her sexual favours for her own benefit, that her ultimate purpose is made clear. The text describes how 'this manumised Woman being advanced through Fortune's benefit, was esteemed for the chief Lady of Asia' and how she was 'not without great happinesse succeeding in al hir affayrs.'⁵⁶⁴ The text then describes how what she really wants is to influence the imperial succession, describing how:

[...] for the satisfying of hir ambitious entents, there wanted but only a mean and occasion, that after the death of Solyman, one of hir own children might obtaine the empire. Where unto the generosity and good behaviour of Mustapha was a great hindaunce.⁵⁶⁵

It is at this stage that it becomes clear that in order to achieve her goal of placing her own child on the throne she will need to destroy Mustapha and the text describes the series of methods which she employs to secure 'hir unhappy desire.'⁵⁶⁶ There is a description of her use of sexual enticements to 'corrupt the Kyng's mynde', including 'promise of the use of other Women, and sometimes with sundry other adulations', but also of her use of

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p.402. For a full description of the status of the *haseki* and of the politics of Ottoman dynastic reproduction, see Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp.107-112.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p.402.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., p.402.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., p.404.

historical precedent as ‘Taking a convenient time not without teares (which Women never want in cloaked matter)’ the text tells how she:

[...] admonished the Kinge of the pearill wherein he stoode, remembering amongs other things, how his father Selymus, by sutch meanes depryved his owne Father both from kingdome and Life...⁵⁶⁷

Here she is shown to use the overthrow of Bejazet II by his son Selim I, an event in Ottoman history which would provide the raw material for Robert Greene’s play *Selimus* (1594).

Amongst the other devices used by Rosa in securing her ambition by attempting ‘to purchase unto hir the good will and familiarity of the Kyng in sutch sort as had never obtained in the Courte of Ottoman’, there is a description which seems to carry a ring of the machinations of the Muhammad of the polemic biographies in achieving his ambitions. The text tells of how Rosa ‘used certayne Sorceries through the helpe of a Woman Jewe borne, which was a famous Enchauntress, to wyn the love of the Kyng,’⁵⁶⁸ seemingly a similar accusation to the ‘necromancy’ attributed to Sergius and other collaborators with Muhammad, and indeed to the prophet himself. Rosa is also shown sending a poisoned suit to Mustapha, which he refuses to wear, but is only successful when she fabricates evidence that Mustapha has contracted a treaty of marriage with the ‘Kyng of Persia’, the ‘deadly and auncient enemy of the Ottoman Ligneage’⁵⁶⁹ consequently turning Solyman against his son and eventually bringing about his death. In

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., p.404.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p.404.

⁵⁶⁹ Painter, *Palace*, p.405.

this narrative it is possible to see the echoes of the true narrative of Hurrem, the first woman in the so-called 'Sultanate of the women', refracted through the perceptions of Turkish-Islamic lustfulness, ambition and deception. The sultan is shown in this story to be overcome by his own sexual appetite and more particularly by the exploitation of that appetite by a Machiavellian woman, who is able to use Islamic law on marriage against him.

Christian Men and Muslim Women and the Drama of Sexuality, Seduction and Conversion on the English Stage

‘Then thus I spit at Mahomet’: The Conversion of Donusa in *The Renegado*

As Jonathan Burton observes, the conversion of the Ottoman princess Donusa in Massinger’s *The Renegado*, ‘revives and updates romantic tropes,’⁵⁷⁰ particularly that of the “enamoured Muslim princess,” as described by F.M. Warren.⁵⁷¹ This trope, in which a Muslim woman of high birth falls in love with a Christian, usually a knight or hero, and subsequently converts to Christianity was, as Burton points out, particularly found in the *chansons de geste* and in other chivalric epics and romances, and is clearly duplicated in Massinger’s play.⁵⁷² Once discovered with her Christian lover Vitelli Donusa displays a confidence in her self-defence which accords with her status as an Ottoman princess. She has already displayed contempt for Mustapha her fiancé, whom she has described as her ‘vassal’ and demands of him on being discovered:

What bold presumption’s this? Under what law
Am I to fall, that set my foot upon
Your statutes and decrees?

(III (v), ll.97-99)

⁵⁷⁰ Burton, *Traffic*, p.143.

⁵⁷¹ F.M. Warren, ‘The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic,’ *PMLA* 22 (1914), pp.341-58.

⁵⁷² Medieval romances also commonly included a trope never present in early modern narratives: that in which a Muslim ruler converts for love of a Christian woman, a classic example of which can be found in English writings in the tale of Custance (Constance) found in Chaucer’s ‘Man of Lawe’s Tale’ from the *Canterbury Tales* and Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*. A detailed discussion of this marriage trope can be found in: Dorothy Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), pp.136-160.

In her imperious treatment of Mustapha Donusa echoes the status accorded to women of the Ottoman household by William Biddulph in his description of ‘the daughters and sisters of the Grand Turk’ as being ‘more free than all other men and women.’⁵⁷³

Biddulph relates of these Ottoman women how ‘when their brethren die, they live’, avoiding the Ottoman law of fratricide so decried by Western commentators, and goes on to describe the power that they given over their husbands, who are taken from the higher ranks of the Ottoman state.⁵⁷⁴ This system, where the husband was known as the *damad*,⁵⁷⁵ is certainly the relationship which Donusa seems to consider as pertaining to herself and Mustapha, but the nature of her offence in having sex with Vitelli is such that this is overruled. Donusa is asked how she would plead to her uncle the sultan, and after claiming that she would first appeal to his affection for her and his mercy she embarks on a far more strident critique of the inequalities of Turkish rules on marriage and on the sexual behaviour of the sultan and of other Muslim men. Donusa states that if the sultan were to ignore her pleas for mercy she would:

... thus rise up
And to his teeth tell him he was a tyrant,

⁵⁷³ William Buddulph, *The travels of certaine Englishmen*, (London: 1609), p.95.

⁵⁷⁴ Biddulph describes the relationship in this way:

[...] when they come to years of marriage, their father (if he is living) or brother (if he is king) will give unto them, for their husbands, the greatest Pashas or Viziers whom they shall affect, and say unto them: ‘Daughter, or sister, I give thee this man to be thy slave and bedfellow; and if he is not loving, dutiful, and obedient unto thee, here I give thee a canzhare (that is, a dagger) to cut off his head’. And always after, those daughters or sisters of the king wear a broad and sharp dagger. And whenever their husbands (who are given unto them by the king to be their slaves) displease them, they may and do cut off their heads... (*Travels*, p.95)

⁵⁷⁵ For a description of the operation of the *damad* system, see: Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp.65-68.

A most voluptuous and insatiable epicure
In his own pleasures; which he hugs so dearly,
As proper and peculiar to himself,
That he denies a moderate lawful use
Of all delight to others.

(IV (ii), ll.116-122)

This argument based on the hypocrisy of the sultan is then turned into an argument based on the gender inequality within Islam which makes 'weak women servants, proud men masters' (IV (ii), ll.127). This is directed towards her 'Unequal judge' who she asks to 'consider what justice/ Thou canst pronounce my sentence (IV (ii), ll.124-5), and then she makes her first direct attack on Muhammad himself, asking 'Indulgent Mahomet, do thy bloody laws/ Call my embraces with a Christian death? (IV (ii), ll.128-9). She contrasts herself with her 'heat and May of youth to plead/ In my excuse? (IV (ii), ll.130-1) with Muslim men who Muhammad's laws 'want power to punish' (IV (ii), ll.131) and who 'with scorn break through thy cobweb edicts/ And laugh at thy decrees? punish' (IV (ii), ll.132-3). She then goes on to describe how for these Muslim men:

To tame their lusts
There's no religious bit: let her be fair
And pleasing to the eye, though Persian, Moor,
Idolatress, Turk, or Christian, you are privileged
And freely may enjoy her.

(IV (ii), ll.133-7)

She then turns this general accusation against the permitted lustfulness of Muslim men into a specific accusation against Asambeg, whom she tells:

At this instant,
I know, unjust man, thou hast in thy power
A lovely Christian virgin.

(IV (ii), ll.137-9)

Donusa compares his actions to her own, telling him that his own offence is 'Equal if not transcending mine' (IV (ii), ll.140), courageously making equivalence between the actions of Muslim men and women, against whom the law so clearly differentiates, and suggesting that they should walk 'Walk hand in hand to death' (IV (ii), ll.143).

Asambeg's reaction to Donusa's argument is simply to state that 'She raves' (IV (ii), ll.144), dismissing her as mad and listening to her as a waste of time.

It is at this point that Asambeg commands the Aga to 'Read the law' (IV (ii), ll.144) and the stage is set for the events which will eventually lead to Donusa's conversion. The Aga reads the law under which Donusa is convicted which states that:

If any virgin of what degree or quality soever, born a natural Turk, shall be convicted of corporeal looseness and incontinence with any Christian, she is, by the decree of our great prophet, Mahomet, to lose her head...

(IV (ii), ll.146-149)

But then the Aga moves on to read a caveat which drives Donusa's subsequent actions, namely that:

... if she, the said offender, by any reasons,
Arguments, or persuasion can win and prevail with the said Christian
offending with her to alter his religion and marry her, that then the
winning of a soul to the Mahometan sect shall acquit her from all
shame, disgrace and punishment whatsoever

(IV (ii), ll.151-155)

Donusa immediately seizes on this clause and claims the 'privilege of the law' (IV (ii), l.156), demanding that she be given the opportunity to 'I'll undertake/ To turn this Christian Turk and marry him' (IV (ii), ll.157-8). Mustapha, although disgusted by her 'base' decision which he states will 'brand the Ottoman line/ With [...] a mark of infamy' (IV (ii), l.162) and which Assambeg exclaims is 'worse/ Than the parting with your honor' (IV (ii), ll.163-4), is forced to agree to Donusa's request. The stage is now set for a trial which proves to be a forceful polemic attack on Islam and which also leads to a reversal of Donusa's intention to convert the Christian Vitelli.

Interestingly, Donusa's arguments in attempting to convert Vitelli are in no way related to the issues of sexual temptation or even of love, the factors which earlier in the play seemed to put Vitelli in 'danger', but rather follow the method of a providential justification of Islam based on the power of the Muslim empire of the Turk. Donusa begins by asking Vitelli to put aside his 'imperious mistress' (IV (iii), l.79), the Christian religion and lay down the 'burthen' (IV (iii), l.75) which it imposes on him. She then goes on to exhort him to 'Be wise and weigh/ The prosperous success of things' (IV (iii), l.89-90), proceeding to observe that:

...If blessings
 Are donatives from heaven (which, you must grant,
 Were blasphemy to question) and that
 They are called down and poured on such as are
 Most gracious with the great disposer of 'em,
 Look on our flourishing empire (if the splendour,
 The majesty and glory of it dim not
 Your feeble sight) and then turn back and see
 The narrow bounds of yours

(IV (iii), ll.90-98)

Donusa then comments that even the 'poor remnant' (IV (iii), l.98) of Christianity is 'Rent in as many factions and opinions/ As you have petty kingdoms (IV (iii), ll.99-100), concluding that the Christian deity (which is clearly here identified as different from the god of Islam) 'Wants care or power to help you' (IV (iii), l.103). In stating her case in this way Donusa is reiterating a genuine concern of early modern Christians, who had to balance a belief in the providence of God with the seemingly inexorable expansion of the Ottoman Empire. This was the vision of the world which led to the view of the Turks as the 'scourge of God' and to the reliance on prophecy and apocalypticism in confronting the physical and theological threat of Islam.

Vitelli's reply does not rely on any form of justification by prophecy, providential theories or logical argument at all, but rests instead on a Manichaean vision of the world in which Islam is simply wrong and includes an attack on Muhammad familiar from the polemic biographies. Having accused Donusa of being possessed by 'The Devil, thy tutor' (IV (iii), l.107) and of having 'blasphemed/ That great omnipotency at whose nod/

The fabric of the world shakes' (IV (iii), ll.112-114), he then goes on to ask her how she dares bring:

Your juggling prophet in comparison with
That most inscrutable and infinite essence
That made this all and comprehends his work?

(IV (iii), ll.115-117)

Vitelli now moves to accuse Donusa of a misuse of her reason and, in an antifeminist flourish, of her 'facilities of discourse, beyond a woman' (IV (iii), l.122) which are the 'liberal gift' (IV (iii), l.123) of a God of whom she is in 'ignorance'. Vitelli then makes his direct polemic attack on Muhammad, stating that:

I will not foul my mouth and speak of the sorceries
Of your seducer, his base birth, his whoredoms,
His strange impostures; nor deliver how
He taught a pigeon to feed in his ear,
The made his credulous followers believe
It was an angel that instructed him
In the framing of his Alcoran.

(IV (iii), ll.125-131)

This catalogue of familiar accusations against Muhammad, derived directly from centuries of polemic biographies, draws from Asambeg the angry rejoinder that 'These words are death, were he in nought else guilty' (IV (iii), l.132), demonstrating the violence with which Christian commentators perceived Islam as defending itself. Now Vitelli points out to Donusa that:

Your intent to win me
To be of your belief proceeded from
Your fear to die.

(IV (iii), ll.132-134)

He asks her how there can be any strength in a religion that ‘suffers us to tremble/ At that which every day – nay, hour – we hast to’ (IV (iii), ll.136-7), an argument which Donusa states is ‘unanswerable’ and which leads her to conclude that ‘there’s something tells me/ I err in my opinion’ (IV (iii), ll.138-9). The somewhat specious argument that fear of death in its believers makes a religion false seems to convince Donusa immediately, and accelerates her towards conversion. In her conversion Donusa is shown to enact a reversal in the Muslim/Christian power relationship as captor/captive, as she states that:

I came here to take you,
But I perceive a yielding in myself
To be your prisoner.

(IV (iii), ll.146-148)

Vitelli then transfers this metaphor into one of military conquest, claiming that her submission is ‘an overthrow/ That will outshine all victories’ (IV (iii), ll.149-150), seeming to substitute the moral triumph of Christian truth over Muslim ‘blasphemy’ for the unattainable military triumph of Christian forces over Muslim, which was the general experience of early modern Christian armies, with a few celebrated exceptions such as the Seige of Malta in 1565 and the battle of Lepanto in 1571. This Christian familiarity

with defeat at Muslim hands was the cause of much expression of fear and consequent employment of theodicy, providential sophistry and Manichaean invective, such as that expressed by Vitelli in his ‘argument’, in the political and religious writings of Christian commentators. As Donusa converts, stating that ‘thus I spit at Mahomet’ (IV (iii), l.158), Asambeg angrily reacts, commanding that someone ‘Stop her mouth’ and bemoans that she has chosen ‘In death to turn apostate’ (IV (iii), l.159) and calling her a ‘wretched creature’ (IV (iii), l.160); yet at the same moment he turns to Vitelli and tells him that:

... in reward of thy brave courage,
Be thy faith right or wrong, receive this favour:
In person I’ll attend thee to thy death.
(IV (iii), ll. 162-164)

This demonstrates that although Vitelli has not succeeded in convincing the Muslim men to apostise, he has at least won their respect and admiration.⁵⁷⁶

Donusa, following her somewhat makeshift baptism, is shown to be entirely transformed and ‘born again’ by her acceptance of Christianity as she declares:

I am another woman – till this minute

⁵⁷⁶ In other ‘Turk plays’ displays of rectitude, bravery and sound argument by Christian men are enough to bring about the conversion of Muslim men. In *The Fair Maid of the West* (Part II), for example, the honourable Muslim Joffer is persuaded by the cumulative actions of Spencer (and Bess) to convert to Christianity, stating of Spencer that:

Such honor is not found in Barbary.
The virtue of these Christians hath converted me,
Which to the world I can no longer smother.
Accept me, then, a Christian and a brother.

(*The Fair Maid of the West*, Part II, V (iv), ll.184-187).

I never lived, nor durst how to die.
How long have I been blind! Yet on a sudden
By this blest means I feel the film of error
Ta'en from my soul'd eyes.

(V (iii), ll.121-125)

And calls Francisco her 'divine physician' (V (iii), l.125), bringing into play the common metaphor of Islam as an 'infection' or spiritual malady. She also uses the metaphor of Islam as imprisonment, as she describes how she has been freed 'from the cruellest of prisons/ Blind ignorance and misbelieve' (V (iii), ll.131-2), prefiguring her literal emancipation from Muslim imprisonment, through the agency of Paulina's pretended apostasy and the actions of the redeemed Grimaldi, and reinforcing the association of Islam with captivity. She finally exclaims against Muhammad as 'False prophet!/ Imposter Mahomet!' (V (iii), l.132), demonstrating her complete rejection of Islam and acceptance of 'true' faith against the perceived deceptions of Islam and its prophet, leaving Asambeg to comment that 'if thou hast another life to lose/ This blasphemy deserves it' (V (iii), ll 135-6). Unlike the usually temporary and unstable conversion of Christians to Islam in the 'Turk plays', including that of Grimaldi in *The Renegado* and Ward in *A Christian Turn'd Turke*, Donusa's conversion seems to mark a stable transition 'from a dangerous Muslim temptress to a happy Christian wife.'⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁷ Burton, *Traffic*, p.153.

‘Where beauty pleads, there needs no sophistry’: The Conversion of Captain Ward in Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612)

The place of the allure of sexual liberty in the conversion of Christian men to Islam, and of the allure of Christian men in the conversion of Muslim women, can be seen in many medieval and early modern texts. In the discussion of Muhammad’s inclusion of polygamy and concubinage in his ‘law’ I have already shown how medieval and early modern commentators perceived this factor as a method designed to attract ‘fleshly’ people to his new religion, and this use of sexual temptation is made central to the conversion of the Pirate Ward in Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turn’d Turk* (Printed 1612). An example from a medieval text of the offering of women to Christian men in return for their conversion is provided in *Mandeville’s Travels* where the Christian knight Mandeville describes how during his time with the ‘Soudan’ in ‘Babylone’ where he ‘duelled with him as a soudyour in his werres’ the Sultan:

[...] wolde haue maryd me fulle highly to a gret princes doughter yif I wolde han forsaken my lawe and my beleue, but I thank God I had no wille to don it for no thing that he behighte me.⁵⁷⁸

In the early modern period John Foxe in *Acts and Monuments* identifies the lure of sexual liberty as being a central factor, along with financial inducements, in the ‘wilful defection and backsliding of the Christians’ which allowed the spread of Islam. Foxe describes how:

⁵⁷⁸ *Mandeville’s Travels*, M.C. Seymour (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.24.

[...] meny, desiring the licentious life and liberty of war, and allured with the prosperous success of things, forsook the church of God, and made themselves bondslaves to Mahomet, and his devilish sect; both because fleshly liberty is delighting to all men, and partly because as fortune favoureth, so commonly the wills of men incline...⁵⁷⁹

This charge is also repeated in John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus' *A geographical historie of Africa* (1600) where he describes how many Christians become 'Turks' in lands of the Ottoman empire:

[...] through sensualitie, and for that they would not be deprived of the licentiousnes and of the life they lead, resolute not to performe that they are bound vnto; deferring thus from moneth to moneth, & from yeere to yeere, to leaue this Babylon & sinke of sin...⁵⁸⁰

An early modern account which shows a Christian man resisting such temptations is found in the diary of the organ maker Thomas Dallam. Dallam relates how during his time at the Ottoman court the Turks, 'Asked me that I would be contented to stay with them always, and I should not wante anythinge, but have all the content that I could desire.'⁵⁸¹ He makes clear just what is being offered, as he describes how:

⁵⁷⁹ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.23.

⁵⁸⁰ Leo Africanus, John Pory (trans.), *A geographical historie of Africa*, (London: 1600), p.386.

⁵⁸¹ Thomas Dallam in: Evo Kamps and Jyotsna G. Singh (eds.), *Travel Knowledge: European Discoveries in the Early Modern Period*, (London: Palgrave, 2001), p.56.

They toulde me that yf I would stayer the Grand Sinyor would give tow
wyfes, ether tow of his Concubines or els tow virgins of the beste I Could
Chuse my selfe, in Cittie or contrie.⁵⁸²

Dallam's account shows how a Christian man could 'make his excuses and leave', in his case pretending that he was married with children; but in *A Christian Turn'd Turk* there is a presentation in the figure of pirate Ward of a Christian man who succumbs to the sexual allure of Islam and converts, albeit without finality.

Daborne's play opens with a statement of its purpose in basing a narrative on the infamous, and much represented, English pirate and Muslim convert Ward, contrasting this version with other previous texts. The prologue of the play states that 'What heretofore set others' pens awork/ Was Ward turned pirate; ours is Ward turned Turk (Prologue, ll.7-8);⁵⁸³ bringing the focus from Ward's notorious piracy to the matter of his conversion. Ward is described in the first scene of the play as:

Heroic captain Ward, lord of the ocean, terror of kings, landlord to
merchants, rewarder of manhood, conqueror of the Western world, to
whose followers the land and seas pay tribute. (Scene 1, ll.22-25)

The description marks both the reasons for which the 'Turks' of the play desire his conversion and also the danger to the Christian world of such skilled sea fighters defecting to Islam. It is Scene 7 of the play, set in Ward's house at Tunis, which contains

⁵⁸² Ibid., p.56.

⁵⁸³ Robert Daborne, *A Christian Turned Turk: the Tragical Lives and Deaths of the Two Famous Pirates, Ward and Dansiker* (London: William Barrenger, 1612) in: Daniel Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England*.

the description of the nature and causation of Ward's conversion to Islam, as the Governor of Tunis and the Turk Crosman seek to suborn Ward and secure his conversion. The Governor tells Ward that he is 'the man we covet, whose valour/ Hath spake out' (Scene 7, ll.3-4) and then Crosman goes on to ask him whether it is the climate in North Africa which deters him and whether the 'air you drew at home' (Scene 7, l.11) will cause him to 'purpose short a return' (Scene 7, l.12). Ward answers that 'I know no country I can call home' (Scene 7, l.13), demonstrating that he is already in danger of 'turning', the abjuring of 'true' religion, whether for Catholicism or Islam, being intimately associated with the rejection of national identity in early modern Britain.

In their arguments to convert Ward, the Governor and Crosman at first use conventional material temptations of wealth and position, with the governor telling Ward that 'there speaks a fortune on your brow' (Scene 7, l.17) and Benwash stating of the English pirate that 'I'll gage a thousand ducats on equal terms/ I live to see him the sultan's admiral' (Scene 7, l.19-20). The allure of military and political advancement to the potential Christian apostate was evidently strong in the early modern period, with converted Christians, including such figures as the legendary Khairadin Barbarossa, occupying important places in the Ottoman naval hierarchy and a series of Christian converts occupying the exalted position of vizier at the Ottoman court as well as important offices in North African states.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ The link between the allure of wealth and apostacy (for all faiths) and between apostacy and treason and the loss of national identity is suggested in the speech of Love from the opening of Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* (1581), a play which has the Italian Christian Mercadore seek to convert in Turkey to avoid debt to the Jew Gerontus. The speech describes how:

For Lucre men come from Italy, Barabary, Turky,
From Iury: nay the Pagan himself,
Indaungers his body to gale for her pelfe.

If any odds be, 'tis on Mahomet's side:
His servitors thrive best, I am sure.

(Scene 7, ll.29-33)

Yet Ward remains suspicious and describes conversion to Islam as a 'hook' which a 'golden bait doth cover' (Scene 7, l.34), provoking Benwash to observe that he too was 'scrupulous' when he converted and then to embark on a providential argument with which he claims 'I was confirmed' (Scene 7, l.37), namely that:

If this religion were so damnable
As others make it, that God which owes the right,
Profaned by this, would soon destroy it quite.

(Scene 7, ll.38-40)

Again Ward, who at this point seems to occupy the unlikely position of the defender of religious orthodoxy, or 'the liturgical scholar' as Burton puts it,⁵⁸⁵ has an answer to this argument, stating that 'heaven is merciful' and that:

By their destruction it should take all means
From giving possibility to their change
And so unjustly damn 'em.

(Scene 7, ll.42-4)

As Burton points out, at this stage Ward is employing explanations found in the early modern period's 'numerous works written to justify to Christians the overwhelming

⁵⁸⁵ Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, p.134.

might of the Ottoman Empire,⁵⁸⁶ particularly in this case the ones which base themselves on eschatological foundations and the belief in the eventual damnation of the Muslims and the triumph of Christianity, and see the only chance for Muslims as lying in the accepting of God's grace and converting.⁵⁸⁷

In keeping with his line of argument Ward now makes a clear statement of the radical cultural separation between Muslims and Christians as he declares that 'It is not divinity but nature moves me/ Which doth in bEasts force them to keep their kind' (Scene 7, ll.45-6), in which he seems to display a vestige of attachment to the national and cultural identity which he has previously claimed to be lost to him. Crosman now makes another argument appealing to Ward's self-interest as he states that men 'have two ends, safety and profit' (Scene 7, ll.47) and 'must make their actions/ Turn to those points (Scene 7, ll.49-50),⁵⁸⁸ whereas the bEasts in Ward's metaphor of cultural segregation, are 'no farther are transported/ Than with the present object' (Scene 7, ll.48-9).

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p.134.

⁵⁸⁷ A classic statement of the Muslim error of arguing the truth of their faith through the prosperity of their empires can be found in Thomas Bilson's *The Survey of Christs sufferings for mans redemption* (London: Melchisedech Bradwood, 1604) where he states that:

The Turke destitute of trueth, and so notable rightly to judge of God'd favours in this life, bendeth his eyes on the worldly misery of Christians, and comparing them with the victories and felicities (as he thinketh) of his owne nation, condemneth the faith of Christ, as displeasent to God, by reason of the manifold afflictions of the faithfull, and preferreth his owne profession, and Mahomet the erector of it as most acceptable to God, because they have their desires in this world, and are conquerors over Christians, not knowing the final reward of the one and of the other after this life. (pp.196-7)

This is also the argument used by Donusa in her attempts to convert Vittelli to Islam in *The Renegado*, see below, p.341.

⁵⁸⁸ This was clearly the view of Francis Walsingham on dealing with the Turks. In his 'Memorandum on the Turkey Trade' (1578) he describes the matters of 'proffitte and suertie' in trade as being the primary benefit of sending 'some apt man [...] with her Majestes letters unto the Turke' (in: Susan Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey 1578-1582* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.28-29.

The Governor now tells Ward that both safety and profit are being offered him 'Might there be assurance in your trust' (Scene 7, l.55) and when Ward questions how this assurance might be given he is presented with the reply 'As we did – turn Turk' (Scene 7, l.57). Ward continues to resist all the material temptations presented to him, causing Benwash to comment that 'This gudgeon will not bite' (Scene 7, l.62), and when the Governor attempts to persuade Ward to ignore what he has heard in the past and look at the example of conversion presented by himself and Benwash Ward replies that:

The cunning fowler to beguile the birds
Brings up some tame, then lets them fly abroad
To draw in others, that their liberty
May be bait to others' misery,

(Scene 7, ll.66-69)

observing that 'Such is state policies, sometimes to advance an ill/ When others for less crimes it oft doth kill (Scene 7, ll.70-1). At this point Ward cuts off any further argument and although stating that 'What's mine of prowess, or art, shall rest by you/ To be disposed of' (Scene 7, ll.73-4), he will not 'abjure/ My name – and the belief of my ancestors (Scene 7, ll.74-5), demonstrating that although otherwise a seemingly deracinated figure who due to his crimes has 'no country I can call home' (Scene 7, l.13), he is still clinging to the vestiges of his Christian identity.

Ward's Muslim persuaders then change tack and bring into play the allure of sexual gratification, moving from a metaphoric seduction to the employment of literal seduction in an attempt to secure the Englishman's conversion. Crosman advises Benwash to change the deal offered to Ward and 'Work in my sister presently' (Scene 7, l.80),

moving to occupy the position of pander or pimp in relation to his own sister. Crosman observes that Ward 'enjoys too much by promise to be won' (Scene 7, l.85) by their arguments based on material reward and preferment and states that:

T'must be a woman's act, to whom there'd nought
That is impossible. What devils dare not move
Men to accomplish, women work them to.

(Scene 7, ll.86-88)

At this point Crosman's sister Voada enters the scene and Ward is immediately entranced, seemingly duplicating the form of love-at-first-sight reaction more usually associated with Muslim men in regard to Christian women within the Turk plays. Ward observes as Voada approaches that 'Here comes an argument that would persuade/ A god turn mortal' (Scene 7, ll.90-1) and begins to declare his love to her. Ward swears to Voada that

If ever brEast did feel the power of love,
Or beauty make a conquest of a poor man,
I am thy captive, by heaven, by my religion.

(Scene 7, ll.109-111)

To which Voada replies by observing that their difference in faiths makes such swearing meaningless to her, provoking Ward to show the first sign of potential turning by swearing his love 'by your god, by the great Mahomet' (Scene 7, ll.114), which Voada

observes is 'Too weak a bond to tie a Christian in' (Scene 7, ll.115). Ward's resolve continues to weaken, asks Voada what he should swear by, and asks her to:

... Propose an oath to me
The breach whereof would at once sink me lower
Than hell knows being – I'll take it willingly.

(Scene 7, ll.116-8)

Voada quickly answers that she will be 'concealed no longer' (Scene 7, l.119) and moves towards Ward's conversion, stating that:

... I love
But not the man whose daily orisons
Invoke confusion on me, whose religion
Speaks me an infidel.

(Scene 7, ll.119-122)

Ward now seems to discard all of his previous religious resolve and declares that his professions of religious faith were made 'only to feed discourse/ And fill up argument' (Scene 7, ll.123-4) and Voada moves to close her argument stating that:

But you must be of one if you'll enjoy me.
If then you thoughts answer to what you speak,
Turn Turk – I am yours.

(Scene 7, ll.125-7)

Ward once again returns to resistance as he questions this course of action asking 'Should I forever sell my liberty?' (Scene 7, l.135), leading Voada, who has already been portrayed in the previous scene as morally questionable and certainly no 'maiden', to

state that Ward has ‘betrayed a maiden’s liberty’ (Scene 7, l.137) and, borrowing the language of religion, to claim that as ‘penance’ she will ‘henceforth hate thy whole sex’ (Scene 7, l.139).

Voada continues her skilful seduction of Ward until the Englishman states that ‘If there be divinity, it hath/ His seat in beauty’ (Scene 7, ll.155-6) and declares Voada ‘th’art a god to me/ My country, friends, nay being – what wouldst thou have?’ (Scene 7, ll.156-7). At last Ward has seemingly surrendered fully his hold on his former life and given himself up to Voada, observing that ‘I am no more mine own’ (Scene 7, l.159). He confirms the success of Crosman’s tactic in employing his sister as tempter, as he tells the how:

...Crosman, in vain
Thy arguments were spent: wouldst thou prevail?
Here is an orator can turn me easily.
Where beauty pleads, there needs no sophistry.

(Scene 7, ll.162-165)

Where arguments based on offers of financial reward and political power, and of the providential preferment of Muslims, have failed, it has taken only lust for Voada to ensure that Ward is ‘o’ercome’ (Scene 7, l.166), with the Englishman declaring that he will ‘take the orders instantly’ (Scene 7, l.170) and convert to Islam, speaking of this lust as the ‘flame [...] Which sets the world on fire and makes me turn’ (Scene 7, ll.172-3). Voada now demonstrates her own mercenary goals as she she states in an aside on

Ward's departure 'I have my ends' (Scene 7, l.174), observing of Ward's spiritual state
'Howe'er thou sink, thy wealth shall bear me high' (Scene 7, l.175).

At first Ward attempts to justify his conversion by appealing to the advantages he has won by doing so, but his apostacy is soon shown to be unstable as he vacillates between defiant self-justification and regret, largely through the interventions of the Christian woman Alizia, who is disguised as a boy with the symbolic name of Fidelio,⁵⁸⁹ and the pleas of her brothers whom Ward has sold into slavery, once again presenting the situation of a Christian woman in the position of *defensor fidei* against the threat of Islam. In these scenes it is also made clear again that the overwhelming love (or lust) he feels for Voadia is the determining factor in his apostacy, overcoming all other theological arguments and warnings.

In a self-justifying speech to Voadia, Ward states that 'Nothing can make him miserable enjoys thee' (Scene 7, l.178), suggesting that potential for misery is clearly present in his choice, but then goes on to further justify himself:

What is't I lose by this my change? My country?
Already 'tis to me impossible.
My name is scandalled? What is one island
Compared to the Eastern monarchy? This large,
Unbounded station shall speak my future fame;

(Scene 7, ll.179-183)

⁵⁸⁹ The name derives from the Latin 'Fidelis' meaning 'Faithful.'

The automatic loss of nationhood through conversion is clear here, but Ward, as a pirate, and so with the concept in Roman law already *Hostis humani generis*,⁵⁹⁰ claims to have already lost this. He then goes on to divest himself of the dictates of morality and shame, observing that:

... they are slaves stand subject unto shame.
One good I enjoy outweighs all ills whatever
Can be objected.

(Scene 7, ll.164-6)

Ward then proceeds to further justify himself, using a personalised version of the providential argument for the rectitude of Islam discussed above, stating that ‘Beauty, command, and riches – these are the three/ The world pursues, and these follow me’ (Scene 7, l.194).

Yet despite his bluff attempts at justifying his conversion Ward is quickly shaken by the arguments of Alizia in the disguise of Fidelio, who delivers to him a series of warning speeches reminiscent of those of the Old Man in Act 5, Scene One of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*,⁵⁹¹ just as Ward’s vacillation between conversion and recantation mirror the conflicted behaviour of Faustus himself. Alizia/Fidelio warns Ward of of conversion that:

...It’s the denial
Of your redeemer, religion, country,
Of him that gave you being.

(Scene 7, ll.198-
200)

⁵⁹⁰ ‘Enemy of Human Kind.’

⁵⁹¹ Jonathan Burton suggests that in this scene Voada and Alizia may resemble the Good and Bad Angels in *Doctor Faustus: Traffic and Turning*, p.135.

This is a statement which, as with Ward's earlier observation that he will lose 'My country' through conversion, reinforces the inextricability of the denial of religion through apostasy from the renunciation of nationhood as a part of the act of 'turning Turk'. Ward provides a defiant reply, exclaiming how:

The slavery of man, how this religion rides us!
Deprives us of our freedom from our cradles,
Ties us in superstitious bondage.

(Scene 7, ll.201-203)

But Alizia/Fidelio continues her homiletic speech, begging Ward to 'Sell not your soul for such a vanity/ As that which you term "beauty," eye-pleasing idol!' (Scene 7, ll.106-207), going on to warn him that:

Should you with the renouncing of your God,
Taking the abhorred name of Turk upon you,
Purchase a little shameful being here, your case
Might be compared to his, who adjudged to death
By his head's loss, should crave (stead of one stroke)
To die a lingering torment on the rack.

(Scene 7, ll.208-213)

In warning Ward of the dangers of exchanging his religious and national identity for temporary pleasure, the figure of Alizia/Fidelio would also be directing her homily to the Christian audience of the play, which, as Jonathan Burton points out, 'doubtless contained numerous discontented Englishmen.'⁵⁹² Alizia/Fidelio warns Ward that, should

⁵⁹² Burton, *Traffic*, p.154.

he convert, his life would mirror that of the man tormented on the rack, telling him that ‘Even such would be your life, whose guilt each hour/ Would strike your conscious soul with terrors’ (Scene 7, ll.214-215), to which Ward replies ‘No more, this boy’s words trouble me’ (Scene 7, l.216), marking the beginning of the vacillation between conversion and recantation which will mark Ward’s behaviour for the rest of the play.⁵⁹³

As Alizia/Fidelio tries to further persuade Ward that if he will not listen to her other arguments he should bear in mind:

...that contempt is thrown on runagates,
Even by thee Turks themselves, at least move you
To fly this slavery.

(Scene 7, ll.118-220)

This is certainly borne out by European writings on ‘renegados’ in early modern texts, although, despite the treatment later given to Ward by his adoptive ‘nation’ within the play, Christian converts seem to have generally prospered and, if anything, been preferred

⁵⁹³ There is no evidence whatsoever of such doubts marking the life of the historical John Ward who was alive and prospering in Tunis at the time of the play’s first performance and who died a Muslim there in 1622 during an outbreak of the plague, under his adopted name of Issouf Reis according to the Venetians and of Captain Wardiyya, according to a later Tunisian source.

A news sheet of 1622 reports Ward’s demise:

From Algiers the Letters come by way of Venice, whence they write; that two famous English Pyrats, Captaine Ward and Captaine Sampson, and divers others of their crew, are lately dead of the plague, which is extremely rife in many parts of Barabary (p.5)

[*Briefe abstracts out of diuerse letters of trust Relating the newes of this present weeke, out of Persia, Egypt, Babylon, Barbary, Turkey, Italy, Spaine, Germanie, Silesia, France, and the Low Countries, with diuers passages from the sea. Wherein are remembered the troubles in the Turkish Empire, the strength of the pyrates of Argier, with a touch of the giuing vp of the towne of Glatz, and the holding out of Frankendale. With the victories of Count Mansfield in the land of Embden, and the flight of the Count of that countrey; and the going on of the Prince of Orange towards Lingen. Together with the sea businesses of the Spanish and Hollandish flectes. In the end is added something of the French affaires, with some other occurrences* (London: Nathaniel Butter, Nicholas Bourne, Thomas Archer, William Sheffard and Bartholomew Downes, 1623)]. See also: David R. Ransome, ‘Ward, John (c.1553–1623?)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

for promotion to ‘true Turks’ or those born Muslim. Indeed, Ward’s own success in Tunis was even described by the Scottish traveler John Lithgow, who tells, in his description of a stay at Tunis, of his meeting with ‘our English Captaine, generall *Ward*, once a great Pyrat, and Commander at Seas; who in despight of his denied acceptance in *England* had turned *Turke*’ and goes on to describe him living in ‘a faire Palace, beautified with rich Marble and Alabaster stones.’⁵⁹⁴ The evident success of Ward in his life as a convert would seem to act as a positive encouragement to any tempted by the profit to be gained by ‘turning Turk’ and so the fictional torments and eventual downfall of the dramatised Ward would seem to be meant to act as a counterbalance against this possibility.

Ward’s first recantation is challenged by Crosman, who, ironically given his role in the play as panderer, asks Ward whether he has ‘no other but my sister, sir/ To make a stale of?’ (Scene 7, ll.230-1) and reminds him of his vow to turn. Ward replies that ‘her looks enchanted me’ (Scene 7, l.232) and is backed up by Alizia/Fidelio who gives him an escape from his oath by stating that ‘Against a man’s soul, no oath can tie’ (Scene 7, l.234). Ward’s recantation, however, is only temporary and as soon as Voada returns to the scene he begs her forgiveness and swears that ‘Plagues, devils, poverty – may all ills fall/ Man e’er was subject to. I will enjoy thee’ (Scene 7, ll.256-7), commanding that Alizia/Fidelio be removed, provoking the disguised Christian woman to comment that ‘As I from hence, so thou art thrust from joy – eternal joys’ (Scene 7, l.249), once again echoing the Good Angel/Old Man speeches of *Doctor Fautus*. Crosman then announces

⁵⁹⁴ William Lithgow, *The totall discourse, of the rare adventures, and painefull peregrinations of long nineteene yeares travailes from Scotland, to the most famous kingdomes in Europe, Asia, and Affrica* (London: 1630), first edition 1614, p.358. Although describing ‘old *Ward*’ himself as ‘placable’ Lithgow manages to include a jibe at apostates as he describes Ward’s retinue as consisting of ‘some fifteene circumcised English Runnagats, whose lives and Countenances were both alike even as desperate as disdainfull’ (Ibid., p.358). Lithgow later returns to Tunis and describes Ward engaged in rearing chickens.

the arrival of the Mufti and that after 'Some trivial ceremonies' (Scene 7, l.251) Ward will be converted.

At this point Ward is presented with further Christian persuasion as the French captive brothers Ferdinand and Albert, in a move echoing the sacrifice of Christ, offer to forgive Ward for selling them into slavery and for their father's death if they can 'set/ Our bodies 'gainst your soul, the dearest purchase/ Of your Redeemer' (Scene 7, ll.263-4) and if Ward will 'Leave but this path damnation guides you to' (Scene 7, l.265). Ward states that their words 'do rip my heart up' (Scene 7, l. 271), but is again persuaded away from changing his mind by Voada and his own despair of redemption, asking:

...what brain can I think
Heaven would be glad of such a friend as I am?
A pirate? Murderer?

(Scene 7, ll. 274-6)

And concluding that he will 'Let those can hope a pardon care/ To atone with heaven. I cannot, I despair' (Scene 7, ll.276-7). Ward ignores Ferdinand's plea that 'Yet heaven hath mercy' (Scene 7, l.278), replying 'And hell damnation'(Scene 7, l.279), leaving the scene for his conversion ceremony with the statement that 'The way that leads to love is no black way' (Scene 7, l.280). This provokes Ferdinand to reply, in a statement which sums up the role of lust and Muslim females in the process of conversion and damnation in the play, that 'thou wilt find it black: no hell I see's so low/ Which lust and woman cannot lead us to' (Scene 7, ll.281-2).

The play now moves to a depiction of Ward's conversion in a dumb show which echoes the descriptions given by several travellers' eye-witness accounts of such ceremonies,⁵⁹⁵ and from this point on his experiences are a catalogue of disappointments. First he is rejected by Voadia, who replies to his ironic observation that 'midst all my miseries I have a friend/ My constant, loyal Voadia' (Scene 13, ll.18-19) by commenting 'This fellow raves sure' and asking him 'Do you know to whom you speak?' (Scene 13, l.22). Even Ward's sanguinary promise that 'if this arm were barred all other means/ From hearts of Christians it should dig thee food' (Scene 13, ll.24-5), draws from Voadia only a statement which confirms Alizia/Fidelio's earlier observation about the contempt in which Christian apostates are held as she tells him that 'We know you are a bloody murderer and are repaid/ By our just Prophet that hates false runagates' (Scene 13, ll.26-27).

When his fellow pirate captain Francisco observes to Ward that 'Could you expect a good/ A happiness, from hell? She is a whore,' (Scene 13, ll.36-7) Ward reiterates his despair about redemption stating:

.... Should I confess my sin,
There's not an ear that can with pity hear

⁵⁹⁵ One such description can be found in William Davies's *A true relation of the travailes and most miserable captiuitie of William Dauies, barber-surgion of London* (London: Thomas Snodham for Nicholas Bourne, 1614). In an account of Argier Davies describes how:

The manner of a Christian turning Turke, is thus. He is put vpon a horse with his face towards the tayle, and a Bow and an Arrow in his hand, then the picture of Christ is carried before him with his feete vpwards, at the which he drawes his Bow with the Arrow therein, and thus he rideth to the place of Circumcision, cursing his father that begate him, and his mother that bore him, his Country, and all his kindred: then comming to the place of Circumcision, he is Circumcised, receiuing a name, & denying his Christian name, so that euer after he is called a *Runagado*, that is, a Christian denying Christ and turned Turke: of which sort there are more in Turkie and Barbary then of naturall Turkes. (Sig.B4).

Davies's account also highlights the proliferation of such converts in the North African context.

A man so wicked miserable.

(Scene 13, ll.108-110)

And describes his own desperate state, telling of how:

...Should I bear up
Outlook my crimes, I want means to support me.
To die I dare not: the jaws of hell do yawn
To swallow me.

(Scene 13, ll.109-112)

And goes on to underline his regret over his conversion, observing that:

Were I this city's viceroy, I would give
My crown, despoil myself of all, only to live
One month with that content this soul did know
When a poor fisherman possessed it.

(Scene 13, ll.150-3)

A statement which, once again, seems designed to appeal to any malcontents who might be present in a London audience.⁵⁹⁶

Alizia and her brother Raymond later commit suicide and Voada, who has been in love with Alizia in her male disguise, is convinced that Ward has carried out the killings and attacks him. During the struggle Ward stabs Voada and she calls out to her 'Dear countrymen' (Scene 13, l.91) to 'Revenge my wrongs, my blood/ On this false runagate!' (Scene 13, ll.91-2), once again depicting Ward, and so the figure of the renegade in

⁵⁹⁶ For a detailed treatment of anxieties regarding the presence of former Christians in Islamic armies see: Nabil Matar, 'Renaissance English Soldiers in the Armies of Islam', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 21 (1995), pp.81-95.

general, in a liminal role as a figure alienated from his own nation and culture, but not accepted by the Muslim culture into which he has attempted to assimilate, being rejected principally, in Ward's case, by the very person for whom he has 'turned'.

The play now ends with Ward's trial in which he displays defiance towards his Muslim captors and issues a series of warnings which, once again, seem directed at the potential renegade in the play's audience. At the beginning of his trial Ward's exclusion from the Muslim community of Tunis and forlorn claims to justice under Islam are again highlighted as he warns the court about Voada, telling them to 'Give her no ear. She is all woman – dissimulation' (Scene 16, l.240), then pointing out to his captors that 'I am a Turk, and I do crave the law' (Scene 16, l.241), a plea which is ignored. Ward receives the indictment from a figure simple named in the script as 'Turk' that 'He hath wounded here a Turk, a lady' (Scene 16, l.242) who then states that 'We crave sentence according to his merit/ He may receive the bastinado, pay a fine' (Scene 16, ll.243-244).

Ward is the clear outsider in the depiction of 'Turkish' judicial proceedings in this scene, his words unheard and his pleas ignored; he may have 'turned Turk', but this has seemingly not secured him full rights or respect, something he was warned of earlier by Alizia/Fidelio. Voada, in contrast, is simply told 'Lady, depose thee for't: you shall have justice' (Scene 16, l.250) and goes on to swear 'By our great Prophet Mahomet!' (Scene 16, l.251), underlining the religious nature of the unequal system under which Ward is to be sentenced. Ward pleads with Voada to be merciful, but she laughs at him, leaving Ward to observe that 'I loved that face so well/ To purchase it I exchanged my heaven for hell' (Scene 16, ll.263-4). In this scene the depiction of the feminine treachery of Voada

is combined with her Islamic identity and the consequent advantage it provides her in a trial against the apostate Ward, as the trial demonstrates that even a Muslim woman, generally perceived in the West as deprived of rights under Muslim law, has a superior status to a Christian apostate in the vital arena of the judicial process.

Ward now kills Voada, provoking all assembled to label him an 'Inhuman dog' (Scene 16, l.290), and then stabs himself. His dying speeches constitute a series of moral lessons containing warnings of Turkish perfidy and ingratitude and even include a hope of crusade, as Ward reoccupies the role of defender of Christian faith he assumed earlier in the play when first approached to convert to Islam. Ward begins by berating his captors and former employers as 'slaves of Mahomet' (Scene 16, l.296), proceeding to call them 'Ungrateful curs' (Scene 16, l.297) who have 'repaid me thus/ For all the service that I have done for you' (Scene 16, ll.297-298). Ward goes on to describe how he has 'brought more treasure to your shore/Than all Arabia yields!' (Scene 16, ll.299-300) and then underlines a matter of concern for Western powers in the defection of skilled seamen to the East as Ward describes how he has 'shown you/ The way to conquer Europe' (Scene 16, ll.300-301) by teaching the Turks 'the seaman's art' (Scene 16, ll.302).

Ward then proceeds to curse the Ottoman dynasty, hoping that its name be 'only scorn' (Scene 16, l.305) and that the Turks will 'cut each other's throats' (Scene 16, l.308) and expresses his wish, in the seeming form of a prayer, for the renewal of the institution of crusade, exclaiming:

... O may, the force of Christendom

Be reunited and all at once requite
The lives of all that you have murdered,
Beating a path out to Jerusalem
Over the bleeding brEasts of you and yours.

(Scene 16, ll.309-313)

As I will show in the next section, such calls for Christian unity against the forces of the Turks, even given the religious schism within Europe, were far from rare in the early modern period and so in making this statement Ward merely reiterates a commonly repeated, if little heeded, aspiration within Christian discourse. Ward finally makes a wish that he be ‘the last of my country/ That trust unto your treacheries, seducing treacheries’ (Scene 16, ll.315-6), emphasising once again the combination of dishonesty and sexual temptation which marked the perception of the allure of Islam in Christian writings, and addresses his final words directly to those who might be tempted by conversion, and who, of course, could conceivably have been present in a London audience at the time. Ward calls on:

All you that live by theft and piracies,
That sell your lives and souls to purchase graves,
That die to hell, and live far worse than slaves,
Let dying Ward tell you that heaven is just,
And despair attends on blood and lust. [*Dies*]

(Scene 16, ll.317-321)

Ward is placed in the homiletic role, offering his own experience as an exemplar and a caveat to any who might be placed in the same position as him. Finally after his death the Governor commands that his his body be torn up and that his ‘accursed limbs’ (Scene 16,

l.323) be thrown into 'raging bowels of the sea' (Scene 16, l.324), also stating that 'His monument in brass we'll thus engrave/ "Ward sold his country, turned Turk, and died a slave"' (Scene 16, ll.325-6), once again emphasising the rejection of nation as inextricably linked with 'turning Turk', while also presenting the act of conversion as one of degradation.

'Mahometical Sodomites': Islam and Homosexuality in Early Modern Texts

One of the other important accusations related to libidinous excess and sexual libertinism made against Muslims in early modern texts is that of homosexuality. The relating of Muslim 'sodomy' was important in setting up an eschatological framework in which the 'Turk' would be judged for their sins and also allowing the effeminising of Muslim men. As Nabil Matar points out, this attribution of such sexual practice to the Muslim 'other' also created a justification for conquest which could be seen as 'divinely sanctioned because of the moral and sexual deviance of the Other.'⁵⁹⁷

This association of sexual laxity within Islam with homosexuality and damnation can be clearly seen in Meredith Hanmer's *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586) where he states that the commonly perceived Muslim doctrine that 'the pleasures of the body hurt not neither hinder at all the foelicity of the life to come' is 'the sink of Sodome, the flesh is the matter, & burning lust is the preamble of the fire falling from heaven', concluding that 'the justice of God threatneth everlasting fire & torments for such Mahometical

⁵⁹⁷ Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp.109-127.

Sodomites.’⁵⁹⁸ Hanmer also manages to accuse Muhammad of committing ‘buggerie with an Asse’, consequently combining bestiality with the accusation of sodomy.⁵⁹⁹

Descriptions of homosexual behaviours, and of other deviant sexual practices, by Muslims are also common in travellers’ accounts and in histories and descriptions of Muslim cultures, often relating to the treatment of captives. A newsheet of 1566, reporting on a Turkish assault on ‘the strong towne and castell of Tula in Hungary’ describes how:

To the women and children which they keepe alive, they use such Sodomish abhomination and tyranny as may not the shame be knowen, nor without hartly sorrow be declared.⁶⁰⁰

drawing from this the militant lesson that:

[...] it behoveth al Christian Princes and good Christians to withstand thys cruel Turkish enemy, & to let to them helping handes, such as can be to helpe to resist hym with some power of warre...

And for other Christians to ‘at lEast to helpe them with their godly prayers,’ concluding with the familiarly threatening prognostication that if the Turks ‘thus [...] procede

⁵⁹⁸ Meredith Hanmer *The Baptizing of a Turke* (London: 1586), Sig.C5.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Sig.C5.

⁶⁰⁰ *Newes from Vienna the 5. day of August. 1566. of the strong towne and castell of Tula in Hungary xi. myles beyond the riuer Danubius, which was cruelly assaulted by the great Turke, but nowe by Gods mighty working relieued, the sayd Turks marueilouslye discomfited and ouerthrowen. Translated out of hye Almaine into English, and printed in Augspurge by Hans Zimmerman*, (London: John Awdeley, 1566), Sig.B4.

forwarde to take the upper hand, it wyl rebound to the great plague and ruine of the while of Christendome.’⁶⁰¹

In the 1585 English translation of Nicholas de Nicolay’s account of his travels there is a description of the Turks as being ‘Much [...] given unto the abominable sin of luxurie against nature’ and of this being particularly true in the case of ‘fairest younglings.’⁶⁰² In his description of Algier Nicolay also attributes this particular form of vice to ‘Christians renied, or Mahumetised, of al Nations’ who he claims make up ‘The most part of the Turkes of Alger’ and who he states are ‘giuen all to whoredome, sodometrie, theft, and all other most detestable vices.’⁶⁰³ In the translation of Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* from 1572 there is a description of how for Christian prisoners in Muslim custody which tells of how both ‘yong men & yong women’ some as young as six and seven years of age are ‘compelled to suffer the filthy lust of those that haue bought them’, proffering this situation as proof of ‘cruelnes of that filthy nacion, against nature in the rage of voluptuousness.’⁶⁰⁴ The highly symbolic fall of Constantinople to Mehmet II in 1453 was also frequently made an object lesson in the cruelty and perversion of the Turks, as in the description included by William Biddulph in his travel account where he describes how:

During the time of the sacking (which continued three days) there was no kind of fornication, sodometry, sacrilege, nor cruelty by them left

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., Sig.B4.

⁶⁰² Nicolas de Nicolay, *The Navigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1585), p.100.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p.8.

⁶⁰⁴ Sebastian Münster, *A briefe collection and compendious extract of the straunge and memorable things, gathered oute of the cosmographie of Sebastian Munster* (London: 1572), p.50.

unexecuted. They spoiled the incomparable Temple of Saint Sophia (which had been built by the Emperor Justinian) of all ornaments and hallowed vessels, and made thereof a stable and a brothel for buggerers and whores.⁶⁰⁵

The matter of Muslim sodomy as an element of the mistreatment of prisoners even made it into debates within the House of Lords. In a Petition presented to the Lords on 11 May 1614 on the problem of ‘Transportation of [...] Ordnance from Argyers’, presented by ‘Londoners the Transporters of Ordnance, and Shot’ there is a description of how their children have been ‘kept for Buggery, and made Turkes,’⁶⁰⁶ linking the issue of homosexual rape directly with conversion to Islam. Descriptions of this kind of treatment are also common in the descriptions of Christian captives and visitors to the Islamic world, as in the 1614 account of William Davies cited by Matar where he describes the Turks as ‘of a very fair complexion, but very villains in minde, for they are altogether Sodomites, and doe all things contrarie to a Christian.’⁶⁰⁷ As Matar points out, this, along with other descriptions locates sodomy as ‘the dividing line between the Christian, civilized Briton and the Muslim “barbarian”’ and became an important feature in creating a Muslim stereotype which facilitated the establishment of ‘demarcation and polarization’ between the ‘normal’ English subject and the ‘barbarous’ inhabitant of the Islamic world.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁵ William Biddulph in: Kenneth Parker (ed.), *Early Modern Tales of the Orient*, p.86.

⁶⁰⁶ *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 1: 1547-1629*, pp. 479-81. This petition also highlights the nature of some of England’s trade with North Africa, which plainly included weapons.

⁶⁰⁷ Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen*, p.113.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.113.

The uncontrollable lustfulness of Turkish rulers (and in this case Persians and ‘Muscouites Xeriffes’ also) is also made the reason for Muslim sodomy in Robert Burton’s *The anatomy of melancholy* (1621), in which he links these excesses to the higher status Muslims being ‘fortunate and rich, high fed and idle withal.’⁶⁰⁹ Burton, having compared these Muslim leaders with Solomon and his ‘thousand concubines’ and Nero with his ‘panders and baudes’, goes on to describe how:

They muster vp wenches as we doe souldiers, and haue their choice of all the beauties their countries can afford, & yet al this cannot keep them from adultery, incest, Sodomy, and such prodigious lustes,⁶¹⁰

stating that given their luxury and idleness ‘it is almost impossible they should liue honest, or not rage and precipitate themselues into all those inconueniences of burning lust.’⁶¹¹ Once again this presents the seraglio as the site of sexual excess, but in this case an excess which is still not sufficient to curb the lustful natures of Musim potentates.

⁶⁰⁹ Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy vvhhat it is. VVith all the kindes, causes, symptomes, prognostickes, and seuerall cures of it. In three maine partitions with their seuerall sections, members, and subsections. Philosophically, medicinally, historically, opened and cut vp. By Democritus Iunior. With a satyricall preface, conducing to the following discourse* (London: 1621), p.546.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.546.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.546.

III

VIOLENCE

‘The force of the sword’: Violence and the Representation of Islam

Perceptions of Muslims being rewarded in paradise for fighting for Islam have derived principally from interpretations of Sura 9 *Al-Tawba*/ Repentance:

Allah has bought from the believers their lives and their wealth in return for Paradise; they fight in the way of Allah, kill and get killed. That is a true promise from Him in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur’an; and who fulfills his promise better than Allah? Rejoice then at the bargain you have made with him; for it is the great triumph. (9:111)

This interpretation had, of course, operated on both sides of the religious divide, and in the early modern period it was certainly a key factor, even for those who, in all probability had never had the opportunity to read the Qur’ān for themselves.

In examining the life of Muhammad and in explaining the subsequent spread and enduring success of Islam, and in particular the Ottoman Empire for early modern commentators, the Christian concept of Islam as a religion of violence and coercion and of Muhammad as a warlord was central. In medieval texts Muhammad’s descent from Ishmael was often made a central explanation of the violence of his creed, but by the early modern period this seems to have become less prevalent, although the association of

Muhammad, and subsequently the Turks, with the 'fourth bEast' of the prophecy of Daniel, the figure of Antichrist and the Book of Revelation remained in currency.

Many of the early modern descriptions of the violent nature of Muhammad's career and of the subsequent violence of Muslims centre on this employment of force as a matter of policy which, along with the deceptions practised by the 'pseudo-prophet,' were aimed at the securing of temporal rule and empire. This created the image of Islam as a religion inimical to reason and rooted in violence, an image which still persists in many discursive formulations today.

In *Acts and Monuments* (1570) John Foxe describes Muhammad as stating that 'whereas Christ and other prophets had the gift given them to work miracles, he was sent by force of the sword, to compel men to his religion'⁶¹², and saying to his followers that:

[...] he came not by miracles, but by the force of the sword to give his law, and that they who ill not obey it, must either be put to death, or else pay a tribute (for so be the words of the Alcoran).⁶¹³

This idea of compulsion in religion, and of the forbidding of discussion, examination or challenge, would create the perception of Islam as a religion inimical to reason and one in which violent conduct in its followers was inevitable, indeed was encouraged from its foundation.

⁶¹² John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.21.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p.21.

The use of violence in the suppression of internal discussion or debate of the tenets of Islam is described in many early modern Christian texts. The 1572 translation of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* describes how Muhammad decreed that 'if any man should dispute against his misteries, that he should suffer death for it' and that the truth of the Qur'ān is defended 'by the sworde onely.'⁶¹⁴ Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) poses the question of how, given that the beliefs of Islam laid down by Muhammad are 'so fond and so ridiculous, that men of courage in Turkie doe not forsake this deceauer, and deluder of mankind?' He goes on to answer this by describing the 'four bulwarkes as it were he hath hedged his law about, that no way be open to subuert the same.'⁶¹⁵ Amongst these 'bulwarkes' Hemmingsen includes how Muhammad 'commaundeth to kill them which speake against the Alchoran', the other defences being prohibition of discussion with 'men of à contrarie sect or religion', the prohibition of 'credite to be giuen to anie beside the Alchoran' and that Muslims should 'separate themselues altogether from other men.'⁶¹⁶ George Sandys, in *A relation of a journey* describes what he perceives to be the effects of a religion 'supported with tyranny and the sword', describing how in the Ottoman domains where 'it is death to

⁶¹⁴ Sebastian Münster, *A Brief Collection (Cosmographia)* (London: 1572), Fol.65.

⁶¹⁵ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.91.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.92. Hemmingsen at least avoids the accusation that Islam compels others to their convert, describing how Muhammad told Muslims to say to those of other faiths 'Let me haue my lawe, and take you yours; ye are free from that which I doe, and I likewise from that which you doe.' (p.92) Descriptions of the prohibition of disputation which echo those those shown in the small sample here can be seen in many of the early modern polemic biographies and in other texts dealing with Islam including: George Whetstone's *The English Mirror* (London: 1586) in which he describes how Muhammad 'made his lawe named the Alcoran: and for that he distrusted the goodnes thereof, he generally forbad all men, vpon the paine of death, not so much as to dispute of his lawe. (p.58); Henry Smith's *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), describes how 'Mahomets law is a tyrannical law, for he made it death to dispute of it' and also describes how 'Mahomets religion is defended by force of sword and fraud, insomuch as hee made it death to cal it into question: so likewise did it begin, as by force of sword.' (Sig.K2); John Cartwright's *The preachers travels* (London: 1611) where he states that 'concerning his Alcoran, wherein hee hath inserted the precepts of his inuention, there is no truth in it. For first vpon paine of death, it may not bee disputed vpon, whereas the truth loues triall.' (p.1-3).

speake [...] against it' the result is the 'rooting out all virtue, all wisdom and science, and in summe all liberty and civility.'⁶¹⁷

The tradition which has Muhammad announcing himself as being sent by God to compel men to religion is also repeated time after time in the early modern polemic biographies. Roger's translation of Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) describes 'Mahomet's manner to enlarge and establish his kingdom' as being rooted in violence, and tells of how Muhammad:

[...] saide howe God at the first to mankinde sent Moses, after him Iesus Christ, who were indued with the power to worke miracles. But men gaue smal heede to them. Therefore he determined to send Mahomet a warrior with-out miracles, that whome miracles had not moued, weapons might compel.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun an: Dom: 1610 Foure bookes. Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning* (London: Richard Field for W: Barrett, 1615), p.60.

⁶¹⁸ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.81. This is repeated in Louis Leroy's *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world and the concurrence of armes and learning, thorough the first and famousest nations: from the beginning of ciuility, and memory of man, to this present* (London: 1594):

He gaue men to vnderstand that God first sent Moises vnto mankinde, then IESVS CHRIST with miracles, and because they had not obeyed him, that he sent at that time Mahomet with strong hand, to the end that such as were not moued by miracles should be constrained by armes. (p.98)

A similar formula is also found in John Cartwright's, *The preachers trauels* (London: 1611), where he says of Muhammad:

For his miracles he wrought none at al, but hee confesseth that God sent Moses with miracles, and Christ his forerunner with miracles, but for himselfe he was to come with fire and sword to force men, to obey his law, whereas the truth doth draw men of their own accords. (p.104).

This decision is presented as an example of ‘the subtiltie of this knaue Mahomet’, who Hemmingsen describes as ‘knowing that he was destitute altogether of the heauenlie gift to worke miracles, which thing was at hand, he fained he was sent with the sworde’.⁶¹⁹

Hemmingsen adds to his version of the early career of Muhammad a passage which also shows Muhammad defeated and humiliated as ‘this armed man at the length was vanquished, and receaued à sore wounde in his mouth, wherebie he lost some of his cheeke teeth, and was throwen into à ditch, and put to à shameful foile.’ This tale of an early defeat is also used to show the deception of Muhammad in that ‘that the verie daie before, he had from the oracle of GOD promised victorie to him and his’, with Hemmingsen concluding of Muhammad that ‘while he was yet à common theefe he was oftentimes beaten sore of the Drianites whose camels he set-vpon returning from Mecha’, reinforcing the image of Muhammad as little more than a criminal.⁶²⁰ Hemmingsen links this pseudo-history directly to the contemporary scene, as he states that it is from this violent root that ‘it is that at this daie that aduersarie of God defendeth his blasphemies against God by Turkishe and Mahometical force, according to the prophecie of Daniel.’⁶²¹ This makes the actions of the Turks the natural result of Muhammad’s example.

In his conclusion titled ‘seuen argumentes, whereby the furie of Mahomet is euidentlie refuted’ Hemmingsen states that ‘whatsoever springeth of fraud, is defended by force and

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p.81.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p.82. This image of Muhammad as a criminal can be seen reiterated in many texts, including Meredith Hamner’s *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586) which describes Muhammad engaged in ‘subduing of Countries’ with ‘force of Armes, with Sworde and shedding of blood’ in the company of ‘Rogues and Vagabonds that repaired unto him.’ (Sig.B1).

⁶²¹ Ibid., pp.82-83.

crueltie, and tendeth vnto the destruction of mankinde, is not wrought by God' and asks his readership 'what else, I beseech you, maie be found in Mahomet?'.⁶²² He concludes that 'this ye pestilence of Mahomet sprung up 900 yeares sithence, spred abroad by blodie warre' is at 'extreme variance' with what he calls 'the most auncient and best religion, which hath the consent of al times, and the testimonies of Moses, of the Prophetes, of Christ, and of the Apostles'⁶²³; the perception of the inherent violence of the spread of Islam stands as absolute proof of its falsity as a creed. Similarly, Henry Smith's *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593) describes how taught his followers that his religion 'began by the sword, is holden by the sword, and is finished or ended in the sword', concluding that this 'sheweth that the sword & arme of flesh is all the author and protector that his religion hath.'⁶²⁴

The 1594 translation of Louis Leroy's *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world* points to the examples of political history and states that:

Almost all founders, or reformers of common weales, and kingdomes, going about to bring in new lawes, and maners, seized on the soueraigne force and authoritie; to the end to feare, and to refraine such as would oppose themselues against it: knowing that such alteration could not be made without violence, and force; and that otherwise, they should neither haue bin heard, nor followed⁶²⁵

And goes on to describe how:

⁶²² Ibid., p.92.

⁶²³ Ibid., p.93.

⁶²⁴ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.K2.

⁶²⁵ Louis Leroy, *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world and the concurrence of armes and learning, thorough the first and famousest nations: from the beginning of ciuility, and memory of man, to this present* (London: 1594), p.101.

Mahomet, calling himselfe the Prophet, and messenger of God, sent to giue the Law vnto men, made himself beleued, not onely by word, but also by force; and fought oftentimes against his aduersaries.⁶²⁶

In this version, as in so many others from the early modern period, the religious deceptions of Muhammad are complementary to his employment of force in the pursuit of authority and empire; importantly, both are matters of policy, geared towards the securing of temporal rule.

Muhammad as Rebel and Criminal

Many of the early modern polemic biographies include a version of Muhammad's early career which situate him as first a criminal and then as the leader of a rebel Arabian army in a mutiny against the emperor Heraclius.⁶²⁷ Muhammad is described as living 'by reason of his pouertie [...] by theft and robbrie,'⁶²⁸ 'joining himselfe with theeues and robbers, his life was to rob such marchants as passed through Arabia.'⁶²⁹ John Cartwright in *The preachers trauels*, 1611 describes how 'Concerning Mahomet, the people of Mecha (where he lieth intombed) doe altogether condemne him both for his robberies and

⁶²⁶ Ibid., p.101. Leroy also compares Muhammad to the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus, describing how:

Lycurgus referred all his Lawes to the warre, and to victorie: And Mahomet all his discipline to fighting, and commaunding; placing the felicitie of man in great power, and largenes of Empire (p.101),

once again presenting a pragmatic, ruthless and politically astute Muhammad.

⁶²⁷ Norman Daniel points out that in the medieval period 'Muhammad was often dated, following the Greek authorities in the reign of Heraclius and the restoration of the true cross in the Persian campaign' (*Islam and the West*, p.101).

⁶²⁸ Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church Militant*, p.79.

⁶²⁹ George Abbot, *A briefe description of the whole world* (London: 1599), Sig.E.

murders,⁶³⁰ a remarkable statement from a man who had travelled in the Muslim world.⁶³¹ Alexander Ross's introduction 'To the Christian reader' for his 1649 *Alcoran of Mahomet* describes how Muhammad, having convinced men 'through a fond conceit of his piety' to be 'ready to sacrifice their lives,' then sent these men 'to rob the Caravans of Merchants that travelled through the desarts' and describes his 'retinue daily encreasing by a multitude of Fugitives and Vagabonds, who by reason of this liberty, to act any villany, resorted to him.'⁶³²

From these descriptions of simple banditry early modern texts went on to describe Muhammad's rebellion against the forces of the empire, consequently conflating the expansion of the Muslim empire after Muhammad's death under the *khālifas* with the battles fought during his own lifetime within the boundaries of Arabia.

The *Acts and Monuments* of John Foxe provides a typical version of this story of rebellion against Byzantine power, describing how Muhammad:

[...] gathered strength about him of the Arabians, which Arabians then had occasion to rebel against the Emperor, because their stipends were not paid them by the officers of the emperor Heraclius, he began to range with force and violence in the parts of Syria, bordering near unto him, and first, subdued Mecca, then Damascus; and further, increasing in power, he entered Egypt, and subdued the same. From thence he turned his power

⁶³⁰ John Catwright, *The preachers travels* (London: 1611), p.103.

⁶³¹ Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581) also describes how Mecca 'that citie which hath him nowe in honour, sometime adiudged him vnto death, as à verie hurtful theefe, and appointed à reward, if anie could bring him vnto them either quicke or deade.' (p.82).

⁶³² Alexander Ross, 'To the Christian reader' in *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London: 1649), no page numbers.

against the Persians, with whom Cosroes, the King of Persia, encountered with a puissant army, overthrew the Saracens, and put Mahomet to flight.⁶³³

This description collapses almost one hundred years of Muslim expansion into the lifespan of Muhammad. The version of Muhammad's military careers included in John Pory's translation of Leo Africanus' *A geographical historie of Africa* (1600) states that 'there was nothing that furthered more the enlargement of the Mahumetan sect, then prosperitie in armes, and the multitude of victories.' He goes on to describe how Muhammad 'ouerthrew the Persians, became lord of Arabia, and draue the Romaines out of Syria,' again collapsing the timeframe of Islamic conquest into the lifetime of Muhammad, although the text does attribute later conquests to 'his successors.'⁶³⁴

Several versions of Muhammad's part in the rebellion against the Byzantine emperor actually place him as a member of the Byzantine army, consequently making him a sort of 'renegado' himself. Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) describes Muhammad as having been 'à souldier among his contrie-men the Arabians

⁶³³ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, pp.21-22.

⁶³⁴ The text describes how the Muslims:

[...]afterwards extended their empire from Euphrates to the Atlantick Ocean, and from the riuer Niger to the Pirenei mountaines, and beyond. They occupied Sicilia, assailed Italy, and with continuall prosperitie, as it were; for three hundred yeeres, either subdued, or encumbred, both the east & west.

[Leo Africanus', *A geographical historie of Africa*, (London: 1600), p.381]. An almost identical version is included in Edwadr Grimstone's English translation of Pierre d'Avity's, *The estates, empires, & principallities of the world* (London: 1615), p.1067. More accurate versions of Muhammad's conquests, limiting their scope to Medina, Mecca and Arabia, were less common than those which included this inflated ahistoric account; a good example can be found in Alexander Ross's preface to his *Alcoran of Mahomet* (1649) which ends its account of Muhammad's campaigns at the point when he:

[...] assaulted the City of Mecca, took it, and after some slaughter of the Nobility, his enemies, proclaimed impunity to all that would acknowledge him a Prophet of God, by whose favour (as he affirmed) and appointment, not by his own valour, he had attained to that honor. (No page in text)

Making it geographically correct, but still guilty of adding to the surrender of Mecca a slaughter not found in Muslim accounts.

vnder Heraclius,' going onto relate how through this position 'he found occasion of principalitie, and power':

[...] when the Arabians, being offended with Heraclius for denieng them their paie, & for his religion, had seuered themselues from him, Mahomet ioined himself to the angred soldiers, & stirred-vp their mindes aaginst ye Emperor, & encouraged them in their defection.⁶³⁵

The text then describes how this act of treachery and desertion led to him being 'chosen to be their captaine,' adding that this is an example of how 'they commonlie are extoled in euerie commotion which fauour the wicked enterprise/ of the rebellious people, and set vppon the mightie & gouernours.'⁶³⁶ Hemmingsen's text then reinforces this idea of Muhammad as criminal and renegade as it relates how Muhammad, sardonically described as 'This champion of the Lord' was 'first à theefe, afterward à seditious souldier; then a runne-agate, after that à capitane of à rebellious hoste', and giving his career in which he 'perswadeth light heads, enimies to the true religion, howe he is the messenger of God' as an example 'wherebie we maie gather howe greate the power of Satan is in them, whiche imbrace not the trueth.'⁶³⁷

Other texts from the period present very similar versions of this story of Muhammad as rebel and 'renegade', and as the instigator of an essentially violent religion, including Meredith Hanmer's *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586), Henry Smith's *Gods arrowe against*

⁶³⁵ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (London: 1581), p.70.

⁶³⁶ This is echoed in the English translation of Louis Leroy's *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things* (London: 1594), p.98.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.82.

atheists (1593), George Abbot's *A briefe description of the whole world* (1599), George Sandys' *A relation of a iourney* (1611), Peter Haylyn's *A little description of the great world* (1625) to name only a few. In these texts the story of Muhammad's violent rebellion is almost uniformly associated with his deceptive claim to prophecy and, as highlighted in my earlier section on Muhammad's deceptions, his institution of a new religion is seen quite straightforwardly as a matter of political manoeuvring and facilitation of the exercise of temporal power. Muhammad is seen as using his pretended divinity, what Louis Leroy, in a typical statement of this process, calls 'a pretext of diuinity in his actions,' to call himself 'no more a Captaine chosen by military fauour, but the prophet and messenger of almighty God' so that 'vnder colour of this imposture, al men should obey him the more willingly.'⁶³⁸ This 'trick' by Muhammad is seen as also being used to counteract the soldiers' contempt for his humble background and social standing, described in George Sandys' version as the 'the basenesse of his birth.' Sandys describes how Muhammad:

[...] to avoid ensuing contempt [...] gave it out, that he attained/ not to that honour by military fauour, but by diuine appointment. That he was sent by God to give a new law unto mankind; and by force of arms reduce the world unto his obedience.⁶³⁹

Obviously these versions of the story link directly to the descriptions of Muhammad's 'base' background found in the polemic biographies.

⁶³⁸ Leroy, *Interchangeable course*, p.98.

⁶³⁹ Sandys, *Relation*, pp.52-53.

The accounts of Muhammad's campaigns also provide a root for the depiction of the rise and spread of Islam as a 'scourge' sent by God for the punishment of Christians; a providential concept central to early representations of Islam and warfare which will form a central feature of this discussion. Henry Smith's *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593) provides a typical example of this in its description of how Muhammad in the planning of his militaristic propagation of his faith 'tooke the aduantage of the time, for that time was a time of dissention among Princes, and of diuision amongst those which called themselues Christians' and relates how at the time:

The Church was troubled with diuers sectes and heresies, as with Nestorians, Iacobites, Monothelites, &c. And then was there contention amongst the Bishops, who should haue the proud title of vniuersall Bishop. God was highly displeased with this wickednes, and suffered Nations to rise as a rodde or scourge to whippe his people...

Smith goes on to state that, 'where the hedge is broken; there it is easie for the bEastes of the field to enter and spoile.'⁶⁴⁰ In this conception of the rise of Islam within the writings of Christian commentators of the early modern period the political division of Christians and also the theological divisions and heresies in the Christian world which had allowed the initial rise of Islam were seen to be replicated exactly in the conditions of post-Reformation Europe, with the contemporary advance of the Ottoman Turks being read as a 'scourge' for the sins and divisions of their own time. This depiction of a providential contest in which true faith would be rewarded and false doctrine punished will be examined in more detail later.

⁶⁴⁰ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.K1.

The early modern accounts of Muhammad's creation of Islam as a religion of the sword also identify violence and warfare in the name of the faith as being encouraged by rewards in the afterlife, creating an image of Muslim holy warrior (*shahid*) fighting the holy war (*jihad*) so familiar in representations of Islam in the modern world. In these accounts Muhammad is shown as setting up a framework for subsequent Islamic conquest, as in Thomas Newton's *A notable historie of the Saracens* (1575) where Muhammad is shown creating:

[...] foure Tribunes or chiefe Capitaynes in warres commonly called Admyralles, whyche had euerie one vnder them many Peticapitaines and Centurions: and these foure hee woulde commonly vse to call the sharpe Swordes of God, and them he commaunded to goe into the foure partes of the worlde, euerie one by him selfe a seuerall waye, and to kyll all suche as repugned hys Law.⁶⁴¹

This version is repeated in Meredith Hanmer's *The Baptizing of a Turke* (1586), in which the mission given to the 'Captaynes' and 'Amiræi' is to 'subdue Nations, and to destroye the Christians, to the end he might establishe that false Religion devised by him and his wicked confederates', also describing how as a consequence of this command 'Et omnes extimverunt: *And all men trembled in fear.*'⁶⁴²

The rewards for these violent actions in the name of the faith are made clear in several of the early modern texts. Neils Hemmingsen's *The faith of the church militant* (1581) describes how Muhammad 'saith [...] He that either killeth his enemy, or is killed by his

⁶⁴¹ Thomas Newton, *A notable historie of the Saracens* (London: 1575), p.10.

⁶⁴² Meredith Hanmer, *The Baptizing of a Turke* (London: 1586), Sig.B2.

enemie entreth into Paradise.’⁶⁴³ In Henry Smith’s *Gods arrowe against atheists* (1593) describes how Muhamamd made a law which stated that ‘He that slayeth his enemie [...] or is slaine of his enemie, let him enter & possesse paradise,’ provoking Smith to comment that in doing so ‘he spake like a man, with a carnal spirit, teaching reuenge to the vttermost, & promising paradise to such’, concluding that this is evedence that ‘no prooffe of a diuine spirit appeareth in him.’⁶⁴⁴ Alexander Ross in his preface to the 1649 translation of the *Qur’ān* also describes this offer of heaven in return for martyrdom where he describes Muhammad telling his rebellious army to fight against Heraclius’ forces, ‘affirming it to be the will of God, that all Men should enjoy their Liberty, that God was offended at their oppressions, and willed them to oppose the tyranny of the Christians’ and going on to promise that ‘whosoever died in that holy War, his soul should be instantly transported to Paradise’, a promise which Ross cites as being one of the central motives which ‘raised them to a resolution of making defection’ and why they ‘elected Mahomet their General.’⁶⁴⁵

As shown here, these depictions of Muhammad were translated directly into representation of the nature and ambitions of the Ottoman Empire. Martin Luther in his tract *On War Against the Turk* (1529) describe how when asked ‘why the Turk [here meaning the Sultan] performs no miracles to conform his new law’ answers that it is not necessary and useless as ‘the people had many miracles before, when Moses’ law and the Gospel arose, and did not believe.’ Luther goes on to relate the Muhammad’s position that ‘That is why his Koran does not need to be confirmed by wasted miracles, but by the

⁶⁴³ Neils Hemmingsen, *The faith of the church militant* (1581), p.83.

⁶⁴⁴ Henry Smith, *Gods arrowe against atheists* (London: 1593), Sig.K2.

⁶⁴⁵ Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London: 1649), no page numbers.

sword, which is more persuasive than miracles', concluding with the observation that 'This is how it has been and still is among the Turks; everything is done by the sword instead of with miracles.'⁶⁴⁶ Neils Hemmingsen's *Faith of the church militant* connects the example of the career of Muhammad to the contemporary threat of the Turks, saying that it is this from the foundation of Muhammad's use of violence 'Whereof it is that at this daie that aduersarie of God defendeth his blasphemies against God by Turkishe and Mahometical force.'⁶⁴⁷

The perception of the root of violent Turkish actions in the teachings of Muhammad can also be seen clearly expressed in a newsheet from 1621, reporting on Turkish assaults on Poland. As part of the relation of the events the writer finds it necessary to take a diversion into a discussion 'Concerning the greatnesse of the Empire of the Turks, and the warlike concussions wherewith they have affrighted both *Persia* and *Europe*.' The writer informs his readership that:

[...] you may consider it thus in the generall, that *Mahomet*, the author of their Religion and *Alcoran*, enjoyed the race of Othoman to two speciall things. First, The one was the propagation of the Empire by some memorable attempt of war. Secondly, The other, the glorification of their Religion, by some remarkeable action of peace...⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Martin Luther, 'On War Against the Turks' in, *Luther's Works*, Vol.46, p.197.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p.82-83. This is repeated verbatim in William Biddulph's *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (London: 1609), p.94.

⁶⁴⁸ *Newes from Poland Wherein is truly enlarged the occasion, progression, and interception of the Turks formidable threatning of Europe. And particularly, the inuading of the kingdome of Poland. With many seuerall repulses he hath receiued from that braue and military nation: euen to this present moneth of October: as is truly collected out of the originall. Published by authority* (London: F. K[ingston] for B. D[ownes] and William Lee, 1621), Sig.A3.

This makes it clear that not only is Turkish violence the result of a direct command from Muhammad (who in the phrasing of this document seems to talk directly to the Ottomans), but that any Turkish offer of peace is likewise a matter of policy derived from their prophet.

And George Sandys in his *A relation of a journey* (1615) describes the perpetuation of the belief in the reward for death or martyrdom in holy war in the Turks' belief that:

[...] they shall be rewarded with Paradise that do spend their blood upon their enemies of their Religion called *Shahids*, which is Martyrs, by them: for although they repute murder to be an execrable crime, that cries to heaven for vengeance, and is never forgiven; yet they are commanded by their law to extend their profession by violence, & without compassion to slaughter their opposers.⁶⁴⁹

The sense of threat from the Turks is duplicated innumerable times in early modern texts and is intimately connected with the concepts of divine Providence in the writings of the commentators of the time, with the Turks fulfilling the role of a 'scourge' for the sins on Christians.

⁶⁴⁹ George Sandys, *A relation of a journey* (London: Richard Field for W: Barrett, 1615), p.58.

‘God’s rod and the devil’s servant’: Early Modern Providentialism and the View of the Turkish Threat

The idea of the providential role of Islam in punishing Christian sin was one which had a long pedigree in the Christian West. The loss of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and subsequently the other Crusader states between 1189 and 1290, and then of Constantinople to the forces of Mehmet II in 1453, were all accompanied by widespread bemoaning of the Christian iniquity which had brought about these defeats as the punishment of God; and this providential reading of the advance of Islam was continued into the early modern era as writers whose worldview was dominated by theological concerns ‘detected scourges of God everywhere.’⁶⁵⁰ In *Mandeville’s Travels* there is a clear statement of this perception of the loss of Palestine as a punishment for Christian sin in an exchange between the English Christian Knight Mandeville and the ‘Souden’. The Sultan asks Mandeville how Christian men behave in his country, to which he replies ‘Right wel, thonked be God,’ provoking the Sultan to deliver a diatribe against the iniquities of Christians in which he describes how:

[...] yee Christene men ne recche right noght how untrewly ye serven
God. Yee sholde yeuen ensample to the lewed peple for to do wel, and ye
yeuen hem ensample to don euylle.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵⁰ C.A. Patrides, “‘The Bloody and Cruel Turk’: The Background of a Renaissance Commonplace”, *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol.10 (1963), pp.126-135. This article provides a detailed overview of the reading of Islam as a punishment of God.

⁶⁵¹ *Mandeville’s Travels*, M.C. Seymour (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.100.

Included amongst his litany of Christian sin are: drinking and gluttony on holy days; disunity in that they ‘fighten and [...] desceyven that on that other’ and the observation that ‘non of hem holdeth feyth to another’; excessive pride demonstrated by showy clothing and greed so great that ‘for a lytylle syluer thei sellen here doughtres, here sustres, and here owne wyfes to putten hem to leccherie.’⁶⁵² The sultan concludes that ‘thei defoulen there lawe that Ihesu Crist betook hem to kepe for here saluacoun’ and goes on to say that as a consequence of this sinful life ‘God hath taken hem into oure hondes, nocht only be strengthe of ourself but for here synnes,’ adding that:

[...] wee knowen wel in verry soth that whan yee seruen God, God wil helpe you, and whan He is with you, no man may ben ayenst you. And that knowen we wel be oure prophecyes that Christen men schulle wynnen ayen this lond out of oure hondes whan thei seruen God more deuoutly.⁶⁵³

The Mandeville author then uses his rhetorical device of placing the exposition of the providential view of Christian failure in the holy land in the speech of a Muslim to castigate his Christian readers, advancing the opinion that ‘it is gret sclaundre to oure faith and to oure lawe, whan folk that ben withouten lawe schulle repreuen us and undernemem us of oure synnes,’ when they should be ‘conuerted to Crist and to the lawe of Ihesu be oure gode ensamples and be oure acceptable lif to God,’⁶⁵⁴ instead of which though the ‘wykkedness and euylle lyuynges’ of Christians they remain ‘straungeres fro the holy and verry believe.’⁶⁵⁵ The Mandeville author concludes by providing a comparison of Christian ‘infidelity’ with the behaviour of the ‘Sarazines’, who he says

⁶⁵² Ibid., p.101.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., p.101.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., p.101.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., p.102.

‘ben gode and feythfulle’ and ‘kepen entirely the commandement of the holy book Alkoran that God sente hem be His messenger Machomet,’⁶⁵⁶ an observation plainly intended to shame the Christian reader and which is echoed in later texts which compare Christian malpractice and disorder with the strict observation and discipline of Muslims.

The most influential early modern texts in constructing the early modern providentialist view of the success of the Turks as God’s punishment for Christian sin were Martin Luther’s *Vom Kriege wider den Türken (On War Against the Turk)* (1529) and Desiderius Erasmus’ *De bello turcico* (‘On the war against the Turks’) (1530). Both of these texts were written in the atmosphere of fear surrounding the siege of Vienna by the forces of Süleyman I, which was ultimately lifted on the 14th October 1529. The two texts should really be read in tandem as their conclusions are strikingly similar, with Erasmus reacting, to some degree, in sections of his text to the earlier assertion of Luther in his *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses* (1518) that ‘to fight against the Turks is the same as resisting God, who visits or sin upon us with this rod.’⁶⁵⁷

The more extreme providential argument forbidding resistance to the divine ‘scourge’ of the Turks is modified significantly by Luther in *On War Against the Turk* in order to address the exigencies of the crisis in Vienna.⁶⁵⁸ In *On War Against the Turk* Luther

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., p.102.

⁶⁵⁷ *Luther’s Works*, Vol.31, pp.91-2. This initial position by Luther also provoked an angry reaction in England from Sir Thomas More. For a discussion of More’s reaction, see: Matthew Dimmock, “‘Machomet dyd as Luther Doth nowe’”: Islam, the Ottomans and the English Reformation’, *Reformation*, Vol.9, 2004, pp.99-130.

⁶⁵⁸ As Luther puts it in his dedication to Philip the landgrave of Hesse:

Now that the Turk is actually approaching, even my friends are urging me to do this [write again on war with the Turks], especially since there are some stupid preachers among us Germans (as I am sorry to hear) who are making the people believe that we ought not and must not fight against the Turk. [*Luther’s Work*, Vol. 46, p.161].

maintains his position that the aggression and success of the Turks is the punishment of God and argues that lack of Christian success in the wars has been due to the belligerent refusal by Christians to change their sinful ways. Luther describes how:

The Christians and the princes were driven, urged, and irritated into attacking the Turk, and making war on him, before they amended their own ways and lived as true Christians.⁶⁵⁹

He then goes on to describe the providential result of the obstinacy of Christians, relating how:

If we will not learn from the Scriptures, we must learn from the Turk's scabbard, until we learn from dreadful experience that Christians should not make war or resist evil. Fools should be beaten with rods.⁶⁶⁰

Luther seems to reiterate his earlier position of prohibiting resistance to the Turks, yet in this text, instead of putting in place an absolute prohibition on resistance, he puts in place a clear separation between the duties of Church and state under God, a matter which formed one of the cores of his general theology. In *On War* Luther makes it clear that the religious *qua* religious should not be involved, including the raising of crusade taxes by the Church or any actual involvement in fighting. Luther states of the direct involvement of the Church that 'If I were a soldier and saw a priest's banner in the field, or a banner of the cross, even though it was a crucifix, I should run as though the devil were chasing

These 'stupid preachers' were evidently following Luther's earlier prohibition of resisting the Turks as the punishment of God.

⁶⁵⁹ *Luther's Works* 46, p.165.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.167.

me.’⁶⁶¹ Luther makes it clear that ‘Charles, or the emperor, should be the man to fight against the Turks, and that the fighting should be done under his banner’ and not on any Church-instigated or Church-run basis, although in fighting the Turks the emperor, or any other Christian prince, would be obeying the ‘commandment of God that says, “Protect the good; punish the wicked,”’⁶⁶² and so fulfilling in Luther’s eyes the true role of the Christian prince. Luther makes it clear that in these circumstances it is perfectly legitimate to resist the Turk as ‘The Turk certainly has no right or command to begin war and to attack lands that are not his’ and ‘Therefore his war is nothing but an outrage and robbery with which God is punishing the world, as he often does through wicked scoundrels.’⁶⁶³ The role of the religious in this schema is to stir the faithful at home to prayer and repentance and through this improvement in the lives of Christians allay the wrath of God which sent the Turks in the first place.

Luther is also the one of the foundational thinkers in creating the conflation between the ‘Turke’ and the papacy in early modern Protestant thought. In *On War* he makes clear the parallel between the two, particularly stressing the worldliness of the papacy, rhetorically asking:

Is it not true that he and his bishops have become worldly lords, and, led by the spirit of lies, have fallen away from the gospel and embraced their own human doctrine, and thus have committed murder down to the present hour?

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., p.168.

⁶⁶² Ibid., p.189.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., p.170. Luther continues in this vein as he describes how: The Turk does not fight from necessity or to protect his land in peace, as the right kind of ruler does; but like a pirate or a highwayman, he seeks to rob and ravage other lands which do and have done nothing to him. He is God’s rod and the devil’s servant (p.170).

Luther goes on to exhort his reader to examine histories where, he says, they will find that:

[...] the principal business of the pope and bishops has been to set emperors, kings, princes, lands, and people against one another, and they themselves have fought and helped in the work of murder and bloodshed.

All of these actions, Luther continues, have their root (as with the actions of the Turks) in the papacy being dominated by ‘the spirit of lies’ which ‘After he has made his disciples teachers of lies and deceivers, he has no rest until he makes them murderers, robbers, and bloodhounds’ which has resulted in the Church commanding men ‘to bear the sword, to wage war, and to incite and arouse men to murder and war, when their duty was to attend to preaching and prayer?’⁶⁶⁴ Luther also places the pope in the position of Antichrist, as his actions are carried out ‘while sitting in the temple of God [II Thess. 2:4], as head of the church,’ a crime of which the Turk is not guilty. However, he does observe that ‘just as the pope is the Antichrist, so the Turk is the very devil incarnate’ and concludes that ‘The prayer of Christendom against both is that they shall go down to hell, even though it may take the Last day to send them there; and I hope that day will not be far off.’⁶⁶⁵

The argument of Erasmus in ‘On the War against the Turks’ follows Luther’s very closely in most respects, but differs in the practical role of the religious in conducting the war and, of course, contains nothing like the paralleling of Pope

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., p.180.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.180-2.

and Turk found in Luther, although he does parallel the actions of Christians and Turks more generally. Erasmus begins his tract with a rhetorical rehearsal of the depredations of the Turks against Christendom:

What atrocities have they not committed against us? For how many cities, how many islands, how many provinces have they snatched away from the domain of Christ? See how they have confined the once world-wide power and influence of our religion to a narrow strip of land.⁶⁶⁶

This depiction of an ever-diminishing Christendom, reduced from its former glory and universal dominance by the threat from Islam, permeated many texts on the Turks and Islam in the early modern period and frequently prefaced a call for Christian unity in opposing the expansion of Islam, which echoed the rhetoric of crusade. Erasmus continues this point in his text, stating that ‘unless we are shielded by the right hand of God, in a few years the remainder of the Christian worlds will also be absorbed’ and points out that:

Even if all these calamities occurred through no fault of our own, the whole body of Christendom should be moved by Christian sympathy to grieve for one of its member in distress...⁶⁶⁷

Yet Erasmus, as Luther did in his tract, goes on to argue that it is indeed the fault of Christians that this situation exists, and outlines a providential explanation for the successful expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Erasmus states his view that the

⁶⁶⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, ‘On the War against the Turks’ in: Erika Rummel (ed.), *The Erasmus Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp.315-6.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.316.

lack of success experienced by Christian forces in the war against the Turks is due to the fact that:

[...] we have still clung to all the things which have angered God and caused him to send the Turks against us, just as he sent frogs, lice and locusts upon the Egyptians long ago...⁶⁶⁸

Erasmus goes on to describe the way in which the Christian defeat is also the outcome of Christian behaviour in war mirroring that of the Turks. He states that Christians 'have relied upon our own strength for victory, and have forgotten that the battle is fought in the name of Christ' and consequently have 'conducted ourselves like Turks against the Turks,'⁶⁶⁹ a statement which breaks down the essentialising Manichaean divide between 'violent' Turk and righteous Christian, a divide which Erasmus further attacks by stressing the non-essential nature of religious identity.

Having described the Christian propensity to 'fight the Turks like Turks,' in attacking the Turks 'with the selfsame eagerness with which they invade the lands of others,' and consequently being 'betrayed by our lust for power' and the urge to 'covet riches', Erasmus goes on to castigate the error of the 'the ignorant mob' who when they 'hear the name 'Turk' [...] immediately fly into a rage and clamour for blood, calling them dogs and enemies to the name of Christian.'⁶⁷⁰ He describes how by reacting in this way Christians forget that 'the Turks are men, and, what is more, half-Christian,'⁶⁷¹ a statement which only moves away from the demonisation of the Turks, but also reflects

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., p.316.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p.316.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., p.317.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., p.317.

an understanding of the shared theological ground between Christianity and Islam, such as that found in the more irenic medieval texts like those included in the twelfth century Cluniac corpus commissioned by Peter the Venerable.

Erasmus states that this Christian ‘mob’ does not understand that ‘The Church has no more dangerous enemies than sinners in high places’ and then return to the trope of Turkish violence as a ‘scourge’ of Christian sin by observing that this mob also does not understand that ‘God, offended by our wickedness, from time to time uses the outrages committed by these barbarians to reform us.’⁶⁷² Yet Erasmus then goes on to locate these Turkish ‘outrages’ within the context of the universality of atrocity (what in modern terminology would be labelled war-crimes) in the arena of conflict. He describes the production of propagandist pictures ‘showing examples of Turkish cruelty,’ which are evidently meant to create the type of angry and bloodthirsty reaction which he has observed in the ‘mob,’ and observes that:

[...] these ought in fact to remind us how reluctant we should be to make war against anyone at all, since similar ‘amusements’ have been common in all the wars in which, over so many years, Christian has wickedly fought Christian.⁶⁷³

Erasmus derives a quasi-pacifist conclusion from this view of the ubiquity of atrocity in war, observing that ‘If the subjects of these paintings truly shock us, we should curb our own impetuosity, which so easily leads us headlong into war’ and concludes that the actions committed during intra-Christian conflicts are in fact worse than those of the

⁶⁷² Ibid., pp.317-318.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., p.318.

Turks, stating that ‘However cruel the deeds of the Turks, the same deeds committed against his fellow by a Christian are still more cruel.’⁶⁷⁴

Accordingly Erasmus, like Luther, makes his priority the reform of the lives of Christians at home and states, citing Leviticus 26:7-8,⁶⁷⁵ that only under these circumstances will Christian forces stand any chance against the armies of Islam. Erasmus, continuing his quasi-pacifist stance, also states a preference for conversion of Turks over conflict, stating that ‘this triumph will be all the more acceptable to Christ if, instead of slaughtering the Turks, we manage to draw them to us in a common faith and observance,’ going on to state his hope for a situation in which Christians ‘destroy a Turk in order to make a Christian, to hurl down an infidel in order to make a true believer’, describing how ‘such ‘slaughter’ as this is the work of piety.’⁶⁷⁶

‘The greatest terror of the world’: The Threat of the Turks in Early Modern English Writing

Even given the geographical remoteness of Britain from the ‘terror’ of the Ottoman Empire it was not uncommon to find febrile statements of imminent threat voiced in English writing during the early modern period, combined with a providential reading of the Turkish threat which echoes the views of Luther and Erasmus. Despite the distance of Britain from any immediate threat from the Turks, a keen interest was maintained

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., p.318.

⁶⁷⁵ ‘You shall put your enemies to flight and they shall fall in battle before you: five of you shall pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you ten thousand.’

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., p.324.

suffering of Christians under this ‘terror’.

The history of the Turks included in the 1570 edition of John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* includes perhaps the most influential of English Protestant statements of this providential conception of the Turkish threat. Given that this second edition, as Matthew Dimmock points out, was the version of Foxe’s work ‘Convocation had directed to be placed in all cathedral churches,’ it was the statement of this idea of the Turks as God’s ‘scourge’ most likely to have been encountered by the average English minister of religion or churchgoer.⁶⁷⁷ Foxe seeks to identify the causes of the ‘cruel tyranny and bloody victories, the ruin and subversion of so many Christian churches, with the horrible murders and captivity of infinite Christians’ enacted by the Turks, and comes to conclusions which echo those of Luther and Erasmus.⁶⁷⁸ Foxe states that these Turkish victories come about so that Christians ‘may ponder more deeply with ourselves the scourge of God for our sins, and corrupt doctrine’ and goes on to assert that ‘this horrible persecution of the Turks’ has come about ‘chiefly by our discord and dissention among ourselves’ and expresses the hope that consideration of this factor ‘may reduce us again from our domestical wars, in killing and burning one another, to join together in christian patience and concord.’⁶⁷⁹ Foxe, like Erasmus, points to the Christian propensity for atrocity as a cause of the Turks’ victories, describing how:

⁶⁷⁷ Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.142.

⁶⁷⁸ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.18.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

We fight against a persecutor, being no less persecutors ourselves. We wrestle against a bloody tyrant, and our hands as full of blood as his. He killeth Christ's people with the sword, and we burn them with fire.⁶⁸⁰

Foxe goes on to describe how 'neither doth he, nor do we, seek our justification as we should, that is, by faith in the Son of God,' paralleling the Muslim rejection of Christ's divinity with the Christian failure to follow his teachings.⁶⁸¹

Foxe also depicts a Christendom which is a shrinking remnant of its former self and highlights the threat to 'the poor congregations and the little remnant of his church' in the face of 'this Turkish power, joined with the malice of Satan against the Son of God' which has already conquered 'strong and noble christian kingdoms and churches, where now we see the Turkish tyranny to reign, and Satan to have taken full possession.'⁶⁸²

Foxe ends with an exhortation to the faithful:

Oh that we might foresee a little the great danger that hangeth over our heads! For though the Turk seemeth to be far off, yet do we nourish within our brEast at home, that which may soon cause us to feel his cruel hand and worse, if worse may be: to overrun us; to lay our lands waste; to scatter us among the infidels, the enemies and blasphemers of the Son of God!⁶⁸³

Here Foxe delivers a call to be aware of the threat of the Turk in terms of the material military threat, but also in terms of the spiritual decline which causes Christians to be

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., p.19.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., p.19.

⁶⁸² Ibid., p.24.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., p.24.

threatened by the Turk as a providential 'scourge' of God. As with other descriptions of the Turkish threat in early modern Britain, Foxe's not only collapses the distance between Britain and the threat of the Turk, but also delivers a call for Christian unity in the face of the Turkish advance. This call for unity would provide one of the last bastions of the idea of Christendom, a concept otherwise fractured beyond repair by the Reformation.

In the dedicatory preface of Thomas Newton's *A Noteable History of the Saracens* (1575) there is a similar statement of the Turkish threat as both a literal one of military conquest and also as an internal threat caused by the behaviour of Christians. In the dedication, addressed to Charles Howard, then the acting Lord Chancellor, Newton, referring to the Ottoman conquests in Europe, describes how the English 'if wee wyll not by others harmes take warning'⁶⁸⁴ and describes:

[...] what curtesye is to bee looked for at their [the Turk's] hands, when and wheresoeuer they can espye any occasion or oportunitie to put in practise their bloody tyranny.'⁶⁸⁵

Newton remarks, continuing and intensifying his presentation of Ottoman threat, that, 'They were (in deede) at the first very far of from our Clyme & Region, and therefore the lesse to be feared, but now they are euen at our doores and ready to come into our Houses.'⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁴ Thomas Newton, *A notable historie of the Saracens* (London: William Howe for Abraham Veale, 1575), 'The Epistle', no page numbers.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 'The Epistle'.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., 'The Epistle'.

Newton also uses the common early modern device of describing the Turks in the light of a 'scourge of God' for the sins of Christians as he observes, echoing Foxe, that it is 'diuision, discord and ciuile dissention' between Christians which 'hath from time to time enticed and brought this Babylonian Nabugadnezar and turkish Pharaoh so neere vnder our noses.' Once again Newton demonstrates the perception of Christian division as causative of the Turkish success, and also provides the type of call for Christian unity which would be included in so many early modern texts on the Turkish threat.

In George Whetstone's *The English mirror* (1586) there is an example of the drawing of a single unbroken line from Muhammad to the threat of the Turks. Whetstone describes how 'Califus succeeded Mahomet in the Empire and Hali succeeded Califus' and goes on to comment that:

[...] these two greatly augmented the secte of Mahomet, and so from tyme to tyme, by diuers meanes and successions, and Principally for our sinnes, and through the cowardlines of the Emperors of the East, this pestilence continueth vnto our age.⁶⁸⁷

Here Whetstone, apart from confusing the term *khālifa* (successor) as being the name of an actual person and then making 'Hali' (Ali ibn Talib) the second *khālifa* instead of the fourth, creates a clear lineage from Muhammad to his own time, through which Islam as providential scourge has been transmitted.

⁶⁸⁷ George Whetstone, *The English mirror* (London: 1586), p.59.

Whetstone reinforces this image by describing how the Ottoman Sultan:

[...] of a vile and abiect person, hee is growne to be a Prince, renowned and feared through the whole worlde, the great Turke I meane, who although he be sprung vp long since Mahomet, yet his damnable secte neuer dyed, & at this day by the Turkes proceedings is wonderfully dispersed,⁶⁸⁸

concluding with the hope that this is a sect which ‘almightie God for his sonne Iesu Christ his sake’ will ‘speedily extinguish.’⁶⁸⁹ Whetstone’s text also includes the ubiquitous call for Christian unity, a cessation of ‘internecine’ warfare and a revival of concerted action against the Turks by expressing the wish that:

I would to God his [the Ottoman Sultan] aduantage were lesse, and the swordes that are now in Christian mens handes ready to gore one an others intrailles, were mutually bent against this tiraunt the sworne enemy of Christ, and blasphemmer of his blessed word.⁶⁹⁰

These sentiments are echoed in the ‘Induction to the Christian Reader’ from Richard Knolles’ monumental *Generall historie of the Turkes* (1603) who draws attention to:

The long and still declining state of the Christian commonweale, with the vtter ruine and subuersion of the Empire of the East, and many other most

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., p.60.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p.60.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., p.78.

glorious kingdomes and prouinces of the Christians, neuer to be sufficiently lamented...⁶⁹¹

Knolles goes on to warn of 'the dreadfull danger daily threatened vnto the poore remainder thereof.' Knolles also draws a direct line from Muhammad to the Turks observing, in a section dealing with the decline of the 'Saracen' Arab empires (whom he calls 'the first champions of the Mahometane superstition'), that out of the decline of the Arab powers, which 'though they had lost much, yet held many great kingdomes both in Asia and Affricke, taken for the most part from the Christians,' there came the rise of the Turks, who he describes as 'an obscure and base people, before scarce knowne vnto the world, yet fierce and courageous.'

Knolles observes that the Turks 'from a small beginning' have 'become the greatest terror of the world' and remarks that, 'at this present if you consider the beginning, progresse, and perpetuall felicitie of this the Othoman Empire, there is in this world nothing more admirable or strange.' Knolles, like the other early modern Christian writers, seeks to discover the principal causes of the 'perpetuall felicitie' of this empire (which he says causes the Turks to hold 'all the rest of the world in scorne, thundering out nothing but still bloud and warre' and to evince that in time they will 'rule ouer all' with 'no other limits than the vttermost bounds of the earth, from the rising of the Sunne vnto the going

⁶⁹¹ Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Othoman familie: with all the notable expeditions of the Christian princes against them. Together with the liues and conquests of the Othoman kings and emperours faithfullie collected out of the best histories, both auntient and moderne, and digested into one continual historie vntill this present yeare 1603* (London: Adam Islip, 1603), no page numbers.

downe of the same') and so to explain their successes against the forces of 'Christendom.' Knolles concludes, in a classic statement of theodicy and providential formula, that the first cause is the:

[...] iust and secret iudgement of the Almightye, who in iustice deliuereth into the hands of these mercilesse miscreants, nation after nation, and kingdome vpon kingdome, as vnto the most terrible executioners of his dreadfull wrath, to be punished for their sinnes...

Knolles observes that the success of the Turks is also brought about by 'the small care the Christian princes, especially those that dwelt further off, haue had of the common state of the Christian Commonweale' and continues to describe how:

[...] in stead of which Christian compassion and vnitie, they haue euer and euen yet at this time are so deuided among themselues with endlesse quarrels, partly for questions of religion (neuer by the sword to bee determined,) partly for matters touching their owne proper state and soueraignetie...

Knolles follows this classic lamentation of Christian disunity, with its creation of 'distrust and implacable hatred,' with an observation that this is the reason why the Christian princes 'neuer could as yet (although it haue beene long wished) ioyne their common forces against the common enemye,' being occupied instead with 'turning their weapons one vpon another' and consequently weakening themselves in the face of the onslaught of the Turks. Knolles observes that were this internecine combat not the norm between the Christian princes they:

[...] with their combined forces (the greedie enemies greatest terrour) [...] might long since not onely haue repressed his [the 'Turk'] furie, and abated his pride, but with small danger and much glorie (God fauouring their so honourable attempts) haue againe recouered from him most of those famous Christian kingdoms...

Once again this demonstrates the power of the Turkish threat as a focus for cohesion in an otherwise divided Christian world.

Knolles' 'Induction' also indicates another strand of the approach to the threat of the Turks in that it acknowledges the many ways in which the Turks are superior to Christians in their cohesion and military organisation. Knolles comments that many of the reasons for the Turks' success are 'more proper vnto themselues' and 'not depending of the improuident carelesnesse, weaknesse, discord, or imperfections of others,' including amongst these features 'ardent and infinit desire of soueraignetic, wherewith they haue long since promised vnto themselues the monarchie of the whole world' and, more importantly in contrast to the division between Christians, notes the:

[...] rare vnitie and agreement amongst them, as well in the manner of their religion (if it be so to be called) as in matters concerning their state (especially in all their enterprises to be taken in hand for the augmenting of their Empire)...

He remarks that ‘thereof they call themselves Islami, that is to say, men of one mind, or at peace among themselves,’ a mistranslation of the term,⁶⁹² but one which marks the perception of Muslim unity, at least within the Sunni Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹³

The bemoaning of Christian division in the face of Islamic threat also made its way into the literary production of the early modern period. The conclusion of William Painter’s ‘A Cruell Facte of Soltan Solyman’ from *The Palace of Pleasure* (1575) announces the overall purpose of the text in relating the narrative as it calls for Christian unity, asking Christians to ‘be wise, and abstayne from civile Warre and dissentions.’⁶⁹⁴ The text proceeds to exhort Christians ‘with common Force’ to attack the Turks, who are described as the ‘wicked Termagant’ and ‘not only a generall Ennemy of our Countrey and Lyfe, but also of oue Soules,’ warning that if this concerted action is not carried out ‘it wyll be dangerous thorough our continuall discorde to give him occasion to invade the rest of Europe’ and bring it to ‘utter destruction.’⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹² ‘Islami’ would more literally translate as ‘submitters’, though with an overtone of peace (*salaam*).

⁶⁹³ This perception of an absence of internal dissention within the Ottoman army is given dramatic expression in Shakespeare’s *Othello* when Othello, intervening in the brawl between Michael Cassio and Montano, comments:

Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?

A more abstract version of this depiction of the need for Christian unity is also found in Thomas Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London* (c.1594), one of the few early modern English plays to employ as its main characters figures from crusading history, albeit in a bizarre and ahistoric manner.⁶⁹⁶ During a clash between fellow crusaders Godfrey and Guy of Lessingham the figure of Robert of Normandy confronts the arguing Christians and asks:

What means these hast Princes thus to jarred,
And bende their swords against their mutuall brEast,
Whose edge were sharpened for their enemies crests...

(ll.884-6)⁶⁹⁷

Robert goes on to suggest that instead of continuing in conflict with fellow Christians they should instead unite against 'mis-beleeving Infidels' (l.936) in 'friendly Christian league' (l.937). Eventually the scene of inter-Christian division is resolved and Robert announces that:

We pawn our faith in this perpetuall league
And now we shew our selves that Christian Hoast
In which true peace should flourish and abound

(ll.1123-1125)

⁶⁹⁶ Thomas Heywood, Mary Ann Webber Gasior (ed.), *The Four Prentices of London* (New York & London: Garland, 1980). The play has the somewhat bizarre premise of locating Godfrey of Bulloigne and his brothers Charles, Guy and Eustice as apprentices in London, prior to their embarking on crusade.

⁶⁹⁷ This edition does not divide the play into acts and scenes.

A statement which echoes the aspirational statements of unity against the Ottoman Turks which were current at the time of the play's performance and which forms the basis for the play's subsequent depiction of Christian victory in the holy land against the Islamic figures of the 'Soldan' and the 'Sophy.'

The accession of James I to the English throne in 1603 brought to power a monarch for whom the idea of Christian unity in the face of the Ottoman Turks was something of an *idée fixe*, marking his reign as a return to the traditional opposition to the Ottoman Turks in political discourse after the ambiguities present in the relationship between Protestant England and the Muslim Ottomans under Elizabeth I. James's reign also saw a return, at least on a rhetorical level, to the idea of holy war against the Turks and of the idea of a united 'Christendom', in which James viewed himself in the role of *Rex Pacificus*, healing the wounds of religious schism and refocusing Christian efforts on the 'common foe.'

As Franklin L. Baumer has detailed, the idea of being the organiser of a 'Christian League' had become of interest to James while he was King of Scotland. Baumer describes how during this time he had made an approach in 1589 to the Danish government suggesting an alliance between Scotland, Denmark and the Protestant states of Germany in order to negotiate with England, France and Spain, the 'three great belligerents of Europe' a 'common peace of Christendom' which would seek to prevent any more 'effusion of Christian blood' and 'avert the common danger that threatens all

the Christian world.’⁶⁹⁸ This self-image as a potential unifying figure in a future war against the Turk remained with James throughout his reign as king of England. His detailed ‘Report on England Presented to the Government of Venice’ of 1607 the Venetian Ambassador Nicolo Molin provided a clear statement of the attitude of James towards the Turks, the desirability of a holy war against them and his own willingness to contribute forces to such an endeavour. Molin describes how:

The king speaks of the Grand Turk with distain. He hates him and wishes that the Christian powers, instead of fighting among themselves, would unite and drive him out.⁶⁹⁹

Molin goes on to relate how:

This idea is so firmly fixed in his mind that he frequently expresses it in terms of great decision, declaring that he would always take the lead if other princes would do their part.⁷⁰⁰

This determination to oppose the Turks, by force if necessary, remained strongly with James and the intensity of his feeling can be seen towards the end of his reign in a report by Venetian ambassador Girolamo Lando. In a letter of April 24th 1620 describes a scene

⁶⁹⁸ Baumer, pp.43-44. As Baumer points out:

...in the correspondence relating to these negotiations there is more talk of a Protestant “counterleague” against Spain than of a “common peace of Christendom,” more mention of the Spanish than of the Turkish “danger”. In 1589 James was primarily interested in establishing his claim to the English throne, to which Spain represented the main challenge. (Ibid, p.44)

Yet this was also the year in which James wrote his ‘Lepanto.’

⁶⁹⁹ *Calendar of State Papers, Venice*, (1603-1607), no.739, p.519.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid, No.739, p.519.

where ‘the king was at table’ and ‘the conversation turned upon the Turks.’⁷⁰¹ Lando describes how:

The king said publicly to the gentlemen present that if the Grand Seigneur moved against Christendom in force, even in favour of his son-in-law [the Prince Palatine] he would use all the forces of these realms to oppose him, and would not stand even at fighting against his own daughter.⁷⁰²

This extreme position also led James to balk at using the assistance of Transylvanian prince Bethlem Gabor during the Thirty Years War in 1624, due to his employment of Turkish forces.⁷⁰³

As Nabil Matar has pointed out, the open hostility towards the Ottomans which marked James’s reign was manifested in a series of pageants which were ‘Inspired by the anti-Muslim zeal of their King.’⁷⁰⁴ Matar describes these extravaganzas as “‘made-up” episodes of Christian victory and Muslim humiliation’ which ignored ‘the actual situation at sea or in the slave market of Algiers and elsewhere’ with their depiction of situations in which ‘British Christianity prevailed over Mediterranean infidelity.’⁷⁰⁵ As Matar goes on to describe, these spectacles presented Anglo-Turkish conflict not as a matter of trade but as ‘an inherent conflict of gods, not men’ which were ‘not merely over London or Algiers but over the land of God, the Holy Land’ but which depicted the English forces as fighting the Turks ‘in the spirit of the medieval holy warriors who had

⁷⁰¹ *CSP, Venice*, (1629-21), no.330, p239.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, no.330, p.239.

⁷⁰³ Baumer, p.38.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.144.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.145.

conquered that land.’⁷⁰⁶ Amongst the pageants described by Matar is the ‘Royall Magnificent and Sumptuous Entertainment’ given at Bristol in 1613 in honour of Queen Anne’s visit to the port and which depicted a ‘‘water-fight’ between Turks and ‘worthy Brutes.’⁷⁰⁷ The verse description of the event by Robert Naile, having identified in classic providential terms the Turks as a ‘Woe worth the sinnes of Christendom,’⁷⁰⁸ appeals to the same concepts of Christian unity which James espoused. Naile describes how ‘*Christian Kings neglect*’ has caused lands to be lost to the ‘accursed Infidels’ and how the cruelty of Christians to Christians ‘through their civill broyles/ Present the Turkes occasion for to glory in their spoyles.’⁷⁰⁹ The verse description then makes a call to ‘Christian Kings and Potentates’ to:

[...] joyne both your hearts and hands,
To chase this off-scumme Scithian brood from you and all your lands;
Unite your forces Christian-like from Europe to expel
Proud Ottoman, too dangerous a neighbour near to dwell⁷¹⁰

These lines seem to echo Edward Fairfax’s *Godfrey of Boulogne: or The recouerie of Ierusalem* (pr.1600), a translation of Torquato Tasso’s *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (c.1580), a work which Nabil Matar states James valued ‘above all other poems.’⁷¹¹ In the opening pages of Fairfax’s translation the text exhorts the ‘Christian Princes’:

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., p.145.

⁷⁰⁷ For a description of the other pageants from James’s reign, see: Ibid., pp.145-150.

⁷⁰⁸ Robert Naile, *A relation of the royall magnificent, and sumptuous entertainment, giuen to the High, and Mighty Princesse, Queene Anne, at the renowned citie of Bristoll, by the Mayor, sheriffes, and aldermen thereof; in the moneth of Iune last past, 1613 Together with, the oration, gifts, triumphes, vvater-combats, and other showes there made* (London: Iohn Budge, 1613), Sig.C3.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., Sig.C3.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., Sig.C3.

⁷¹¹ Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen*, p.143.

To win faire Greece out of the tyrant's hands
And those usurping Ismaelites deprive
Of woeful Thrace, which now captive stands,
You must from realms and seas the Turkes forth drive,
As Godfrey chased them from Iudais lands

(Book 1, Canto 5, ll.32-8)⁷¹²

In this text the Turks are plainly connected to Muhammad through the pseudo-genealogical link of Ishmael.⁷¹³ In the reprint of 1624 the dedication to James's son Prince Charles, soon to be Charles I, wished the prince 'all the Happy successe, in your Noble and Heroicall enterprises, which these great and memorable names are celebrated for,'⁷¹⁴ a possible hint at the prophecies which surrounded Charles as a future conqueror of the Turks.

A few years earlier, in a collection of poems which mourned the death of Prince Henry and celebrated the births of his brother Charles and sister Elizabeth, James Maxwell included 'A Congratulation of the most hopefull Prince Charles his auspicious Entrie into the world,'⁷¹⁵ a prophecy in verse which clearly outlined both the general aspirations of the Stuart court and the particular expectations for young Charles. The poem juxtaposes

⁷¹² Toquato Tasso, Edward Fairfax (trans.), *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or The recouerie of Ierusalem. Done into English heroicall verse, by Edward Fairefax Gent* (London: Ar. Hatfield, for I. Iaggard and M. Lownes, 1600), Sig. B2. For a modern edition of this text see: Lea, Katherine M. and Gang (eds.), *Godfrey of Bulloigne: a critical edition of Edward Fairfax's translation of Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata, together with Fairfax's original poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

⁷¹³ See Appendix II, p.475.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., No page in text.

⁷¹⁵ James Maxwell, *The laudable life and deplorable death, of our late peerlesse Prince Henry. briefly represented Together, with some other poemes, in honor both of our most gracious soueraigne King James his auspicious entrie to this crowne, and also of his hopefull children, Prince Charles and Princesse Elizabeths happy entrie into this world. By I.M. Master of Artes* (London: Edward Allde for Thomas Pauier, 1612).

Charles with crusading heroes through the date of his birth on 19th November, including ‘*Philip the brave Prince Palatine of Rhine*’ who fought under ‘*Charles of Spain/ The Emperour, in defence of Vienne,*’ against ‘*Soliman,*’ making the Turks ‘flee away’ (Verse 15)⁷¹⁶ and also claiming that:

Stout *Castriote*, whom *Scanderbeg* they call
A second Pyrrhus valient, bolde and brave,
The *Turkish* Troupes that often did appall
And in the field full oft the foyle them gaue
About the time of *Charles* Natiuitie
Began to be nam’d Prince of *Albanie* (Verse 14)

The poem then evinces the hope that Charles will one day stand ‘With *Castriote* once chiefe of chivalrie/ Against the Turks his Banner to display,’ and that:

...as hee’s nam’d the *Duke of Albanie*:
So men may him a *Scanderbeg* enstile
Th’horror of *Turks*, the *Hector* of this Ile (Verse 15)

The poem then asks Jesus to ‘*Charles of Britanie/ With Scanderbeg, thy Soldier and thy Knight*’ and to ‘choose him thy fields to fight/ Gainst *Mahomet,*’ in order that he can win ‘*Constantines Towne with proud Turks Empire*’ (Verse 16).⁷¹⁷ Once again the fight

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., Sig.F1.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., Sig.F2. In the prophetic schema followed by Maxwell:

The destruction of Islam (anticipated to occur about the year 1630, a millennium after its advent) would be accompanied by still other eschatological events, notably the conversion of the Jews. There in the British Middle East would emerge a community of Christian Jews, possibly, Maxwell hoped, under the guidance of James himself. (D.N.B.)

against the Turks is a fight against 'Mahomet,' perceived as the underlying cause of Islamic violence.

Despite the rhetoric of crusade which emerges from the records and texts surrounding the administration of James I, there was no actual action taken by the English state against Muslim powers until the 1621 attack by the English fleet on Algiers and, as Nabil Matar points out, this was not viewed at the time as being a matter of holy war but rather as a matter of securing the safety of English trade in the Mediterranean against the attacks of the Corsairs. In his only letter to an Ottoman sultan, dated 17th January 1617 James had complained to Ahmet I, in a terse manner markedly less conciliatory than that of Elizabeth's letters to Murad III, of the 'depredations and spoils done by your men-of-war' on English traders and requested that the sultan make arrangements for 'the releasing of our subjects, their ships and goods, which have been taken there and restrained.'⁷¹⁸ Nothing came of this request and in the same year Francis Bacon produced a memorandum on the possibility of employing the English fleet against the Algerian pirates.⁷¹⁹ The eventual attack was initiated in 1621 and was unsuccessful.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ G.P.V. Akrigg (ed.), *The Letters of King James VI & I* (London: University of California Press, 1984, Letter 170, pp.356-7.

⁷¹⁹ Matar, *Turks*, p.150.

⁷²⁰ The attack prompted the Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon to write his *An Advertisement Touching a Holy War*, see Appendix VI, p.501.

Raging Turks: The Depiction of the Sultan as *Ghazi* in Early Modern English

Writing

Although the word *ghazi*, meaning holy warrior, was never used in early modern English texts (George Sandys, as I have shown, used the word *shahid*), the depiction of the Ottoman Sultans as holy warriors of Islam engaged in the destruction of Christendom was a common one in writings of the time, including in the construction of the figures of Turkish leaders on the English stage.

The depiction of the Ottoman Emperor in the role of *ghazi* was not an inaccurate one. John F. Guilmartin has pointed to the vital role of the concept of holy war to the Ottoman Empire and the contrast between the conception of war held by the Ottoman Turks and the prevailing conceptions of war in the West. Guilmartin relates how the Ottoman conception of war was ‘Derived from pre-Islamic Arab and Turco-Mongol traditions’ and was ‘articulated in a rhetoric based on the Koran and elaborated in the *sharia*, the holy law of Islam,’ the Islamic concepts of war and peace not being at odds with pre-Islamic Turkic ideas but rather serving ‘to legitimize them in religious terms.’⁷²¹

Guilmartin goes on to point out that in the case of the Ottomans the ‘Turco-Mongol ideal of world empire meshed with concepts of war derived from the pre-Islamic Arabian past and was easily accommodated by the vocabulary of the *sharia*,’ going on to describe how:

⁷²¹ John F. Guilmartin, Jr., ‘Ideology and Conflict: The Wars of the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1606’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, ‘The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars’ (Spring, 1988), p.723.

Islam, by prohibiting Muslims from shedding the blood of another Muslim, turned pre-Islamic concepts of war outward against the enemies of the faith. Only one kind of war was recognized as lawful, the jihad, or holy war, conducted to expand the domain of Islam.⁷²²

In this sense the objective of the Ottoman Empire was to fight an ongoing holy war. Guilmartin also draws attention to the Ottoman distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim lands in the matter of war, describing how, in the Ottoman conception:

A permanent state of war was considered to exist between the Islamic state, the *darūlislām* (the house of Islam, the abode of those who submit to the will of God) and the rest of the world, the *darūlharb*. The use of the term *darūlharb*, literally the house of war, to describe the non-Islamic world is a cogent illustration of Ottoman ideas concerning war with Christendom.⁷²³

This was a distinction which led to the Ottoman use of the term *harbi* to describe any Christian who was not under imperial jurisdiction.

Guilmartin's analysis goes on to outline the two forms of war possible under the Ottoman system. The first form was 'the war of imperial campaigns, formally legitimized by the Ottoman state's chief religious authority, the *sheikh ul-Islām*, and justified in terms of the *sharia*,' and the second form:

⁷²² Ibid., p.723.

⁷²³ Ibid., p.723-4.

[...] the perpetual war of raid and counter-raid along the borders of the Ottoman Empire and its Christian neighbors. This type of conflict was called ghazi warfare, from the term *ghaza*, a raid; it was the concrete manifestation of the unceasing obligation of the faithful to expand the boundaries of the *darüislam*.⁷²⁴

Guilmartin also observes that ‘Ghazi was an honored title’ and that ‘the legitimacy of the Osmanli regime derived largely from Ottoman success as ghazis,’ a matter which, as I will show was reflected in literary representations of Turkish violence in early modern Britain.

Guilmartin also points out the distinction between this Ottoman conception of perpetual holy war and its ‘closest equivalent Christian concept [...] the crusade,’ pointing out that the vital difference was that ‘crusades were efforts of limited duration mounted in pursuit of discrete and clearly specified objectives, usually geographical,’ a factor of which ‘the traditional numbering of crusades is indicative.’ He goes on to observe that ‘the concept of a first, second, or seventy-fifth ghaza would have been inconceivable to a *ghazi* for the *ghaza* was unending.’⁷²⁵ Guilmartin also states that the Ottoman emphasis on gazi warfare ‘was unusual even by Islamic standards’ and that this emphasis ‘reduced the importance of the *jihad*,’ leading to a situation wherein:

Although the practice of formally proclaiming the *jihad* to justify war for a specific purpose was common in most Islamic states, the Ottomans rarely

⁷²⁴ Ibid., p.724.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., p.724.

went to the trouble. With a stolid, matter-of-fact self confidence, matched in the West only by the Iberians, they considered themselves always justified - and always at war.⁷²⁶

Guilmartin concludes that 'The concept of perpetual war to defend the faith and expand its boundaries was inherently compatible with the Ottoman worldview' but that 'it was not [...] consonant with the outlook of their Christian enemies,' for whom warfare, even in its religious form of the crusade, was a matter of particular cases and specific situations.⁷²⁷

The perception and representation of the Turks as holy warriors certainly found its way into the religious and political texts of the time and also made its way into literary representations of the Ottomans, and in particular the representation of Turkish Sultans on the English stage. An example of the representation of the Turks as holy warriors can be found in Thomas Kyd's *Soliman & Perseda* (1592) where the first example of the religious foundations of East/West conflict is found in the opening scenes, which depict an international, and inter-faith, tournament held on the isle of Rhodes where 'Brave Knights of Christendome, and Turkish both' (I (iii), l.1) are to fight 'in thirsty honors cause' (I (iii), l.2) and 'exercise their war with friendly blows' (I (iii), l.7) in honour of the Prince of Cyprus' wedding.

At the outset of the tournament all the knights are asked to give an account of their deeds and speak their 'motto' (I (iii), l.16). The Englishman tells of wars in Scotland, France and

⁷²⁶ Ibid., p.724.

⁷²⁷ Ibid., p.727.

Ireland and swears by Saint George; the Frenchman relates his service in Italy and swears by 'Saint Denis' (I (iii), l.34) and the Spaniard recounts his conflict with a 'Rutter'⁷²⁸ and swears by the 'golden Fleece' (I (iii), l.45) and 'Iaques' (I (iii), l.46), presumably a reference to Saint James. When the turn of Brusor, who is introduced as 'renowned Turk/ Not for thy lay [faith], but for thy worth in arms' (I (iii), l.47-8), comes to speak he first of all gives an account of his involvement in conflicts with other Muslims. Brusor tells of how he has fought 'against the Sophy' (I (iii), l.51) and relates how 'The desert plaines of Affricke have I staid/ With blood of Moores, and there in three battles fought' (I (iii), ll.56-7), but then moves on to describe how:

Along the coast held by the Portinguize,
 Even to the verge of golde abounding Spaine,
 Hath *Brusor* led a valiant troope of Turkes,
 And made some Christians kneele to *Mahomet*:
 Him we adore, and in his name I cry,
Mahomet for me and Soliman...

(I (iii), ll.58-63)

Although the speeches of the other knights carry with them suggestions of familiar religious conflicts and all explicitly swear by saints, it is only Brusor who connects his military career directly with holy war and who expresses the purpose of his battles with making others 'kneele' to his faith.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁸ This would suggest a German war as a result of the Protestant schism.

⁷²⁹ Interestingly in this scene it is only the 'braggart knight' Basilisco who provides no religious motto whatsoever. Introduced as a 'Rutter borne in Germany' (I (iii), l.6) he goes on to state that 'the earth is my Country' (I (iii), l.79) and that 'I have no word, because no countrey' (I (iii), l.111), which makes 'each counties word mine to pronounce' (I (iii), l.113). This presentation of Basilisco as a type of *déraciné* mercenary has consequences later in the play as he 'turns Turk' to pursue Perseda to Constantinople and then reconverts to follow her back, making him similar to one of the 'Apostates and circumcised

In a later scene the sultan Soliman reinforces this depiction of holy war as he waits for the return of his knight Brusor from the tournament. Soliman states how 'I long till Brusor be returned from *Rhodes*/ To know how he hath borne him gainst the Christians' (I (v), ll.1-2), but goes on to reveal his reason for anticipating Brusor's return as being

... to be well assured by him
How *Rhodes* is fenc'd, and how I best may lay
My never failing siege to win that plot...

(I (v), ll.4-6)

The image of this relentless 'never failing' attempt to attack Christian lands is then reinforced as the sultan continues. He swears 'by the Holy Alcoran' (I (v), l.7) that he will redirect his campaigns away from the East and towards the Christian world, describing how he will:

...call my Souldiers home from *Persia*
And let the Sophie breath, and from the Russian broiles
Call home my hardie, dauntlesse Ianisaries,
And from the other skirts of Christendome
Call home my Bassowes and my men of war,

(I (v), ll.8-12)

Renegadoes' later attacked by Henry Byam in section in the sermons published as *A returne from Argier* (1628), preached at Minehead on the occasion of 'the re-admission of a relapsed Christian into our Church.' Byam describes the phenomenon of men who 'will rather hazard the losse of heaven, than endure disgrace (as they account it) on the earth' and so 'are Musselmans in Turkie, and Christians at home; doffing their religion, as they doe their clothes, and keeping conscience for every Harbor where they shall put in.' See: Edward Kellet & Henry Byam, *A returne from Argier A sermon preached at Minhead in the county of Somerset the 16. of March, 1627. at the re-admission of a relapsed Christian* (London: T[homas] H[arper] for I[ohn] P[arker], 1628), p.74.

Soliman then states his intention to ‘beleaguer *Rhodes* by sea and land’ (I (v), l.13), highlighting the tactical importance of the islands of the Mediterranean as he describes Rhodes as:

That key will serve to open all the gates
Through which our passage cannot finde a stop
Till I have prickt the hart of Christendome,
Which now that paltry Iland keeps from scath.

(I (v), ll.14-17)

The religious nature of Soliman’s command is made clear by his brother Amurath, who addresses him as ‘heavens only substitute/ And earth’s commander under Mahomet’ (I (v), ll.20-1), once again connecting the sultan for an early modern British audience with the familiar and universally vilified figure of Muhammad, a connection which, as I discussed earlier, is also performed through the treachery of Soliman in his dealings with Perseda and Erastus. The scene ends with a depiction of the fratricidal violence perceived to be endemic within the Ottoman dynasty as Soliman’s brother Amurath, over an argument about the decision to invade Rhodes in which Amurath angrily points out that Soliman has sworn ‘Upon the Alcoran religiously’ (I (v), l.46) to carry out the attack, kills the third brother Haleb, leading to Soliman killing Amurath.

Business Before Pleasure: The Duties of the *Ghazi* and the Tale of the Sultan and the 'Faire Greek'

The story of the sultan and the Greek lady Irene/Hirene, depicted variously in William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567-8), Richard Knolles *Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603) and Thomas Goff's *The Courageous Turk* (printed 1632), as well as depicting the worst excesses of Turkish cruelty towards a captive Christian woman, also depicts the prime responsibility of a sultan as being the waging of war, and in particular a holy war derived from the teachings of Muhammad. The sultan's execution of the young Christian woman happens in the context of a sultan curbing his lust, rather than giving it free reign, and the reason which allows him to do so in all these versions is the need to pursue violent conquest, which has been shown to be compromised by indulgence in sexual love, as central matter of policy and consequently as means of retaining his position.

Painter's version of the tale, entitled 'Hyerenee the Faire Greeke,' opens by billing itself as the story of 'the bEastlie crueltie of an Infidell over towards his ladie' and identifies the sultan in question as 'Mahomet', making certain that the reader understands that this is 'not the false Prophete, but the great graundfather of Soliman Otiman, Emperoure of the Turkes.'⁷³⁰ The text then immediately moves to a description of the fall of Constantinople, a hugely symbolic event in the history of the Western relationship with

⁷³⁰ 'Hyerenee the Faire Greeke' in: William Painter, Joseph Jacobs (ed.), *The Palace of Pleasure* (London: David Nutt, 1890). In the version contained in Goff's *The Courageous Turke* the sultan is identified as Amurath (Murad) I.

the Turks, and to early modern humanism in particular, marking, as it did, the final throes of the Roman Empire in the East.

The text describes how the sultan:

[...] to the shame and eternall infamie of all Christian Princes of his tyme did wyne Constantinople, and tooke away the Eastern Empire from Constantine, A Christian Emperour, the yeare of our Lord 1453⁷³¹

Descriptions of the conquest and sack of Constantinople provided some of the most lurid and graphic descriptions of Turkish cruelty, violence and voracious sexuality in early modern texts. In *The travels of certaine Englishmen* (1609) William Biddulph provides a perfect example of this as he describes how:

During the time of the sacking (which continued three days) there was no kind of fornication, sodometry, sacrilege, nor cruelty by them left unexecuted. They spoiled the incomparable Temple of Saint Sophia (which had been built by the Emperor Justinian) of all ornaments and hallowed vessels, and made thereof a stable and a brothel for buggerers and whores.⁷³²

Painter's text goes on to describe Hyrenee as being 'a Greeke mayden, of suche rare and excellent beautie, as she allured the eyes of every wight' who was taken 'amonges the spoyle of that riche Citie' and presented by a Turkish captain to the sultan, in order 'to gratifie his Lorde', as 'a Iewell, (as he thought) moste acceptable to him, above all

⁷³¹ Ibid., p.190.

⁷³² William Biddulph, *The travels*, in Kenneth Parker (ed.), *Early Modern Tales of Orient*, p.86.

things of the worlde.’⁷³³ This use of women as property, the ‘spoyle’ of war, already familiar from the description of the sultan’s seraglio, is highlighted here and Hyrenee, her virtue now in the hands of the lascivious infidel, seems to stand as a symbol for the city itself. At this point the ‘Emperour Mahomet’, who is described as ‘yonge and wanton beyonde measure’, is shown to experience the type of ‘love-at-first-sight’ reaction described ealier in the discussion other Turkish rulers’ reactions to virtuous Christian women in the ‘Turk plays.’ The text describes how:

[...] after he had caste his eye upon the mayden, and had graven her beautie in his harte, gave a straighte charge that shee shoulde bee kept for hym, hopinge after the tumulte of the warre was ended, to bestowe convenient time upon her⁷³⁴

After his wars are over the sultan is shown spending all his time with Hyrenee and the text describes how he ‘yelded him selfe suche a praie to his darling Hyrenee, that he felte none other contentation in his mynde but that whiche he received of her’ and goes on to describe how:

[...] this amorous passion indured the space of three continuall yeares, taking suche vigor and increase by litle and litle, that he began to forget that whiche appertained to the ornament and honour of his Empire, leaving the whole administration of publique causes to his Baschats

⁷³³ Painter, p.190.

⁷³⁴ Painter, p.190.

With the sultan himself becoming 'so negligent' that he left to his administrators 'all matters concerning the state of the Empire.'⁷³⁵ As a result of this obsession with Hyenee and subsequent neglect of his duties as ruler the people begin to plot against the sultan and the text places the neglect of his military duties as being the principal cause for disention by describing the Janisseries 'commonlie complaining howe hee consumed his life like effeminate persone', suggesting that the Turkish obsession with war and empire, at least in this case, outweighs the compulsion towards sexual libertinism, which is here seen as 'effeminate'.

At this point there is a hint of what is to come as the sultan is described as 'Of nature terrible, cruell, and rigorous' and yet he continues to be so 'bewitched' by the young Christian woman that:

[...] not onely hee consumed dayes and nightes with her, but he burned with continual ielousie, whose beautie was so livelie painted in the inward partes of his hart and minde.

The image of the 'jealous Turk' is clearly presented here and the text goes on to describe how he 'remained thus overwhelmed in bestly pleasure', reinforcing the bestial nature of Turkish lust.⁷³⁶ At this point Mustapha, a close friend and advisor to the sultan, berates him for his weakness, telling him of how 'not onely your Souldiours and the rest of your popular people, but the most faithful Lords of your Empire, do murmure, conspire, and conjure against you' and states that the change in him has only come about through

⁷³⁵ Ibid., p.191.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., p.191.

allowing himself to ‘be a spoile and praye of a simple woman.’⁷³⁷ Mustapha exhorts the Sultan to ‘leave off this effeminate life: receive againe the smell of your generosity and virtue’, advising him that if he ‘cannot at one time cutte of and remove all that amorous heate which undermineth so your hart’ then at lEast to ‘moderate the same litle by litle, and give some hope to your people.’⁷³⁸ Here again there is a clear privileging of martial honour and conquest over sexual pursuits and in the subsequent actions of the sultan this prioritising of the demands of expansionism as the core duty of the *ghazi* ruler, as well as the potential for Turkish cruelty towards women, is underlined.

The text then describes how the sultan ‘went into the Greeke, with whom he reioyced all that day and night, and made more of her than he ever did before’, even breaking the rule about allowing women to eat with men by dining with her. The sultan then commands Hyrenee that after dinner ‘she should adorne herselfe with her most precious Iewels, and decke her with the costliest apparel shee had’ and tells of how ‘the poore wenche obeyed.’⁷³⁹ At this point the sultan gets all of his nobles to assemble in the hall, and enters with Hyrenee ‘accompanied and garnished with beautie, so rare and excellent as she resembled rather an heavenly Goddesses than a humaine creature.’⁷⁴⁰ The text then describes how ‘the barbarous cruel Prince’ makes a speech to the assembled nobles in which he asserts his commitment to the tradition of Ottoman martialism and expansionism, stating that:

⁷³⁷ Ibid., p.193.

⁷³⁸ Ibid., p.193.

⁷³⁹ Painter, p.196.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., p.196.

[...] I will make you understand, that there is no earthlie thing that can bind up, or captivate my senses so much, but that from henceforth I will follow the glorie of mine auncestors.⁷⁴¹

When the speech is finished the text describes how the sultan:

[...] incontinently with one of his handes, hee caught the Greeke by the heare of the head, and with his other hand he drew out his falchion from his side, and folding his hands about her golden lockes, at one blow hee strake of her head, to the the great terrour of them all.⁷⁴²

This horrific act of murder being carried out, the sultan once again addresses those assembled with a seemingly rhetorical question as he asks them ““Now ye know, whether your Emperour is able to repress and bridle his affections or not?””⁷⁴³ This act of bloody resolution at the conclusion of this narrative seems to work against the idea that Muslim men are unable to control their sexual appetites, but only inasmuch as such behaviours conflict with their duty as conquerors and holy warriors, drawing attention to another central matter in the Christian perception of the nature of Islam and its adherents: that of the habitual use of violence and of Islam as a religion of the sword.

The version of the narrative of ‘the fair Greek’ found in Thomas Goffe’s *The Courageous Turke* (Printed 1632)⁷⁴⁴ presents an even more explicit depiction of the sultan Amurack’s

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., p.197.

⁷⁴² Ibid., p.197.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., p.197.

⁷⁴⁴ Thomas Goffe, *The Raging Turke & The Couragious Turke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for Malone Society, 1968 (1974)). All quotations are from this edition.

realisation of his duty as a holy warrior in a *ghazi* tradition instigated by his father. The play, as with Painter's version, describes in the Argument the triumph of the sultan's army in Greece where 'many captives tane/ One among the rest, IRENE, conquers him' (*Argument*, ll.2-3), with the result that 'taken with her love, he sounds retreat/ Eternally from Warre' (*Argument*, ll.4-5); it is this 'retreat', and more importantly its reversal, which forms the central matter of Goffe's play. In the play it is the sultan's 'tutor' Schahin⁷⁴⁵ who plots to bring the sultan back to his primary role as a holy warrior and this is achieved through a series of masques and performances.

In Act One there is a performance of a masque about Alexander the Great in which the figure of Fame congratulates Alexander on his rejection of Lust, telling him:

That this thy scorne of Lust shall be
Propos'd to all Kings example to posterity,
Know mortals that the men the Gods most love
In hard and dangerous arts they always prove,
When men live brave at first, then fall to crimes,
Their bad I chronicle to future time

(I (i), ll.357-362)

At the end of the speech, which is evidently aimed at Amurath's new pacifism born out of his obsession with Eumorphe (the name of the Greek lady in Goffe's version), a stage direction states that 'Amurath *seemes troubled*'. In a soliloquy soon after he displays his concern, observing that:

I might orecome more Kingdoms; have more dominion

⁷⁴⁵ The name seems to echo the word '*shahid*', but this is speculative.

Enthroned my selfe an Emperour! O'th world,
I might! I might! *Amurath* thou mightst!
The Christians now will scoffe at *Mahomet*;
Perchance they sent this wretch thus to inchant me!

(II (iii), ll.548-552)

This marks the beginning of Amurath's return to his role an expansionist holy warrior which is completed in the next scene.

The scene in which Amurath is 'reconverted' has Schahin enter his bedchamber 'disguised like the Ghost of Orcanes father to Amurath' and deliver a speech in which he places the actions of his son into the context of the history of Ottoman holy war. Schahin introduces himself as 'first of all the Turkish Kings/ That *Europe* knew, and the fond Christians plague' (II (iv), ll.591-2) and then proceeds to accuse Amurath of being a man who 'marrest all/ Thy Fathers acts, by thy untam'd desires' (II (iv), ll.594-5). After this the disguised tutor has Orcanes exhort his son to 'cut this Gordian thred, and rend hence/ That putrid Wenne which cleaves unto thy flesh' (II (iv), ll.606-7), promising him that if he does so he will achieve success as a conqueror of Christians as '*Mahomet*/ Shall be auspicious unto each designe' (II (iv), ll.606-609).

As with Painter's version what is interesting in Goffe's play is the way in which it privileges martial religion over sensuality in the construction of its Islamic ruler, although, as I have shown elsewhere, these aspects were most often compounded in Muslim figures, including Muhammad himself. Amurath now goes on to commit the familiar act of decapitating the Greek lady, marking his return to his traditional role by remarking to Schahin 'Now Tutor, shall our swords be exercised/ In ripping up the

brEasts of Christians' (V (ii), ll. (720-1) and recommences his wars with a call to attack Thracia.

From this point Amurath speaks almost exclusively as a Muslim holy warrior and the figure's bombastic speeches locate him within this tradition. Following the battle in Thracia Amurath asks Schahin if his forces have 'slaine/ A thousand superstitious Christian soules' (III (ii), ll.770-1) and talks of how he will 'Make them stoope to us' (III (ii), l.772). His tyranny is then linked explicitly to his religion once again as he declares that:

...Now I will be a *Turke*,
And to our Prophets altars do I vow,
That to his yoke I will all necks subdue,
Or in their throates my bloody sword imbrew

(III (ii), ll.775-8)

The implication here is that only through these acts of religious tyranny and genocide can Amurath truly be a 'Turke', particularly the 'Great Turke' or sultan. When Schahin presents Amurath with Christian heads he declares:

So am I *Amurath* the great King of *Turkes*,
O how it glads me thus to pash their braines,
To rend their lockes, to teare these Infidels!

(III (ii), ll.792-4)

This statement of exaggerated anti-Christian violence is then once more related directly to his position as sultan, and Muslim as Amurath observes that 'now I fit in *Orchanes*

great throne/ And sacrifice due rites to *Mahomet*' (III (ii), ll.797-8), stating that in the pursuit of these 'rites' he will 'dung the Earth/ With Christians rotted trunckes' (III (ii), ll.799-800). These acts form part of the prosecution of the depiction of what are called later in the play the 'great Prophets Warres' (IV (i), 11073) which will see the sultan 'hewing down Christians' (IV (i), 1 1073-4), converting young Christian boys (a depiction of the institution of the *devshirme* or child levy which manned the Janissaries) and pronouncing threats against Christendom in the most violent of terms.

The language used by the sultans in their role as *ghazis* or holy warriors can be seen echoed in a series of publications from the early seventeenth century which purported to reproduce in English translation the actual words of Sultan Ahmed I from his letters to Christian leaders. The 1606 publication of one of these letters, addressed to 'the great Champion of Rome [the Pope], and to his confederates The Princes of Christendome', begins with a lengthy statement of his titles which describes Ahmed I as:

Most welbeloved in heaven, discended of the line of the great Prophet
Mahomet; Champion of Babilon, God on earth, Barron of Turkie, Lord of
the countrie of Iudea, even unto the earthly Paradise; Conqueror of
Constantinople, and of Greece, Governor of the high and low Seas,
Commander of Hungarie and the future conqueror of Christendome.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁶ Ahmed I, *Letters from the great Turke lately sent vnto the holy father the pope and to Rodolphus naming himselfe King of Hungarie, and to all the kinges and princes of Christendome Translated out of the Hebrue tongue into Italian, and out of the Italian into French and now into English out of the French coppie* (London: John Windet, 1606), p.2. This is evidently the type of title which prompted the line by Joan la Pucelle in *1 Henry VI*, where in reaction to Sir William Lucy's statement of the titles of Talbot she remarks:

Here is a silly stately style indeed!
The Turk, that two and fifty kingdoms hath,
Writes not so tedious a style as this. (*1 Henry VI*, IV (v), ll.72-4)

The list of subject lands and the projected conquest of the whole of Christendom is then stated in this letter to have come about through the will of God ‘by the intercession and councell of the great Prophet Mahomet’ who has ‘vouchsafed through his grace to exalt us and our dominion above all Princes and principalities of the whole earth’⁷⁴⁷ and the letter goes on to demand that the pope and the other Christian princes ‘submit yourself unto our most sacred & puissant Triumphant mightie Monarchie’ or else be conquered.⁷⁴⁸

The 1606 letter promises religious toleration for the conquered Christians, stating that ‘it hath pleased us and of our perpetuall authoritie and deliberation it is graunted unto you, to use your owne faith and lawe, and your accustomed ceremonies,’ a matter which in the letter is extended to ‘all christians, and also to all other what religion or law soever they hold’; although this toleration is qualified by the statement that ‘we hope to be the only Monarche of the whole earth before the expiration of two years,’ an event which the letter says will lead to ‘Christians denying your law and imbracing a much better.’⁷⁴⁹ The letter ends by speaking in ominous and threatening terms about the Ottoman advance and sets up a providential contest, stating that:

The titles given to the Ottoman Emperor in Thomas Goff's *The Raging Turke* (Printed 1631) are also used to suggest his enmity to Christendom as a holy warrior. Bejazet II is described in the play as ‘subverter and sworne enemie of the Christians, and of all that call upon Christ’ (IV (iv), ll.2115-6). Quotation from: Goffe, *The Raging Turke & The Courageous Turke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for Malone Society, 1968 (1974)).

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., p.3.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid., p.4.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., p.4.

[...] wee doe already possesse the principal countries and Isles, which by our tyranny we oppresse & the in habitants threof, and we shall heerafter see, if the God in whom thou beleevest can helpe thee, or save thee, (we meaning to destroy thee and all that shall assist or aide thee) with our invincible armie...

The letter then promises that all Christians will be put to the ‘most cruel death and tortures that possible we may’, seemingly contradicting its earlier offer of toleration.⁷⁵⁰

The letter then gives an account the immense army of the sultan including ‘Christians which attend our artillery ordinance and other instruments of warre’ who are described as ‘Renegados to fight in defence of our lawe.’⁷⁵¹ The letter ends with a statement of the intention to ‘win the country of Hungarie and all Germany; and finally to pierce and draw unto us the noble countries of France and withal the countries adjacent and lying on the seas’ and ‘Set forth, plant and display the most victorious and triumphant colours of our great Prophet Mahomet.’ All of this seems well calculated to touch each point of British anxiety concerning the Turks, and makes the letter much more likely to be an exercise in propaganda than a genuine translation of a letter from Ahmed I.⁷⁵²

The letter published in 1621, addressed to Sigismund of Poland, contains even more inflammatory language. Amongst the titles given by the ‘sultan’ are ‘great persecutor of all Christians’ and the text continues in a similarly confrontational manner.⁷⁵³ In this

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., p.6.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., pp.6-7.

⁷⁵² Ibid., p.8. This status as propaganda is also suggested by the statement by the sultan in the letter that he will place Muhammad’s ‘most Worthie Image on the one side and ours on the other side graven on all sorts of monies’ (p.8), a most unlikely move given the Muslim prohibition of images of the Prophet.

⁷⁵³ Ahmed I, *True copies of the insolent, cruell, barbarous, and blasphemous letter lately written by the Great Turke, for denouncing of warre against the King of Poland: and of the magnanimous, and most christian answeere made by the said king thereunto. With a short preface, declaring the vniust cause on*

letter Ahmed I is shown as declaring that 'I will utterly root out the very remembrance of the Crucified God,' again marking a clear providential contest between Christianity and Islam (which are depicted as having separate gods) by stating 'Let thy God be angry, I care not.'⁷⁵⁴ This letter contains violent language reminiscent of the speeches of Amurath in Goffe's *The Courageous Turk*, including the threat that when Christendom is conquered:

Thy anointed (the Priests) I will surely put to the plague, Wolves and wilde BEasts shall suck the brests of thy Women, thou shalt leave and forsake thy Religion which thou now hast, that which remaineth of all things shall be consumed with fire.⁷⁵⁵

In Sigismund's reply to the letter he gives example of Bajazet I, the sultan famously captures by Tamburlaine and who:

...lived to see himself vanquished, taken prisoner, coopt up in an iron cage, (wherein hee was in triumph drawne after the victorious conqueror, serving him no better than a footstool) and having no other food, then such as was cast him (like a dogge) from his table⁷⁵⁶

This statement demonstrates the tenacity of the symbolic power of this incident, as popularised by Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, in the armory of Christian rhetoric against the Turks. Both of these letters seem designed to incite Christian readers against the Turks

which this Turkish tyrant, and faithlesse enemy of Christendome, now layeth hold to inuade it (London: G. Purslowe for William Lee, 1621), p.2.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., p.3. This providential contest will be mapped later in relation to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., p.4.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p.8.

and their production in England during the reign of the profoundly anti-Turkish James I, as well as some of their more bizarre contents and close relation to anti-Turkish rhetoric at the time, would seem to suggest their status as propaganda pieces. As propaganda the letters deal in the dominant ideas regarding the Ottomans and Islam during the early modern period as a religion of anti-Christian warfare and violence, yet, as I will now show, these ideas were far from always determining foreign policy throughout the period.

Pragmatism over Prejudice: The English State and Islam under Elizabeth I

The early modern period in Britain, and especially the reign of Elizabeth I, saw the development of many cultural, political and economic links with the Ottoman Empire, and indeed with other Muslim powers such as those of the Barbary States and Persia. This pattern of trade and treaty can also be observed in the behaviour of other European states in their approaches towards the 'Porte' and this also involved political manoeuvring, in which European powers offset inter-Christian threats through alliances (tacit or otherwise) with Muslim powers, particularly the Ottomans. This history of inter-faith co-operation suggests that no absolute 'clash of civilisations' existed between Christian and Muslim. However, such dealings with the 'infidel' were always controversial and usually provoked a chorus of disapproval from other Christian states⁷⁵⁷ and, as can be seen in the writings of the British commentators analysed earlier, the depiction of an apocalyptic opposition between Muslim and Christian was still the dominant view expressed in British texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; particularly those dealing with theology or history in relation to the Turks. In the texts of the time, opposing the Turks also formed the last rhetorical rallying point for Christian

⁷⁵⁷ In a letter of 1543 Elizabeth's father Henry VIII had complained of the French King Francis I in this regard:

...the Frenche kynge, omittynge the dutie and office of a good christen prynce (whiche is moche to be lamented) hath not onely by a longe time and feafon ayded the great Turke, common enemye to christendome, and also by sundry wayes and meanes encouraged procured and incited, and dayly procureth the syade Turke, to arrayse and assemble greate armies and forces of warre, to enter and invade the same, whiche dayly the sayde Turke attempteth and putteth in execution, to the great trouble perturbation and molestation of all good christen princes and their subiectes, and to peryll and daunger of the state of christen religion and imminent destruction of the universall weale and quiet of all Christendom...

[Henry VIII, *For as moche as by credyble meanes it hath bene declared to the kynges maiestie, that the frenche kynge omittynge the duetie and office of a good christen prynce (whiche is moche to be lamented) hath not onely by a longe time and season ayded the great Turke...* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1543)]. Elizabeth would have very similar allegations made about her own policies in regard to the Ottomans.

unity and for the concept of 'Christendom' in an otherwise fractured post-Reformation Europe, a factor which would become more central to the concerns of the British state, as discussed earlier, under the Turcophobic exegete James I.

Following the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, the re-Protestantised England faced a period when the threat of the Turks had to be increasingly balanced with that of the Catholic powers of Europe, especially that of Spain. The latter threat, given the geographic proximity of Spain, was far more imminent and realistic than that posed by the distant armies of the Ottomans and the equally remote menace of their theology; and this Catholic threat was to culminate in the launching of a crusading Armada against England in 1588. Relations between England and Spain degenerated during the 1560s with the imprisonment of the Catholic monarch of Scotland Mary I in 1568; throughout the 1570s with the excommunication of Elizabeth I, the rise of English privateering against Spanish shipping, attempted attacks on Ireland by Papal forces and new threats to English trade as the Spanish state absorbed Portugal in 1580 following the death of Sebastian in 1578 at Al Kasr al Kebir (Alcazar); and, finally, in the 1580s with a proxy war in the Low Countries and the execution of Mary I. As this series of events unfolded, the English state from 1578 onwards sought to forge closer links with the Ottoman 'Porte' as a counterbalance to the threat of Spain although, as I will hope to show, this did not signal any fundamental change in British Protestant views of Islam or of the Ottoman Turks.

'Pope and Turke': Parallel Enemies

The debate in Protestant theology over whether the 'Turke' or the pope constituted the greater threat, or even over which was the true Antichrist, had a pedigree going back to Martin Luther, whose own view was that the pope was the most likely candidate, as he carried out his works from within the church itself. In Britain this parallel treatment of Islam and Catholicism also had a considerable pedigree. In a sermon delivered on 14th March 1550 at Westminster to the court of Edward VI, and published in the same year, John Ponet, the polyglot controversialist and future Bishop of Winchester, concluded with '*A prayer agaynst the pope and Turkes, whiche be the mortall enemies of Christ, hys word, and hys churche.*'⁷⁵⁸

This sermon, demonstrates an early expression of the equivalence with which Roman Catholicism and Islam would be regarded throughout the British Reformation, and in the location of its delivery at court, the centrality of the question of Islam in public life. One of the most widely disseminated statements of this equivalence of the Turks and the Catholic Church as a threat or as Antichrist is found in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. In the summing up of the history of the Turks, included in the expanded second edition of 1570 edition, Foxe calls attention to 'the terrible image of Antichrist.' He comments that:

... in comparing the Turk and the pope, if a question be asked, whether of them is the truer or greater Antichrist, it were easy to see and judge, that the Turk is the more open and manifest enemy against Christ and his

⁷⁵⁸ John Ponet, *A notable sermon concerninge the ryght vse of the lordes supper and other thynges very profitable for all men to knowe preached before the Kynges most excellent Mayestye and hys most honorable counsel in hys courte at Westmynster the 14. daye of Marche, by Mayster Iohn ponet Doctor of dyuinity* (London, 1550, n.p.), no page numbers.

church. But, if it be asked whether of them two hath been the more bloody and pernicious adversary to Christ and his members; or whether of them hath consumed and spilt more Christian blood, be with sword, or this with fire and sword together, neither is it a light matter to discern...⁷⁵⁹

Foxe himself does not come to a conclusion, commenting that in regard to this question ‘neither is it my part here to discuss, who do only write the history.’⁷⁶⁰

The ‘pope and Turk’ were also read by Protestant exegetes as the figures of Gog and Magog from the Book of Revelation (20:8), the nations deceived by Satan.⁷⁶¹ Amongst those to produce a reading of this kind was James Stuart, king of Scotland and future king of England. In a tract commenting on the Book of Revelation James observes that ‘The buik of Revelatioun is maist meit for this our last age’⁷⁶² and goes on to identify Gog (the hidden enemy) and Magog (the enemy revealed) with the pope and Turk respectively, being both ‘Twa sorts of men ... hypocrites and avowit enemies of God.’⁷⁶³ James goes on to describe the pope ‘of lait dayis seing his kingdome going to decay’ sending out Jesuits to ‘stir up the Princes of the earth his slaves, to gather and league themselves togidder for his defence, and rooting out of all them that possess Christ trewth.’⁷⁶⁴ James draws attention to the treaties between pope and Turk, commenting that:

⁷⁵⁹ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.122.

⁷⁶⁰ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.122.

⁷⁶¹ The passage from Revelation reads:

And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. (Rev., 20:7-8).

⁷⁶² James Stuart (James VI Scotland & I England), *Ane fruitfull meditatioun contening ane plane and facill expositioun of ye 7.8.9 and 10 versis of the 20 chap. of the Reuelatioun in forme of ane sermone. Set down be ye maist christiane King and synceir professour, and cheif defender of the treuth, James the 6 King of Scottis* (Edinburgh: Henry Charteris, 1588), Sig.A.iii.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, Sig.B.i.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Sig.B.ii.

...quhaires ye awowed enemie of God ye Turke was under bloodie weiris with him ever befor, is their not of lait ane trewis amangis them, that the faithfull may be mare easily rooted out.⁷⁶⁵

He then concludes by pointing that through ‘Ye agreance of Gog and Magog, the Turke ye awowed enemie, and ye Pape ye covered enemie, to this persecutioun’ both had ‘declared ye rooted hatred of ye wickit against ye faithful.’⁷⁶⁶ I will return to James I’s strongly held views on Islam, and the degree to which they shaped his administration’s foreign policy in relation to the Muslim world (and indeed the Catholic powers of Europe), later in this section.⁷⁶⁷

Yet despite this parallel demonisation of ‘pope and Turke’, and the unchanging nature of anti-Islamic polemic in English writing, the exigencies of trade and national defence resulted from the middle of the sixteenth century in the development of increasingly close ties between the English and Ottoman states. Yet these ties, and the language of Elizabethan diplomacy in regard to the Ottomans, were, on close examination of the extant records, more the result of the pragmatic pursuit of profit and national security than any genuine interest in establishing ecumenical religious ground between Protestantism and Islam. This gap between the rhetoric of realpolitik and the realities of

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., Sig.B.ii. James here refers to the series of treaties between the pope, Spain and the Ottomans (the first in 1580) which allowed the Spanish and Turks to conduct their wars against England and Persia respectively.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., Sig B.iii.

⁷⁶⁷ In producing his reading of pope and Turk as Gog and Magog James may well have been influenced by an earlier tract by John Bale which in its reading of Revelation states:

So shall ye well perceiue y^e holy ghost to meane none other hereby this Gog and Magoge,
but the Romish Pope & Mahomete, with their blasphemous and wicked generations.

[John Bale, *The image of both Churches* (London: Thomas East, 1570), Fol.66].

the persistence of a polemic and religiously antagonistic view of the Turks within British Protestant culture can be seen in the marked difference between the content of the texts sent to the 'Porte' and those which were for English eyes only. At best the detente and amicability in relations with the Turks was only ever a case of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend.' Yet, as I have said, this situation in itself serves to negate the idea of an ongoing 'Clash of Civilisations', as it was an intra-Christian conflict which formed the basis of the policies of the English state under Elizabeth, although this would change somewhat after the accession of James I for whom pragmatic cooperation with an Islamic power (given the strength of his anti-Muslim attitudes) was a matter of supreme distaste.

'The General Enemy Ottoman': England and 'Christendom'

Despite the perception in early modern Britain of a dual and parallel threat emanating from the Muslim and Catholic worlds, the texts of early modern Britain still saw the Ottoman Turks, in the words of Franklin L. Baumer, as:

[...] a species different *in kind* from Christian states whether Catholic or Protestant, a political pariah excluded by his very nature from membership in the family of European states.⁷⁶⁸

It was this perception which saw the Turks as one of the last foci of the idea of Christendom which 'despite the growing secularisation of European politics and the

⁷⁶⁸ Franklin L. Baumer, 'England, the Turk, and the Common Corps of Christendom', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.50, No.1 (Oct., 1944), p.27.

religious schism [...] continued to hold its ground to an astonishing degree.⁷⁶⁹ In relation to the English Protestant assessment of the nature of the dual menaces of Catholicism and Islam this finds its clearest expression in liturgical services and reports of Elizabeth's reign related to Ottoman attacks on Europe, which continued to perceive the struggles of Catholic powers against the Ottomans as being, at least to some degree, the struggle of fellow Christians against an alien theology.

This perception of the Turks as an alien extra-Christian and of the survival of the idea of Christendom in opposition to the Ottoman threat is clearly conveyed in a series of liturgical services put in place by the Bishop of Salisbury John Jewel (who, as Baumer points out, was one of the foremost defenders of the Church of England against Catholicism),⁷⁷⁰ relating to the Siege of Malta and its defence by the Catholic Knights of St. John in 1565. The preface of the form of service speaks of Malta as "a key of that part of Christendom"⁷⁷¹ and goes on to bemoan the fact that it is now invaded by:

[...] Turks, infidels and sworn enemies of the Christian religion, not only to the extreme danger of those Christians that are besieged [...] but also to the rest of the countries of Christendom adjoining...⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., p.28.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., p.31.

⁷⁷¹ John Jewel, *A Form to be used in common prayer every Wednesday and Friday, within the citie and Diocese of Sarum: to excite all godly people to pray unto God for the delivery of those Christians that are now invaded by the Turk* (1565), in: William Keatinge Clay (ed.), *Liturgical Services: Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer Set Forth in the Reign of Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1847), p.519.

⁷⁷² Ibid., p.519.

The representation of 'Christendom' unified entity in the face of this threat, and of the Turks as being committed to wiping out Christianity, can be seen in Jewel's appeal to God to:

...defend and deliver Christians professing his holy name, and in his justice to repress the rage and violence of Infidels, who by all tyranny and cruelty labour utterly to root out not only the true Religion, but also the very name of Christ...

The preface then goes on to make it clear that the Turks are a threat to the whole of Christianity by observing that 'if they should prevail in Malta, it is uncertain what further peril might follow to the rest of Christendom.'⁷⁷³ The prayer at the end of the service includes the standard providential reading of the attacks and triumphs of the Turks as God's 'just judgement' against his 'disobedient and rebellious children,' but still appeals to God for his help against 'thine and our sworn and most deadly enemies the Turks, Infidels and Miscreants' who will otherwise carry out their intention to 'set up, to extol, and to magnify that wicked monster and damned soul Mahumet above thy dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ.'⁷⁷⁴

Following the victory of the Christian forces at Malta the Archbishop of Canterbury Matthew Parker instituted a thanksgiving service within the diocese of Canterbury which once again highlighted the role of 'Turks and Infidels' as a means by which God '...most sharply corrected and scourged our christian brethren thy servants with terrible wars and

⁷⁷³ Ibid., p.519.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p.522.

dreadful invasions of most deadly and cruel enemies,⁷⁷⁵ and then goes on to thank God for the ‘assistance given to divers Christian princes and potentates’ which had:

... dispersed and put to confusion those Infidels, being thine and our mortal enemies, and graciously delivered thy afflicted and distressed Christians in the Isle of *Malta* and sundry other places in Christendom.⁷⁷⁶

Parker’s service proceeds to ask God to ‘Continue thy great mercies towards us, and in this, so in all other invasions of Turks and Infidels, save and defend thy holy Church,’ again putting the image of a unitary Christianity under threat from the ‘Infidel’ enemy at the centre of his text.⁷⁷⁷ In 1566 Parker also instituted a form of prayer for the Christians being invaded in Hungary, this time to be observed ‘through the whole Realm.’⁷⁷⁸

Parker’s text describes Hungary as a state ‘which hath of long time been the most strong wall and defence to all Christendom’⁷⁷⁹ and this time prays for a specific Catholic monarch, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II. The prayer asks God to:

...give sufficient might and power to the Emperor’s excellent Majesty, as God’s principal minister, to repress the rage and violence of these Infidels, who by all tyranny and cruelty labour utterly to root out not only true

⁷⁷⁵ Matthew Parker, *A Short Form of Thanksgiving to God for the delivery of the Isle of Malta from the invasion and long siege thereof by the great army of the Turks both by sea and land, and for sundry other victories lately obtained by the christians against the said Turks, to be used in the common prayer within the province of Canterbury, on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, for the space of six weeks next ensuing the receipt hereof* (London: 1565) in: *Ibid*, p.526.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.526.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.526.

⁷⁷⁸ Matthew Parker, *A form to be used in common prayer, every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, through the whole Realm: To excite and stir all godly people to pray unto God for the preservation of those Christians and their Countries, that are now invaded by the Turk in Hungary, or elsewhere* in: *Ibid.*, pp.527-537.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.527.

religion, but also the very name and memory of Christ [...] and all Christianity...⁷⁸⁰

Once again the sense of a unitary Christianity under threat from the 'Infidels' is stressed, and this is reinforced by the observation that should the Turks be victorious in Hungary:

...all the rest of Christendom should lie as it were naked and open to the incursions and invasions of the said savage and most cruel enemies the Turks, to the most dreadful danger of whole Christendom...⁷⁸¹

The form of service ends with a prayer which largely replicated that included in Jewel's form of service for the deliverance of Malta, including its reference to the Turks placing the 'monster and damned soul' Muhammad in the place of Christ.⁷⁸²

Pius V's excommunication of Elizabeth I with the papal bull *Regans in excelsis* on 27th April 1570 signalled a significant change in relations between England and Catholic Europe and sowed the seeds which would eventually lead to the crusading Armada of 1588. The implication of the Bull had been clear: any right-believing Catholic effectively had the duty to remove Elizabeth from the throne, and she was now under direct threat from Catholic powers and especially Spain.⁷⁸³ A year later in 1571 the Christian Holy

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., p.527.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., p.527.

⁷⁸² Ibid., p.533.

⁷⁸³ In the papal Bull *Regans in excelsis* Pius V had referred to Elizabeth as 'the pretended Queen of England and the servant of crime' and 'a heretic and favourer of heretics' (Clause III). The Bull had gone on to declare Elizabeth 'deprived of her pretended title to the aforesaid crown and of all lordship, dignity and privilege whatsoever' (IV) and had absolved all subjects of England of 'any duty arising from lordship, fealty and obedience' (V) and went on to command 'all and singular the nobles, subjects, peoples and

League (comprising of Spanish, Venetian and Papal forces and commanded by Philip II's illegitimate brother Don Juan of Austria) won the much-celebrated naval victory against the Ottoman fleets at Lepanto in an action which utilised all the symbolism of crusade.

The significance of Lepanto, and whether it signalled a decline in Ottoman power, has been a subject of heated debate between historians, and there is not sufficient space here to cover the issue.⁷⁸⁴ Whatever the long-term effects,⁷⁸⁵ the victory set off waves of triumphalism across Europe, and even Elizabeth, herself now threatened by the selfsame powers who had won the battle, evidently felt the need as a 'Christian Prince' to at least appear pleased. Although there is no evidence of special forms of liturgy in English churches to give thanksgiving for a Christian victory, as with Malta in 1565, the Venetian ambassador to France Sigismondo Di Cavalli recorded in a letter to the Venetian Signory dated 16th January 1572 that in a letter to Philip II Elizabeth had included congratulations 'upon the victory which God had given him against the common enemy of Christianity,'⁷⁸⁶ and a later letter from Di Cavalli informs the Signory that the secretary of the English ambassador 'has been to wait upon me to express the satisfaction of the

others afore said that they do not dare obey her orders, mandates and laws' (V), placing those who did so likewise under ban of excommunication.

⁷⁸⁴ For a detailed appraisal of the significance of the battle of Lepanto, see: Andrew C. Hess, 'The Battle of Lepanto and Its Place in Mediterranean History', *Past and Present*, No.57 (Nov., 1972), pp.53-73.

⁷⁸⁵ It is worth noting that earlier in the year of the Christian victory at Lepanto the island of Cyprus was taken from Venice by the Turks. This was reported in: William Malim (trans.), *The true report of all the successes of Famagosta, of the antique writers called Tamassus, a citie in Cyprus In the which the whole order of all the skirmishes, batteries, mines, and assaultes geuen to the sayd fortresse, may plainly appeare. Moreouer the names of the captaines, and number of the people slaine, as well of the Christians as of the Turkes: likewise of them who were taken prisoners: from the beginning of the sayd seege vntill the end of the same* (London: John Daye, 1572). In his dedication to the Earl of Leicester Malim describes how 'it moueth me much to remember the losse of those three notable Ilands, to the great discomfort of all Chistendome, to those hellish Turkes, horseleeches of Christian blood' (Sig.A4) He goes on to describe the Ottomans as 'cruell Turkes, ancient professed enemies to all Christian religion.' (Sig.B1). Malim's text was later included in Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations* (1599).

⁷⁸⁶ *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, 1558-1580*, no.534, p.480.

Queen of England at the great victory.⁷⁸⁷ Elizabeth was plainly still highly anxious to be included in the club of 'Christian Princes,' although seen by many of its members as an illegitimate heretic.

Famously, the battle of Lepanto also produced an ambivalent response from the future King of England James I, then James VI of Scotland. First published in Edinburgh in 1591, but probably written in 1585,⁷⁸⁸ and published in England on James's accession in 1603, the poem celebrated the victory of 'the baptiz'd race/ And circumcised Turband Turkes,'⁷⁸⁹ but in line with his identity as a Protestant monarch James feels the need to qualify his celebration of the victory. In the 'Chorus Angelorum' at the end of the poem James makes it clear that God has granted victory because 'so he loves his name' that 'he doth mercy shew to all/ That do professe the same', even, as in this case, to those who are not 'Professing it aright' but instead 'mixe therewith/ Their owne inventions flight', in other words Catholics.⁷⁹⁰

James goes on to take the opportunity to turn his poem on the Catholic victory into an exhortation to Protestants that if such a victory could be won by those that 'beare upon their brow/ The marke of Antichrist the Whoore' and who 'the truest Christians/ With fire and sword invade', how much more likely would victory against the Turks be for the

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., No.538, p.483.

⁷⁸⁸ Robert Appelbaum, 'War and Peace in "The Lepanto" of James VI and I', *Modern Philology*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (Feb., 2000), pp. 333-363.

⁷⁸⁹ James Stuart, *His Maiesties Lepanto, or heroicall song being part of his poetick exercises at vacant houres* (London: Simon Stafford and Henry Hooke, 1603), Sig.A4.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., Sig.E3.

Protestants who carry instead ‘His speciall marke, a cerayne signe/ Of everlasting grace.’⁷⁹¹

The qualification of the Catholic victory is even stronger in the 1603 reprint of the poem where in ‘The Authors Preface to the Reader’ James, now the monarch of the even more vehemently anti-Catholic England, takes the opportunity to defend himself against the charge that in *Lepanto* he had seemed ‘far contrary to my degree & Religion, like a mercenary poet, to pen a worke in praise of a forraine Papist bastard [Don John].’⁷⁹²

James proceeds to argue that he had written the poem at a time of ‘the stirring up of the league & cruell persecution of Protestants in all countries’⁷⁹³ and that in fact his poem praises God and not Don John who was neither ‘the first or second cause of that victory’ but only a ‘particular man.’⁷⁹⁴ However James defends his work, there is little doubt that its creation had its root a very deep antipathy to the Turks and Islam, which would come to manifest itself in his attitude towards the Ottomans during his reign.

From the beginning of his reign James made it clear that his relations with the Ottoman Empire would take a very different form from those under his predecessor Elizabeth, which will be discussed shortly. A report of 11th December 1603 from the Venetian Ambassadors Piero Duodo and Nicolo Molin describes how James’s aim was ‘to live at peace with everyone’ within the Christian world and relates how James was displeased by having to receive a Turkish ‘cavass’ as ‘he did not approve a Turkish alliance, though the

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., Sig.E3.

⁷⁹² Ibid., Sig.A2.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., Sig.A3.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., Sig.A3.

present position of affairs would compel him to receive the Turk.⁷⁹⁵ In a letter to the Doge and Senate dated 25th December 1603 Molin describes the complaints reaching England from the English ambassador in Constantinople that:

[...] after the death of Queen Elizabeth, he is badly treated by the Sultan and his ministers, who decline to recognise him as Ambassador, and refuse to observe the capitulations made under Elizabeth.⁷⁹⁶

Molin goes on to describe the anxiety of the Sultan regarding the potential English peace with Spain (which was achieved in 1604) and goes on to describe how James ‘openly shows that he has no affection for the Turkish alliance’ and clearly expresses his attitude that ‘all Christian Princes ought to unite for the destruction of their common foe.’⁷⁹⁷ In a letter from Molin on October 6th of 1604 James is described as stating that ‘it was a matter of no moment to him that an Ambassador should reside in Constantinople’ as ‘he had no wish to continue friendly relations with the Turk’ and that if the Levant Company ‘found an Ambassador necessary for their own interests they must pay for him themselves.’⁷⁹⁸ This rigidity of attitude and unwillingness to do anything that was ‘unfitting a Christian Prince,’⁷⁹⁹ even to the degree that James resented financing an Ambassador to the Porte in order to protect trade, highlights the enormous gap between

⁷⁹⁵ *Calendar of State Papers, Venice*, (1603-7), No,169, p.122.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, No.175, p.125.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, No.175, p.125. The purely financial reasons for maintaining relations with the Porte is also made clear in Molin’s letter as he describes how, despite James’s fundamental distaste of association with the Turks:

In Council [...] where everything is weighed in the scales of material interests, the opinions are very various. Some hold that it is necessary to maintain a good understanding with the Turks, on account of English trade in the Levant (*Ibid.*, No,175, p.125)

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, no.278, p.184.

⁷⁹⁹ Thomas Wilson to Sir Thomas Parry, June 12, 1603. Cited in: Franklin L. Baumer, ‘England, the Turk and the Common Corps of Christendom’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.50, No.1 (Oct, 1944), pp.26-48.

the conciliatory and pragmatic approach of Elizabeth's administration and that of his own.

Under James's predecessor Elizabeth I relations with the Porte had been handled in a very different way. The excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570 had major implications for the nature of the materials which English merchants now exported to the Muslim world and English traders took advantage of their new position outside the jurisdiction of the pope to trade in previously forbidden goods, particularly raw materials for munitions.

As Susan Skilliter comments:

[...] the English merchants, now outlawed, were free to reap the harvest offered by the infidel market. On the other hand the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in June, followed by the naval defeat at Lepanto in October 1571, and the colossal replacement of the navy during the winter months created a need for armaments greater than the Empire could supply.⁸⁰⁰

Skilliter goes on to describe how:

Flaunting their liberty, English ships would carry to the infidel the scrap-metal resulting from the upheavals of the Reformation – lead from the roofs of ecclesiastical buildings, old bells, and broken metal statuary.⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰⁰ Susan Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey, 1578-1582* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.23.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.23.

Skilliter points out that this trade followed almost directly from Elizabeth's excommunication, commenting that 'It cannot be a coincidence that the new contraband trade with Turkey followed almost immediately after.'⁸⁰² The types of goods which English merchants were exporting to the Ottoman Empire are demonstrated in a 1577 '*Estimate for a voyage to the Levant*' by John Hawkins, which was to include dealing in Ottoman ports such as Alexandria, Tripoli and even Istanbul. Along with English cloth ('Karsys') the 'parsells of ware' listed by Hawkins includes '20 hundredweight of [...] tynne, 40 fodder of ledd' and 'style' [steel].⁸⁰³ As Skilliter points out:

All these items, destined for the Ottoman market, were 'prohibited goods', that is, goods which could be used as war material by the enemy. This prohibition, active in the Roman Empire, had been formulated in the Codex Justinianus, and the edict banning the export of munitions and food-stuffs from Christendom to the Infidel had been enforced through the centuries by many Popes, threatening the excommunication of any who dared to break the rule.⁸⁰⁴

Of course, to the English, already excommunicated by the Bull of 1570, this was an empty threat.

English export of these restricted, potentially military, materials to the Islamic world excited concern and recrimination from the Catholic nations. In a letter to Philip II in 1579 the Spanish ambassador to England Bernardino de Mendoza reports that the English had been exporting tin to the Ottomans and that 'The Turks are desirous of friendship

⁸⁰² Ibid., p.23.

⁸⁰³ Ibid., p.19-21. One of the ships which was to be used for this voyage was the *Pelican*, later renamed the *Golden Hind* and used as Francis Drake's ship for his circumnavigation.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., p.22. Skilliter also observes that 'A similar ban existed in Islam against the export to Christian countries of goods which might be used in warfare or maintain an army.'

with the English on account of the tin which has been sent hither in the last few years,' a material without which 'They cannot caste their guns.'⁸⁰⁵

In a letter of 1582 to Philip Mendoza reiterates this concern, describing how 'Two years ago they [i.e. the English] opened up the trade, which they still continue, to the Levant, which is extremely profitable to them,' before going on to relate how:

[...] they take great quantities of tin and lead thither, which the Turk buys of them almost for its weight in gold, the tin being vitally necessary for the casting of guns and the lead for the purposes of war.⁸⁰⁶

Mendoza draws attention to the unique position of the English in regard to exporting this type of merchandise, describing how the trade with the English merchants 'It is of double importance to the Turk now' as a result of 'the excommunication pronounced '*ipse facto*' by the Pope upon any person who provides or sells infidels such materials as these,' a sanction which no longer had any meaning for the excommunicated English. In a report of 1580 the French ambassador Jacques de Germigny also observed English ships bringing such cargos into Istanbul and describes the materials imported by the English traders as '*contrebande odieux et pernicious à toute la chrestienté.*'⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., p.24.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p.24.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., p.25. Despite the change in approach towards the Ottoman Empire under James I the English trade in munitions to the Ottoman Empire continued. In a letter to the Doge in 1607 the Venetian Ambassador Otaviano Bon, describing a dispute in Constantinople over an English claim that 'all nations not represented here by an Ambassador should sail under the English Flag,' noted that the matter was resolved in favour of the English interest by the giving of 'presents' and 'on the ground that the English alone of all Christian powers supplied the Sultan with powder and arms' [*Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, Vol.10, 1603-7, No.712, p.485*].

'Alcazar' and the Beginnings of English Negotiations with the Porte

As Susan Skilliter has pointed out, the efforts to formalise the trade relationships between the English state and the Ottoman Empire, and to attempt to secure the support of the Ottomans, seem to have intensified following the events of 4 August 1578 at El-Ksar El-Kebir (Alcazar) where the crusading forces of the Portuguese king Sebastian were defeated by the Ottoman-backed army of 'Abd al-Malik, leading to the death of Sebastian and the eventual annexation of Portugal by Spain on 27 June 1580.⁸⁰⁸ The events of the battle, and particularly the involvement of the English recusant Thomas Stukely, found their way onto the London stage in two plays: George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (c.1588)⁸⁰⁹ and the anonymous *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (c1596), both of which present a complex and problematic relationship between Catholicism, Islam and English nationalism.⁸¹⁰ Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* presents its English hero Thomas Stukeley and his crew arriving in Lisbon having been driven off

⁸⁰⁸ Skilliter, *William Harborne*, p.31. Skilliter uses this series of events to re-date Francis Walsingham's 'A consideracion of the Trade into Turkie' to 1578 (from its original archive date of 1580) due to her assertion that its composition must have preceded the annexation of Portugal, due to its observation in regard to the safety of English trade with the Ottomans that 'the Kinge of Spaine [...] whi shal be hable after he is possessed of the Kingedome of Portingale greatlie to impeach us, having fortes on bothe sides of the straightes.' (Ct. Skilliter, p.29).

⁸⁰⁹ In his rehearsal of the dating of *The Battle of Alcazar* in his recent edition of the two plays Charles Edelman points out that the play does not appear on the Stationers Register and notes that 'the unambiguous notice of the play's existence is the quarto, printed 'by Edwarde Allde for Richard Bankworth' in 1594.' Edelman goes on to set the dates for the play to an upward limit of February 1589, when Peele's *A farewell Entitled to the Famous and Fortunate Generals of our English Forces: Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Drake* was published and a *terminus quo* in 1587, the year of the publication of the play's major source, John Polemon's *The second part of the booke of batailles, fought in our age taken out of the best authors and writers in sundrie languages. Published for the profit of those that practise armes, and for the pleasure of such as loue to be harmlesse hearers of bloudie broiles* (London: Thomas East for Gabriell Cawood, 1587). [Charles Edelman, 'Introduction' in: *The Stukeley Plays*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.16-18. All quotations are from this edition].

⁸¹⁰ For a full coverage of the historical background of the two plays, see: Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.112-134.

course on route to a Papal sponsored invasion of Ireland.⁸¹¹ They are greeted as ‘valient Catholics’ (II (ii), l.1) and ‘brave Englishmen’ (II (ii), l.2), which would seem to set up a paradox in the context of the religious conflicts of the play’s first production.

The Irish Bishop present at the Portuguese court states that the purpose of Stukeley’s mission in Ireland was ‘Conquering the land for his Holiness/ And so restore it to the Roman faith’ (II (ii), ll.15-16), a mission which surely would not have sat comfortably with an English audience who had just faced, or were about to face, a Spanish crusade in the form of the Armada of 1588.⁸¹² In fact, a reprimand on the nature of the papal mission to Ireland is delivered by the governor of Lisbon Diego Lopes who calls the mission in Ireland ‘Unhonourable’ (II (ii), l.24) and ‘misbeseeming you to meddle in’ (II (ii), l25).⁸¹³

Stukeley makes a statement in which he rejects the ties of nationhood, stating that he is:

...resolved in all

⁸¹¹ Details of this failed invasion were detailed in a newssheet entitled: *Newe Newes. A short rehersall of the late enterprize by Captaine Stukely, and sithence continuing and put in practice, by MacMorice, his Lieutenant upon the country of Ireland*, (London: I.C., 1579). The news describes Stukeley arriving in Lisbon and ends with a description of Stukeley’s death at El-Ksar El-Kebir, stating that:

[...]God prevented captaine Stukeley, his purpose, for there he ended his life, and was slaine in the same Battaile against the Moores. (Sig.A.iii).

⁸¹² Opinion is divided on whether the play was written before or after Armada. See Edelman, pp.16-19.

⁸¹³ Interestingly the prefatory poem attached to a report of a later attack on Ireland in 1580 related Pope with ‘Turk’ in its providential explanation of the failure of the attack:

VVho fauours; feares, or followes with desire,
Thy state, thy strength, thy vaine and wicked reed:
Deserues, dislikes, and iustly dooth acquire,
The sword, thy swaye, destruction for his meed.
Let Pope, let Turke, let Sathan rage their fill:
God keepeth vs, if we doo keepe his will. (No page in text)

[Anthony Munday, *The true reporte of the prosperous successe which God gaue vnto our English souldiours against the forraine bands of our Romaine enemies lately ariued* (London: J. Charlewood for Edward White, 1581)].

To follow rule, honour and empery,
Not to be bent so strictly to the place
Wherein I first blew the fire of life

(II (ii), ll.28-31)

So far Stukeley, although depicted as valiant and proud (in many ways an ambitious over-reacher in the style of Tamburlaine), is also a liminal figure whose position regarding his own country and its faith would hardly seemed designed to appeal to a contemporary English audience. Yet the production of two plays about him within fifteen years of his death, as well as several ballads, suggests that he remained a paradoxically attractive character and this is possibly due to his presentation in both plays as being involved in pseudo-crusading wars against Islamic enemies.⁸¹⁴

Both plays present Stukeley diverting his energies from an attack on Ireland and joining an idealistic but naïve Sebastian on an expedition which is couched in the rhetoric of crusade. In the *Battle of Alcazar* Stukeley is persuaded by Sebastian to follow him ‘in holy Christian wars,/ And leave to seek thy country’s overthrow’ (II (iv), ll.134-5), an act which Stukeley is told will speak ‘in honour of thy country’s fame’ (II (ii), l.85). In both plays the alliance of Sebastian with the villainous ‘Moor’ Muly Mahamet is pitted against the forces of the rightful king Abdelmelec who, as in the actual battle, is supported by the Turkish Sultan ‘Amurath the Great’ (Murad III).

Both plays present Philip II as a treacherous Machiavell who deserts Sebastian in order to claim his throne.⁸¹⁵ In *The Battle of Alcazar*, in which he never appears in person, Philip

⁸¹⁴ An extensive survey of the career of Thomas Stukeley can be found in: Juan E. Tazon, *The Life and Times of Thomas Stukeley (c1525-1578)*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

⁸¹⁵ This element of the narrative was probably taken by Peele and the anonymous author of *Captain Thomas Stukeley* from *The explanation of the true and lavyful right and tytyle, of the most excellent prince, Antonie the first of that name* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1585), which describes how ‘his vncke King

encourages Sebastian to ‘plant religious truth in Africa’ (III (i), 1.9) with promises of ‘aid of arms’ (III (i), 1.12) and ‘men, munition, and supply of war’ (III (i), 1.14), the Spanish ambassador describing the Spanish soldiers as being ready ‘to spend their blood in honour of their Christ (III (i), 1.16) and even offering his daughter’s hand in marriage in order to demonstrate ‘‘How much the Catholic king of Spain affects/ this war with Moors and men of little faith’ (III (i), 1.18-19). In *Captain Thomas Stukeley* Philip actually appears onstage and after hearing Sebastian’s plans from his ambassador Botellio asserts that ‘The right is in Molocco’ (Scene 14, 1.32), meaning that his claim is legitimate, and questions why Sebastian would aid Muly Mahmate, adding that:

Beside Mahamet is an infidel,
 From whose associate fellowship, in this
 And all things else, we Christians must refrain

(Scene 14, ll.34-36)

This statement seems to raise troubling questions regarding the English associations with the Porte at the time of the play and certainly echoes Spanish statements on the actions of the English state.⁸¹⁶ The reason for the alliance with Muly Mahamet is outlined to him by

Phillip of Castile to vouchsafe some ayde vnto him in that beehalfe. The King of Castile granting this petition, promised to ayde him’ and then:

[...] caused a proclamation to bee made and published thorowoute all Spayne, subiecte to his Iurisdiction, whereby all his subiectes were commaunded vppon greate pennalties that none of them shoulde accompanye Kinge Sebastian in that Voyage...(p.3)

Concluding that:

[...] whereof certaynelye there can no other coniecture bee gathered, sauing onely that the king of Castile by his vnmesurable ambition & insatiable desire to haue dominion, neither coueted nor hoped for any other thing then onely that the yong prince king Sebastian his nephew, for want of sufficient force, should be ouerthrown and come to destruction in the same Iourney, so as thereupon the said king of Castile might by that meane haue oportunity to ioyne the kingdome of Portugall to his kingdome of Castile as it came to passé (pp.3-4).

⁸¹⁶ In his *A declaration of the true causes of the great troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realm of England Wherein the indifferent reader shall manifestly perceauae, by whome, and by what means,*

Botellio as being not due to the legitimacy of Mahamet's claim to the throne of Morocco, but as being undertaken in order to 'advance/ The Christian true religion through those parts' (Scene 14, ll.45-47). Botellio further explains that when the Portuguses have Mahamet 'planted' (Scene 14, l.63) as king and have 'The country [...] subdued and kept in awe' (Scene 14, l.64) there would be a situation in which for Mahamet there would be a compulsion that:

...either he and his to change their faith,
And worship that eternal God we do,
Or disannulling, be deprived of life...

(Scene 14, ll.66-68)

Botelli then goes on to state that in this eventuality the Portuguese would 'assume the government' themselves (Scene 14, l.69). It is this abortive mission of crusading regime change, and the place of a treacherous Spanish king in its failure, which occupies the centre of focus in both plays. Of course, the fact that the 'religious truth' (III (i), l.9) being spread by Sebastian's mission is that of Roman Catholicism is highly problematic

the realme is broughte into these presentee perils (Antwerp: J. Trognesium, 1592) Richard Verstegan made a series of accusations regarding English involvement in the events of 1578 at El-Ksar El-Kebir. He stated that:

I may not here omit, that after the warres of Barbarie, made by Sebastian king of Portugall (wherein the Mahometaines were assisted with munitions against the Christians by the English, and the said King was slaine) (p.24).

Later in the text Verstegan repeats this accusation, stating that:

When *Sebastian* king of Portugal warred with the Mahometaines of Africa, gave they ayd to the Christians, or unto the infidels? (p.46).

In fact, as Jack D'Amico has pointed out, given that the English had been trading munitions for saltpeter in Morocco to both Abd el-Malek and Mohammed el Masoukh (Muly Mahamet), they had actually supplied both sides [*The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991), pp.15-16.]

in the context of plays' first performances, with England under threat from just such an attempt.

The sympathetic treatment of Sebastian and the Portuguese cause chimes directly with the subsequent support extended by England to his heir Anthony, culminating in the abortive 'counter-Armada' of 1589 which sought to place him on the throne. Ultimately the politically awkward and paradoxical figure of Stukeley as Catholic, traitor and, conversely, anti-Islamic hero (though again fighting for the 'wrong' faith, like James Stuart's Don John in *the Lepanto*) is redeemed in the *Battle of Alcazar* by his final speech, in which he begs the forgiveness of his countrymen and rehearses his life from its beginning in 'England's London' (V (i), l.136). The dying Stukekey asks that 'if thy country's kindness be so much/ The let your country kindly ring your knell' (V (i), ll.175-6), even adding, as Jonathan Burton observes, the hint of the beliefs of a 'good Calvinist' in predestination⁸¹⁷ with the comment that 'from our cradles we were marked all/ And destinate to die in Africa here' (V (i), ll.171-2).

It was shortly after the battle at El-Ksar El-Kebir in 1578 that England began to work in earnest to secure trading rights and military alliance with the Ottomans and Skilliter suggests that Francis Walsingham produced his memorandum 'A consideracion of the Trade into Turkie' shortly after the battle. In the memorandum Walsingham perceived the English trade to the East as being threatened by England's competitors in Venice, France and Ragusa and also by:

⁸¹⁷ Burton, *Traffic*, p.90.

[...] the Kinge of Spaine (who cane never be longe without warres with the Turke) will seek [...] to impeach anie thinge that may be to his benefit, being no the best effected towards us.⁸¹⁸

Walsingham was not wrong about this danger to English trade from Spain, and particularly to the trade in military supplies, the Spanish disapproval of which I have already discussed. In a letter to Philip II in November 1579 Mendoza had informed the Spanish King that the English were ready to send out five ships and proceeds to report how one of the ships would contain ‘nearly twenty thousand crowns worth of bar tin’ going on to say that:

As this sending tin to the infidel is against the apostolic communion, and Your Majesty has ordered that no such voyage shall be allowed to pass the Messina light, to the prejudice of God and Christianity, I advise the viceroy of Sicily of the sailing of these ships as I understand they will touch at Palermo, where the tin can be confiscated.⁸¹⁹

Again this trade places England in the position of enemies of the faith, whose actions violate the rules of the ‘apostolic communion’ by aiding its Muslim enemies.

Skilliter details how Walsingham saw the solution to this danger of England’s enemies and competitors seeking to ‘impeache us [...] by fines and by Force’ as being to send ‘some apte man [...] with her Majesties letters unto the Turke to procure an ample safe conducte, who is allwaies to remaine there at the charge of the merchants’ in order to

⁸¹⁸ Cited in: *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.24-25.

‘impeache the indirect practices of the said Ambassadors.’⁸²⁰ Walsingham also demonstrates a keen awareness of the likely reactions of England’s European competitors to such a mission by suggesting that the matter be handled with ‘grett secrecie’ and that ‘his voyage be perfourmed rather by lande than by sea.’⁸²¹ It was in response to this advice that William Harborne was dispatched to Istanbul in 1578, in Turkish disguise, in order to negotiate the instigation of diplomatic and commercial relations with the Porte.

Enemies of Idolatry: Reading the Correspondence of Elizabeth I to the Porte

At first sight what is remarkable about Elizabeth’s approach to negotiations with the Ottoman Sultan is not so much the appeal to an ‘infidel’ *per se*: all European states were involved in that to some degree, whatever their representatives might have said, but the fact that it was phrased in terms of shared ground between Protestant and Muslim religious belief. In a series of letters to Sultan Murad III, Elizabeth used the concept of idolatry in an attempt to draw attention to the shared beliefs of Protestantism and Islam, as opposed to the ideas of Catholics relating to religious images, in order to win trading and diplomatic privileges. In a letter of 1579 requesting that William Harborne, the trader who was soon to be the first English ambassador to the Porte, be allowed ‘to come with marchandizes both by sea and land, to the countries and territories subject to your government,’⁸²² Elizabeth styled herself as ‘the most invincible and most mighty defender of the Christian faith against all kinde of idolatries,’⁸²³ ensuring that it was clear

⁸²⁰ Ibid., p.29.

⁸²¹ Ibid., p.29.

⁸²² Hakluyt, Richard, *The Principall Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Vol.5 (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1904), p.175.

⁸²³ Ibid., p.175.

to Murad that these 'idolatries' were the acts of those who 'falsly professe the Name of Christ'; in other words, Catholics. This appeal shows obvious knowledge of the Muslim prohibition of sacred images, and so appeals to a projected distaste on the part of the Ottoman Sultan for idolatry.

This perception of Sultan Murad III's particular concern with the upholding of monotheism and the castigation of idolatry could have developed through the examination of letters from the Sultan to other members of the *Luterān mezhebi* ('Lutheran sect'), as the Ottomans referred to the Protestants of Europe, much to the displeasure of Calvinists resident in Istanbul, such as William Harborne⁸²⁴. The perceptions of the Ottomans of the nature of the differences between Christians on these issues are highlighted in a letter, sent shortly after his accession to the Sultanate in 1574, from Murad III to 'the members of the Lutheran sect in Flanders and Spain'⁸²⁵. In the letter Murad addresses the 'Luterāns' as follows:

As you, for your part, do not worship idols, you have banished the idols and portraits and bells from churches, and declared your faith by stating that God Almighty is One and Holy Jesus is His Prophet and Servant, and now, with heart and soul, are seeking and desirous of the true faith; but the faithless one they call Pāpā does not recognize his Creator as One, ascribing divinity to Holy Jesus (upon him be peace!), and worshipping idols and pictures which he has made with his own hands, thus casting doubt upon the oneness of God and instigating how many servants of God to that path of error.⁸²⁶

⁸²⁴S.A. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey 1578-1582* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.36.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.37.

Evidently this letter shows the Sultan demonstrating a gross exaggeration of the extent to which Protestantism differed from Catholic orthodoxy; amongst other things Murad seems to see Protestants as denying the divinity of Christ, according him a position equivalent to that of Muhammad in Islam. Yet these distorted perceptions of Protestant belief were evidently received as serendipitous by the Elizabethan state, which in its new position of isolation from the Catholic powers of Europe following the Queen's excommunication in 1570 saw them as ammunition in the attempt to secure friendly relations with the Ottoman Porte, as a counterbalance to the threat from its new enemies in Europe.

The technique which developed from this perception of Ottoman attitudes towards Protestantism displayed by Elizabeth's letter of 1578, seemingly aimed at tacit approximation of English Protestantism with Ottoman Islam, is reiterated in a letter of 1584 begging Murad III for 'the restitution of the shippe called the Jesus, and English captives detained in Tripoli', where Elizabeth styles herself 'against all the Idolaters and false professors of the name of CHRIST dwelling amongst the Christians, most invincible and puissant defender.'⁸²⁷ In both of these correspondences Elizabeth is also careful to make regular reference to 'most mightie God, and onely Creatour of heaven and earth,'⁸²⁸ hence tying the Ottomans and the English together through both opposition to idolatry and through their monotheistic belief.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., p.312.

⁸²⁸ Ibid., p.175 This exact phrase is reiterated in the letter of 1584, cf. p.312.

The diplomatic technique employed by Elizabeth's negotiators, and in the letters of the Queen herself, of identifying common religious ground between the Muslim Ottomans and the Protestant English, as enemies of idolatry, has caused a great deal of critical speculation, which I will discuss shortly, regarding the extent to which the English identified religiously with the Muslim Turks. Many of these readings have come about due to what can only be described as a misreading, or perhaps an overstressing, of diplomatic language as representing the reality of English Protestant theological positions *vis a vis* Islam; even to the point where it has been suggested that the English 'heretics' self-identified' with the Muslim 'infidel', a position which will be disputed in this section.

In the negotiations to secure an Ottoman military alliance against the Spanish, which intensified during the 1580s, as the Spanish threat became more pressing, Ambassador William Harborne was instructed by Sir Francis Walsingham, the aspiring architect of the alliance, to continue the attempt to bring about a military entente with the Ottomans in the hope of persuading them to attack Spain. In a letter dispatched on 8th October 1585 Walsingham reminds Harborne of 'the instructions given to Jacobo Manuci for to impart to you about VI months since' in which:

[...] I did advise you of a course to be taken there for procuring the Grand Seigneur, if it were possible, to convert some part of his forces bent, as it should seem by your advertisements, from time to time wholly against the

Persians, rather against Spain, thereby to divert the dangerous attempt and designs of the said King from these parts of Christendom...⁸²⁹

Walsingham explains to Harborne that the situation in the Low Countries, through which 'hot wars' looked likely between England and Spain, 'wills me again to require you effectually to use all your endeavour and industry in that behalf' and secure the immediate assistance of the Ottoman fleet, in order that the Spanish:

[...] might be kept thoroughly occupied, either by some incursion from the coast of Africa in itself or by some galleys of the Grand Seigneur in his dominions of Italy or otherwise, as may be best considered of you in those parts...⁸³⁰

With the English taking steps to 'annoy him from this side of Europe' Walsingham expressed the hope that the Spanish force 'should be so weakened and divided as it would be no small advantage to her Majesty presently.'⁸³¹

So far this seems like a straightforward situation in which the Protestant English seek to ally themselves with the Muslim Ottomans to the end that, as Harborne expressed in a letter to the Murad III in 1587 to remind him of the 'solemn treaty' between Elizabeth

⁸²⁹ Conyers Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p.226.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.226.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, p.226.

and himself, 'all the idolators, our common accursed enemy might be entirely extirpated.'⁸³² Arthur Leon Horniker comments that in making this statement Harborne:

Like his mistress [...] completely dissociates the English people and their faith from the other Christians and establishes a definite religious identity between Protestantism and Islam.⁸³³

I would argue that this 'identity' existed purely in the diplomatic texts of the time, as there is little or no evidence for it outside this correspondence.

Walsingham's 1585 letter to Harborne displays the fact that any alliance with the Porte against Spain was far from signalling a retreat from theologically fuelled hostility towards the Ottomans. The contents of Walsingham's letter demonstrate that the attempt to set the Ottomans and Spain against each other was not just calculated to be of 'advantage to her Majesty presently', in assisting English defence against the Spanish, but would also be of advantage 'to all Christendom hereafter.'⁸³⁴ It is in his elucidation of this statement that Walsingham outlines his 'long game,' which envisages a Spanish-Ottoman war as 'the limbs of the devil being [...] set one against the other' and which he states would provide a situation wherein:

⁸³² Cited in: Edward Pears, 'The Spanish Armada and the Ottoman Porte', *The English Historical Review*, Vol.8, No.31. (Jul., 1893), p.445.

⁸³³ Arthur Leon Horniker, 'William Harborne and the Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Diplomatic and Commercial relations, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.14, No.3 (Sep.1942), pp.289-316, p.309.

⁸³⁴ Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham*, p.226.

[...] the true Church and doctrine of the gospel [i.e. English Protestantism] may, during their contention, have leisure to grow to such strength as shall be requisite for suppression of them both...⁸³⁵

In this statement, contained in a secret governmental communiqué meant only for the eyes of Harborne, Walsingham provides a characteristic statement of the Protestant paralleling of 'Pope and Turke' as equally opposed to the 'true' faith. Walsingham's statement of parallel hostility to Islam and Catholicism, it could be strongly argued, says more about the true attitudes of English Protestants towards the Islamic Empire of the Turks than any amount of pleasantries regarding 'mutuall and eternall familiaritie,'⁸³⁶ sending of extravagant gifts such as the organ constructed by Thomas Dallam in 1599, or attempts to 'link Protestantism and Islam together in ersatz kinship'⁸³⁷ found in the diplomatic correspondence between Elizabeth, or her political servants, and the Porte. All of these interactions were, after all, designed to flatter the Sultan and engage him in mercantile and military agreements seen as vital to the interests, even the survival, of the English state.

The English may not have identified themselves with the Muslim World as a result of their alliances with the Ottomans and other Islamic states, but their Catholic opponents were certainly quick to make the parallel (which in essence provided a mirror image of the Protestant connection of Islam and Catholicism). The clearest expression of this

⁸³⁵ Ibid., p.226.

⁸³⁶ 'The letters sent from the Imperiall Musulmanlike highnesse of *Zuldan Murad Can*, to the sacred regall Maiestie of *Elizabeth Queene of England*, the fifteenth of March 1579, conteyning the grant of the first priuileges' in: Richard Hakluyt, *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation* (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599), p.139.

⁸³⁷ Jonathan Burton, 'Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Image of the Turk in *Tamburlaine*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30, (2000), p.136.

Catholic associating of Protestant and Muslim in an English text appears in Richard Verstegan's *A declaration of the true causes of the great troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realm of England* (1592), in which he attacks the new alliances made by the English and defends Philip II's actions against the Low Countries and England, including the Armada of 1588. Verstegan's text outlines Philip's ongoing determination in regard to the Turks 'to employ such means as God had given him, to with stand the intention of this common enemy,' and describes how the English state (through the policies of Cecil, who is his main target within the English administration) has 'rather sought to work some speciall damage to the king Spaine, then to have the potencie of the Turke diminished.'⁸³⁸ Verstegan goes on to describe how 'certaine players were permitted to scof and iest' at Philip 'upon their common stages' and then proceeds to describe how 'the lyke was used in contempt of his religion,' including in order to 'make it no better then Turkish' the 'annexing unto the very psalms of David (as though the prophet himself had been the author thereof)' of the following verse:

Preserve us lord thy deere word
From Turk and Pope defend us lord,
That bothe, would thrust out of his throne,
Our lord Iesus Christ, thy deere sonne.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁸ Richard Verstegan, *A declaration of the true causes of the great troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realm of England Wherein the indifferent reader shall manifestly perceave, by whome, and by what means, the realme is broughte into these presentee perils* (Antwerp: J. Trognesium, 1592), p.20.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20. This verse, a translation by Robert Wisdom of John Cellarius' Latin original, was indeed added to the 1564 of the Psalms. See: William Keating Claye (ed.), *Private Prayers: Put Forth During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1851), p.412.

Verstegan goes on to describe how the English divines had spoken of Catholicism as ‘farr more odious and woors, then was the religion of Mahomet’ in including ‘divers ministers’ who:

[...] did at divers tymes insinuate unto the people. And one of them in a sermon at Paules crosse, affirmed that it was a more better acte to assist Turks, then Papists.⁸⁴⁰

Verstegan supplies another anonymous source for this English preferment of Turks, referring to ‘a printed book’ which contained the message that ‘it was better to sweare unto the Turk and turkery, then unto the Pope and popery, and that the Pope is a more perilous enemy to Christ, then the Turk,’⁸⁴¹ once again placing Anglo-Protestantism religiously, as well as politically, in line with Islam.

Verstegan goes on later in his text to further parallel English Protestantism with Muslim Turks by attacking the actions of the English state against recusants, stating that:

There was never *Scythian*, nor savage *Tartar*, that could use more inhumaine cruelty then to rip up the bodies of innocent men, being perfectly alive, to tear out their entrails, to be consumed with fyre.⁸⁴²

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., p.20. Verstegan gives no name to this ‘divine’, but this may be a reference to a sermon preached by John Foxe at Paul’s Cross in which he stated:

[...] the Turke with his sword is not so cruell, but the Byshop of Rome on the other side is more fierce and bitter against us, sturring up his Byshops to burne us, his confederates to consoire our destruction, setting kyngs against their subiectes and subiectes disloyally to rebel against their princes...

The last comment seems to refer to the rebellion of the recusant Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk in 1569. [John Foxe, *A sermon of Christ crucified, preached at Paules Crosse the Friday before Easter, commonly called Goodfryday* (London: John Day, 1570), Sig.J3].

⁸⁴¹ Verstegan, p.21.

⁸⁴² Ibid., p.45.

This is a blackly ironic statement coming from a defender of the Catholic Church, whose own Inquisition was certainly averse to such practices and whose fires were still a recent memory for English Protestants, particularly those who read martyrological works such as Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. Verstegan also attacks the levying of fines for non-attendance by the English Church courts, stating that:

There was never *Turk*, nor *Barbarian*, that imposed upon Christians so great and continuall a tribute, as twenty poundes, for every eight-and-twentie days absence, from their *Moskeyes*.⁸⁴³

This is a somewhat ambiguously phrased statement, which seems to carry the possibility that English also worship in '*Moskeyes*.' Verstegan goes on to identify the 'newe confederates' of the English state as 'the great *Turk*, the kinges of *Fesse*, *Marocco*, and *Algiers*, or other Mahometains and *Moores* of *Barbarie*, all professed enemies to Christ'⁸⁴⁴ and then describes how:

...the great Turk and his consorts, may be by the English excited to invade parts of Christendome, neere unto them aioining (as already upon such perswasion they have attempted) but good unto England they can do none, albeit the English would exchange their *Geneva Bible*, for the *Turkish Alcoran*, because their situations are so far distant.⁸⁴⁵

In this text Verstegan echoes many of the accusations made earlier by Catholic apologists which identify the English as 'newe Turkes'⁸⁴⁶ and this identification of the Christian

⁸⁴³ Ibid., p.45.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., p.48.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., p.49.

⁸⁴⁶ Reginald Pole, *The seditious and blasphemous Oration of Cardinal Pole both against god & his Cou'try which he directed to themperour in his booke intytlede the defence of the ecclesiastical vnitye, mouing theemperour therein to seek the destruction of England and all those which had professed the gospels.*

religious other with the figure of the Turks was, as shown earlier in this thesis, equally common in Protestant tracts.⁸⁴⁷

Affinity Overstressed: Paralleling Islam and Christianity in *Tamburlaine*

The apparent syncretism contained in Elizabeth's letters to Murad III, combined with the paralleling of Protestants with Muslims by their Catholic opponents and Ottoman misunderstandings of Protestant belief, seems to have produced a vein within recent criticism which depicts English Protestants as self-identifying with Islam outside the very discrete series of diplomatic correspondences which are made the root of this analysis. This has had some profound consequences in the reading of some early modern works and in particular in reading of the religious interactions and providential structures within Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays. Lisa Jardine provides an example of this overstressing of the religious affinity between Anglo-Protestants and Muslims. Beginning from an analysis of the Elizabeth/Murad letters Jardine makes the uncontroversial point that:

The axis around which the Anglo-Ottoman political negotiations were conducted was the supposedly shared values and beliefs of Lutheran Protestantism and Islam.⁸⁴⁸

Translated into english by Fabyane Wythers (London: 1560), Sig.A3. For a discussion of the contents of this text see: Dimmock, *New Turkes*, pp.58-61.

⁸⁴⁷ For a detailed examination of responses to the English 'Capitulations', see: Matthew Dimmock, "'Captive to the Turk': Responses to the Anglo-Ottoman Capitulations of 1580", in: Matthew Birchwood and Matthew Dimmock (eds.), *Cultural Encounters Between East and West 1453-1699* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), pp.43-64.

⁸⁴⁸ Lisa Jardine, 'Gloriana Rules the Waves: Or, the Advantage of Being Excommunicated (and a Woman)', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (2004), p.216.

She then comments upon the ‘remarkable’ fact of an approach being made by Elizabeth on the basis of an appeal to ‘shared beliefs and principles of Protestantism and Islam.’⁸⁴⁹ Yet this analysis ignores the diplomatic context of these statements by Elizabeth and attributes to them a basis in genuine perceptions by Protestants of Islam for which there is little evidence in other non-diplomatic texts of the time; as Jonathan Burton has commented, this was an attempt to ‘link Protestantism and Islam together in ersatz kinship.’⁸⁵⁰ Jardine deals briefly with Francis Walsingham’s correspondence with William Harborne on the securing of Ottoman military assistance, but does not cite the section which calls the Ottomans and the Spanish the ‘two limbs of the devil,’ consequently allowing an interpretation of the position of the Elizabethan state which overstates the level of religious identification with Islam.⁸⁵¹ From this basis Jardine is able to make the surprising statement that:

In the political iconography of Anglo-Spanish and Protestant Catholic hostilities, there is, in other words, a tendency towards identification of Protestant and Turk – both dubbed ‘infidel’ by the pope and the Holy Roman emperor, both practising the ‘true’ religion of the book, free from alienating rituals, superstition and idolatry.⁸⁵²

This seems to overstate significantly the level of identification and, indeed, to go against the overwhelming weight of evidence contained in texts from the time dealing with the Turks. In my examination of English writings relating to Islam during the writing in this thesis, I have found little evidence of identification with Islam, its ceremonies or its holy

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., p.216.

⁸⁵⁰ Burton, ‘Anglo-Ottoman Relations,’ p.136.

⁸⁵¹ For an analysis of Walsingham’s letter, see above, pp.27-8.

⁸⁵² Jardine, p.217.

book on the part of Anglo-Protestants outside the politically calculating statements made *in extremis* by Elizabeth I. In fact, quite the opposite is the case: Islam was seen by early modern English Protestants, along with Catholicism, as a prime example of the perversion of religion, and its 'holy book' as the foundation of the falsity of the faith. There is no doubt that cooperation between Protestant England and the Muslim Ottoman Empire could, and did, occur, but to attribute this level of identification with Islam to the English Protestants seems to go against all available evidence.

As mentioned earlier, in the case of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays this tendency to overstress the degree to which early modern English Protestants were capable of self-identifying with Islam has influenced readings of the providential structure of the play, and particularly of the moment when Tamburlaine asks:

...where's the Turkish Alcoran
And all the heaps of superstitious books
Found in the temples of that Mahomet
Whom I have thought a god?

(*Part II*, V (i), ll. 172-174)⁸⁵³

before going on to command that 'They shall be burnt' (*Part II*, V (i), l.174). This climactic scene of renunciation is indeed a vital moment in *Tamburlaine (Part II)*. Delivered by Tamburlaine in his penultimate scene, the rejection of Islam comes at the moment when the Scythian conqueror is at the zenith of his imperial career, having already defeated, in his providential role as 'Scourge of God,' a status he is given on the

⁸⁵³ Christopher Marlowe, J.S. Cunningham (ed.), *Tamburlaine the Great* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, Revels Series, 1981). All quotations are taken from this edition.

title page of the first printed edition of 1590,⁸⁵⁴ the armies of the Islamic leaders of Persia, Egypt and, most importantly for the contemporary audience of the play, the army of the Ottoman Turkish sultan Bajazeth.

The speech has become intimately associated with Robert Greene's famous description of Marlowe 'daring God out of heauen with that Atheist Tamburlan,'⁸⁵⁵ which in turn has been read through the prism of biographical detail relating to Marlowe's own atheism, and more recently through the perception of the possibility of a parallel in Protestant/Muslim theology. Less focus has traditionally been given to the nature of just *what* is being renounced at this point. As Matthew Dimmock asks:

[...] does Tamburlaine at any point 'Dare God out of Heaven'? If so, in a play set almost entirely in the 'East' (I, I, i.43), whose God is it that he attempts to provoke?⁸⁵⁶

In this brief discussion of the treatment of religion and providence in the plays I will argue that it is not just any 'god', or religion *in toto*, which is repudiated by *Tamburlaine* at this moment but a very specific creedal identity: that of Islam, or rather a version of the distorted constructions of Islam, produced over centuries in the imagination of Western writers. At no point in the play does Tamburlaine reject religion *per se* and retains his self-designated and non-specific monotheistic identity as 'scourge of God' until the end,

⁸⁵⁴ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great Who, from a Scythian shepherde, by his rare and woonderfull conquests, became a most puissant and mightye monarque. And (for his tyranny, and terrour in warre) was tearmed, the scourge of God. Deuided into two tragicall discourses, as they were sundrie times shewed vpon stages in the citie of London. By the right honorable the Lord Admyrall, his seruauntes* (London: Richard Ihones, 1590).

⁸⁵⁵ Robert Greene, from 'Peremides the Blacksmith' in: Millar Maclure, (ed.), *Marlowe: the Critical Heritage 1588-1896* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979), p.29.

⁸⁵⁶ Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.136.

reiterating and confirming it even in his final line, where he declares that ‘Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die’ (Part II, V (iii), 1.249). Yet there is also the question of Tamburlaine’s death after feeling ‘distempered suddenly’ (*Part II*, V (i), 1.217) in the wake of his rejection and abusing of ‘Mahomet’ and in this discussion I will argue that it is at this point that the idea of special providence within the *Tamburlaine* plays becomes truly problematic.

There is no doubt that the matter of providence forms a central theme of both the *Tamburlaine* plays. As Dena Goldberg observed, in the *Tamburlaine* plays it is not religion *per se* ‘but rather a particular religious orientation; an emphasis on the concept of special providence – of a god or gods who watch over every aspect of human life’⁸⁵⁷ and particularly the presentation, and possible parody, of what Goldberg terms the ‘my-god-can-beat-yours motif.’⁸⁵⁸ In *Part One* of *Tamburlaine* the depiction of this providential contest is relatively uncomplicated and, I would argue, less the subject of parody.

Although the figure of Tamburlaine himself presents the most complex and unstable depiction of religious identity in the play, in *Part One* he crucially makes no reference to ‘Mahomet’ at all. In his first scene Tamburlaine makes reference to a series of classic deities and supernatural forces, including ‘Phoebus’ (Pt.I, I, iii, 40), ‘the Fates’ (Pt.I, I, (iii), 174) and ‘Apollo’s oracle’ (Pt.I, I, (iii), 212), and both he and the characters around him make seemingly polytheistic references to ‘the gods’, a polytheism which echoes the polytheism of the Muslim villains of the *chansons de geste*, whom Tamburlaine, in his rejection of ‘Mahomet’, will come to resemble far more closely later.

⁸⁵⁷ Dena Goldberg, “Whose God’s on First? Special Providence in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe”, *ELH*, Vol.60, No.3 (Autumn, 1993), p.569.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.575.

Marlowe's choices in depicting his hero's religious identity, which in both *Parts One* and *Part Two* rely to some degree on his sources,⁸⁵⁹ make the Tamburlaine plays very distinct from each other in the providential nature of their hero's actions. In *Part One* he is an ambiguous religious figure opposing clearly Muslim enemies as a 'scourge', whereas in *Part Two* this is complicated by the presentation of Tamburlaine's own Islamic identity and his eventual rejection of Islam, a rejection which, vitally, is not found in any of Marlowe's sources, but which instead reconfigures the medieval trope of the 'Saracen' rejecting his religion.

In *Part One* it is the choice of Tamburlaine's opponents which is most important, most particularly Bajazet the Turkish Sultan. Jonathan Burton points out in *Traffic and Turning* that in *Part One* of *Tamburlaine*:

As Elizabethan diplomacy overlooked Turkish Islam while establishing relations with the Porte, so is Tamburlaine's Islam silenced as he emerges as the protector of Europe...⁸⁶⁰

This follows Burton's earlier analysis of the content of Elizabeth's letters to Murad III as producing a discursive style in which 'religious difference is muted or qualified while a specious doctrinal identity emphasized,'⁸⁶¹ vitally suggesting, as I will in this discussion, that no genuine religious affiliation existed and that consequently the possibility of English Protestants paralleling themselves with Ottoman Turks was extremely unlikely.

⁸⁵⁹For Marlowe's sources on Tamburlaine's religion, see: Appendix V, p.493.

⁸⁶⁰ Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning*, p.62.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

In *Part One* Bajazet's Islamic nature and status as a personification of the violent, oppressive and anti-Christian Turk threatening Europe are constantly reiterated; he is very much the Bajazet presented by John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the 'cruel tyrant' against whom Foxe states 'the providence of God' opposed Tamburlaine.⁸⁶² Bajazet swears by repeatedly by 'Mahomet', even calling him 'my kinsman' (Pt.I, III (iii), l.75), and by 'the holy Alcoran' (Pt.I, III (iii), l.76), and when first encountered in the play is carrying out his 'dreadful siege/ Of the famous Grecian Constantinople' (Pt.I, III (i), ll.5-6) with his army of 'circumcisèd Turks' (Pt.I, III (i), l.8) and 'Christians renied' (Pt.I, III (i), l.9). In contrast to the threats posed by Bajazet to Christendom Tamburlaine states that he will 'subdue the Turk' (Pt.I, 9(iii), l.46) and 'enlarge/Those Christian captives' (Pt.I, III (i), l.46-7) held a galley slaves by the 'pirates of Argier' (Pt.I, III (i), l.55), a place he describes as 'Inhabited with straggling runagates/ That make quick havoc of the Christian blood' (Pt.I, III (i), l.57-8). In his conflicts with Bajazet, as Burton observes, 'Tamburlaine's primary objectives are projections of Christian Europe's Mediterranean anxieties'⁸⁶³ and this is further reinforces when in defeat Bajazet declares that:

Now will the Christian miscreants be glad,
 Ringing with joy their superstitious bells
 And making bonfires to my overthrow.

(Pt.I, III (i), ll.236-8)

Bajazet also goes on to make a further threat that he will use his remaining garrisons to force the Christians, whom he calls 'foul idolaters' (Pt.I, III (i), l.239), to 'make me

⁸⁶² John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, p.28.

⁸⁶³ Burton, *Traffic*, p.76. The contemporaneity of these references is also identified by Matthew Dimmock in *New Turkes*, p.145.

bonfires with their filthy bones' (Pt.I, III (i), l.240), a threat which Tamburlaine, reiterating his role as defender of Christendom, says he will counter by subduing the remaining Turkish garrisons and cleansed the seas of:

The galleys and those pilling brigantines
That yearly sail to the Venetian gulf
And hover in the straits for the Christians' wrack...

(Pt.I, III (i), ll.248-250)

This, once again, locates the conflict in the context of the contemporary situations of Marlowe's own time and makes Tamburlaine a relevant and immediately identifiable providential hero to the play's first audiences.

Yet despite the anachronistic reference to contemporary aspects of the Ottoman threat throughout *Part One*, as Matthew Dimmock points out, 'conspicuously absent is any recognition of the Anglo-Ottoman league,'⁸⁶⁴ which had been in place for almost a decade by the time of the plays' first performances. Dimmock goes on to point out that the edition of Hakluyt's which advertised the syncretic techniques of negotiating this political entente, by publishing the letters between Elizabeth I and Murad III, was not published until 1589, and that that the play is otherwise 'suffused with anachronistic reference to contemporary political and mercantile events and preoccupations.'⁸⁶⁵

Dimmock also draws attention to the play's focus on Tamburlaine as king of Persia and comments that 'By focusing on the Persian and demonizing the Ottoman, Marlowe

⁸⁶⁴ Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.137.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.136.

crucially inverts the prevailing tenets of late Elizabethan policy.⁸⁶⁶ The play may invert the structure of the political alliances of the Elizabethan state, but it could be argued that it does not invert the dominant attitudes within the discursive formulations of the period regarding the Ottoman Turks. As examined earlier in this thesis, medieval perceptions of Islam as violent and anti-Christian, rooted in perceptions of Muhammad, still persisted in Early modern English texts and in this sense, at least in this aspect of its representation of providential frameworks, *Tamburlaine Part One* is highly conventional.

In its depiction of the captivity and punishment of Bajazet, and eventually in the failure of his appeals to Muhammad which lead to his and his wife Zabina's attacks on Muhammad *Tamburlaine Part One* is also conventional, following familiar medieval tropes repeated many times in the anti-Islamic literature of the West, such as the *chansons de geste*. As Bajazet is captured by Tamburlaine he calls out in despair to 'sleepy Mahomet' (Pt.I, III (iii), l.269) while Zabina cries out to 'cursèd Mahomet' (Pt.I, III (iii), l.270), blaming him for their predicament. Later, following the failure of further appeals to Mahomet and shortly before her own and Bajazet's suicides, Zabina asks the despairing question 'is there left no Mahomet, no God' (Pt.I, V (i), l.239), a seemingly more categorical rejection of providential power. As Burton points out, 'Muhammad comes off as either indifferent or impotent in Part One,'⁸⁶⁷ and Daniel Vitkus takes this observation further by stating that:

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., p.141. Dimmock also points out that this 'favouring' of Persia also 'presages the policies of James I' (ibid., p.141), whose policy was to use the Persians against the Ottomans.

⁸⁶⁷ Burton, p.77.

Marlowe's 'sleepy Mahomet,' an Islamic deity who is impotent, presents the possibility that all belief in metaphysical power that observes and responds to human words is indeed a delusion...⁸⁶⁸

What Vitkus's assertion assumes is that in an early modern context a parallel could feasibly be drawn between Islam and Christianity in this way, so that the providential failure of Islam and Muhammad would for a Christian evoke the possibility of a the providential failure of Christianity and Christ. Vitkus goes on to draw attention to the connection between the rejection of Islam by Bajazet and Zabina to the medieval traditions in which:

The denunciation of Mahomet or the denial of the "gods" to whom Muslim "pagans" pray was usually a way to validate, by contrast, the authority of the "true" Christian deity...⁸⁶⁹

And also claims that:

The followers of "sleepy Mahomet" are in a sense, a version of the boasting Saracens of the romance tradition, whose invocations of Mahound and other idols prove ineffective in their confrontations with Christian Knighthood...⁸⁷⁰

Yet without any further justification he asserts that in *Tamburlaine Parts One and Two* 'the demonization of Islam contaminates Christianity itself – indeed, all faith in metaphysical causality is shown to be futile,'⁸⁷¹ a claim he does not seem to make for the medieval texts with which he parallels the *Tamburlaine* plays. It would seem that Vitkus

⁸⁶⁸ Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p.47.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.50.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56-57.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.50.

is claiming that in an early modern context the paralleling of the providential failure of Islam and 'Mahomet' could be clearly paralleled with that of Christianity; yet I would argue that the failure of Islam and Muhammad to support his believers would be expected by a Christian audience, who saw Islam as being as false as their own religion was true, making such a comparison highly unlikely if not unfeasible for contemporary Christian audience.

There is, indeed, a strong connection between the rejections of Islam found in the Tamburlaine plays and those found in medieval texts. In the section of the late Twelfth Century crusading epic *Le Chanson de Roland* which relates the reactions of the Saracens when they suffer defeat, there is a description of how:

Ad Apolin en current en une crute,
Tencent a lui, laidement le despersument:
"E! malvais dues, por quie nus fais tel hunte?
Cest nostre rei por quie lessas cunfundre?
Ki Mult te sert, malvais luer l'en dunes!"
[...] E Tervagan tolent sun escarbuncle
E Mahumet enz en un fosset butent
E porc e chen le mordent e defulent.

(ll.2580-2591)⁸⁷²

⁸⁷² Gerard J. Brault (ed.), *Le Chanson de Roland (The Song of Roland): Oxford text and English translation* (London: Penn State University Press, 1979).

The English translation of these line reads as:

They run to an idol of Apollo in a crypt
They rail at it, they abuse it in a vile fashion:
"Oh, evil god, why do you cover us with such shame?
Why have you allowed this King of ours to be brought to ruin?
You pay out poor wages to anyone who serves you well!"

This is a scene which in its attribution of failure to the medieval Islamic pantheon, including ‘Mahumet’, carries echoes of Bajazet and Zabina, but which in its polytheism and iconoclasm connects far more strongly with the rejection of Islam by the ‘Muslim pantheist’ Tamburlaine. This scene of Islamic leaders turning on their gods and destroying their idols, and blaming them for all their misfortunes, is also found in the late medieval romance *The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone*. In this poem the ‘Sowdone’, when he discovers, ‘howe his vitaille were nomen,/ And howe his men were slayne’⁸⁷³ (ll.2758-9), reacts by turning against ‘Mahounde and Apolyne/ Iubiter, Ascarot and Alcoran’(ll.2761-2) and turns iconoclast by ordering:

...a fire to be dight
With picche and Brymston to bren.
He made a vowe with alle his might,
“Thai shal be caste ther-Inne!”

(ll.2764-7)

Once again the Islamic pantheon is invoked, this time with the interesting inclusion of ‘Alcoran’ as one of the deities - an unusual designation for the holy book of Islam. This scene, though once again having an evident connection to Bajazet and Zabina’s reproach of ‘Mahomet’, is clearly more fully replicated, but as I will discuss with profoundly different implications, in Tamburlaine’s own rejection of Islam at the end of *Part Two*.

[...] They snatch Tervagant’s carbuncle,
Throw the idol of Mohammed into a ditch,
And pigs and dogs bite and trample it.

⁸⁷³ Emil Hausknecht (ed.), *The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras his sone who conquerede Rome, E.E.T.S Extra Series pt.38* (London: Early English Text Society, by N. Trübner & Co, 1881).

Yet there is no suggestion by Vitkus that the rejections of Muhammad in these texts would have had the effect of destabilising their Christian audience's perception of their own God's efficacy, and so there is no reason for him to suppose that the parallel rejections of Islam in *Tamburlaine* would have had such an effect.

Part Two of *Tamburlaine* does indeed complicate the providential relations of the plays, but possibly not in the ways that some critics have suggested. In *Part One* there is only the hint of an Islamic identity for Tamburlaine in the appeal of his wife Zenocrate to 'holy Mahomet' (Pt.I, V (i), l.365) to pardon Tamburlaine for the death of Bajazet and later in the comment from Zenocrate's father the Sultan of Babylon that Tamburlaine has been made 'Mighty' by 'God and Mahomet' (Pt.I, V (i), l.480). Yet in *Part Two* Tamburlaine's Islamic identity is made explicit and in his first scene he swears an oath by 'sacred Mahomet' (Pt.II, I (iii), l.109). As Jonathan Burton comments, *Part Two* 'undoes the muting of religious difference that allows for Tamburlaine's Euro-Christian absorption in *Part One*,'⁸⁷⁴ observing that whereas *Part One* 'only briefly confronts the audience with its conditional embrace of a Muslim conqueror, the second play sets up that embrace as a premise.'⁸⁷⁵ The tension created is that of a situation in which the scourge of the Turks – and consequently Islam – is now a Muslim himself, making any victory a providential exercise in 'robbing Peter to pay Paul.' Yet as Dimmock points out, even though *Part Two* contains 'more mobile divisions'⁸⁷⁶ and a 'more ambiguous exploration' of providence in its interrogation of 'the Muslim side of his hero,'⁸⁷⁷ Tamburlaine is still opposed to Orcanes and Calapine and their 'Turkish crew' (Pt.II, I, ii,

⁸⁷⁴ Burton, *Traffic*, p.80.

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁸⁷⁶ Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.154.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.155.

1.108), and in his eventual rejection of Muhammad, I will argue, there is the possibility that he is recuperated within a Christian providential framework.

Before discussing Tamburlaine's rejection of Islam it is worth briefly examining the only appearance of Christian figures within the Tamburlaine plays, in the form of the Sigismond the King of Hungary and his followers, who vitally are representatives of a Catholic power. The defeat of Sigismond by Orcanes, following his breaking of an oath is apparently, as Vitkus suggests, 'a clear case of divine intervention' with the Christian's 'sleazy arguments in favour of oath-breaking constitute a cynical perversion of providentialism.'⁸⁷⁸ In the exchange of parallel oaths Sigismond has sworn by 'Sweet Jesus Christ' (Pt.II, I (i), l.135) and Orcanes 'By sacred Mahomet' (Pt.II, I (i), l.137) not to violate their truce; Sigismond goes on to break this oath following argument put forward by his follower Baldwin that:

... with such infidels
In whom no faith or true religion rests
We are not bound by those accomplishments
The holy laws of Christendom enjoin
(Pt.II, II (i), l.33-36)

There is also a statement of the deceptive nature of Muslims in Baldwin's speech as he claims that:

...the faith which they profanely plight
Is not by necessary policy
To be esteemed assurance for ourselves...
(Pt.II, II (i), ll.37-9)

⁸⁷⁸ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p.58.

Baldwin then employs this perception of Turkish faithlessness and dishonesty as the platform for his justification of the breaking of the oath. Acting on this specious argument makes Sigismond guilty of the type of moral relativism, or neglect of the tenets of Christian faith, which was cited by so many commentators as the providential cause of Christian failure against the Turks. Certainly this is the view of his defeat put forward by Sigismond himself, who states at the end of the battle that 'God hath thundered forth vengeance from on high/ For my accurst and hateful perjury' (Pt.II, II (iii), ll.2-3), calling his overthrow the actions of a 'just and dreadful punisher of sin' (Pt.II, II (iii), l.4).

Vitkus notes that this seeming example of a conventional operation of providence in allowing Turkish victory to punish Christian sin (in this case perjury) is complicated by the scene in which 'Orcanes, a Muslim, acknowledges the doctrine of Christ's divinity,⁸⁷⁹ having previously called on Christ to punish the perjured Christians and declaring after his victory that 'Christ or Mahomet hath been my friend' (Pt.II, II (iii) l.11). Vitkus sees this line as serving 'to intensify the already increasing sense of doubt about the exact location of the godhead.'⁸⁸⁰ Yet Orcanes' view of the causes of his victory is questioned by his follower Gazellus, who observes that "'Tis but the fortunes of the wars [...] Whose power is oft proved a miracle' (2.3.31-32), one of the most explicit denials of special providence in the play, but perhaps one which might be expected at the time from a 'faithless' Turk. The operations of providence and the line between faiths are confused somewhat by Orcanes' own comment that:

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., p.58.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.58-9.

[...] in my thoughts shall Christ be honoured,
Not doing Mahomet an injury,
Whose power had a share in this victory...

(Pt.II, II (iii) ll.33-5)

Yet this could also be interpreted as a reinforcement of the providential nature of the scene, as even an 'infidel' Muslim character is made to identify the 'justice of [...] Christ' (Pt.II, II (iii), l.28) which he states 'appears as full/ As rays of Cynthia to the clearest sight?' (Pt.II, II (iii), ll.29-30). Ultimately, however, the scene is at best highly ambiguous, neither clearly nor confirming the conventional structures of English providential thought.

The scenes in which Tamburlaine himself turns on 'Mahomet' and burns the *Qur'ān*, and subsequently dies, present the most difficulties of interpretation for an examination of the representations of providence within the plays. Vitkus identifies the fact that the scene of renunciation:

[...] draws upon the anti-Islamic discourse that had developed over centuries in Christian Europe, and specifically on the traditional misrepresentations of Islam as a religion that deified and worshipped Muhammad himself.⁸⁸¹

Tamburlaine is, after all, the only figure in either play to identify Muhammad as 'a god' (Pt.II, V (i), l.175), placing him amongst the pantheon to which he refers during the play, in line with the medieval trope of the polytheistic Muslim. Yet Vitkus moves away from drawing a parallel between Tamburlaine's identification of 'Mahomet' as god and his

⁸⁸¹ Ibid, p.52.

subsequent destruction of the *Qur'ān* and the iconoclastic rejection of their gods by the Muslims of the medieval texts. He draws instead a distinction between 'an iconoclastic smashing of idols and what Tamburlaine does when he burns the Koran,'⁸⁸² and carries this out by what can be identified as an example of the overstressing of the affinity between English Protestant and Muslim theologies which bases itself on the diplomatic correspondence of Elizabeth I and Murad III. Vitkus observes that:

By calling for the destruction of sacred texts, Tamburlaine assaults the ideological foundation of expansionist Islam – its intense logocentrism. Logocentrism and iconoclasm were theological positions that Muslims and Protestants held in common...⁸⁸³

Vitkus uses for his evidence for this 'shared' position the 'diplomatic relations between the rulers of England and Turkey' in which 'these shared beliefs were sometimes emphasized,'⁸⁸⁴ and at this stage cites Jonathan Burton's description of the parallels drawn between Islam and English Protestantism in the diplomatic correspondence of Elizabeth as an 'ersatz kinship.'

However, Vitkus moves from this identification of the qualified nature of the religious parallels drawn in Elizabeth's diplomatic letters to a statement in which he sees the radical, even blasphemous, nature of Tamburlaine's destruction of the *Qur'ān* as lying in the idea that 'For London playgoers in Protestant England, Tamburlaine's attack on the Book would have glanced at the logocentric principles of Protestantism' and would also

⁸⁸² Vitkus, p.51.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., p.51.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., p.51.

‘remind them of the book-burning that took place as part of the post-Reformation struggle between conflicting Catholic and Protestant interpretations of the world.’⁸⁸⁵

This seems to suggest the possibility that for an early modern London audience the burning of the *Qur’ān*, a book which, as I have shown in this thesis, was described in the most febrile of terms in texts of time as false and pernicious, could be paralleled with the burning of the Bible, a book which was held within English Protestant culture to be the transcendent repository of truth; or that the burning of the tracts of Protestant reformers, which were viewed as delivering Christianity from its corrupted state, could be paralleled with the burning of the *Qur’ān*, a book seen as responsible for the corruption of a huge section of mankind. This is far from being a convincing argument and speaks more of the ability of a materialist critic four-hundred years later to equate the *Qur’ān* and *Bible* in parallel terms than it does of any possibility of such a conflation within the religious climate of early modern England. This problem of invoking the possibility of a parallel reading of the status of the two holy books within early modern English culture leaves Vitkus’s conclusion, that in this scene *Tamburlaine Part Two* ‘evokes the uncomfortable contradictions inherent in England’s cozy relations with the infidel Turks,’⁸⁸⁶ once again overstressing the level of identification between Anglo-Protestantism and Islam and crediting the *Tamburlaine* plays with a radicalism which, at least in this sense, they do not possess.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., p.51. Matthew Dimmock also draws attention to echo of the burning of books by Luther and others during the Reformation (*New Turkes*, p.157).

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., p.51.

I would argue that something different occurs in Tamburlaine's scene of renunciation, which in its violent rejection of Islam, and call for the destruction of the *Qur'ān* as its textual symbol, resembles so closely the reactions of defeated Muslims within the medieval tradition and particularly the Sultan of *The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone*, with his projected burning of the idol of the 'Alcoran.'⁸⁸⁷ The renunciation scene in *Tamburlaine Part Two*, which was an innovation on the part of Marlowe in the diegesis of Tamburlaine, takes the familiar trope applied to the depiction of Muslims in defeat and in an inversion of its significance within the medieval tradition applies it to the victorious Tamburlaine. In *Tamburlaine Part Two* the foregrounding of Tamburlaine's Muslim identity (however confused it may be in comparison to the other, more 'orthodox' Muslims of the *Tamburlaine* plays) creates a tension within the providential framework of the narrative: if the scourge of Islam is a Muslim, then what is really achieved by his victory?

It could be argued that the rejection of 'Mahomet' and the burning of the *Qur'ān* in this climactic scene offer an opportunity for the recuperation of Tamburlaine as a providential hero in a Christian context. In these final scenes Tamburlaine is shown to move from the worship of Muhammad (and, in the style of the medieval Muslims of the romances, a pantheon of other deities) to a declaration of non-specific monotheism, stating that he will obey the 'God full of revenging wrath/ [...] Whose scourge I am' (Pt.II, V (i), l.l.182-4). He also commands his men to likewise abandon 'Mahomet' and 'Seek out another Godhead to adore' (Pt.II, V (i), l.199) and suggests that they settle on 'The God

⁸⁸⁷ See above, p.50. In *The Romaunce of the Sowdone of Babylone* the sultan eventually repents after pleas which include an entreaty 'by the hye name Sathanas' (l.2776) from the 'bisshope Cramadas' (l.2775) to 'saven his goddess ychon' (l.2777).

that sits in heaven, if any god/ For he is God alone, and none but he' (Pt.II, V (i), ll.200-

1). Matthew Dimmock suggests that:

In the attempted eradication of this 'Mahomet' whose perceived laws and chosen people Tamburlaine has continually destroyed, he not only escalates the challenge against all things Ottoman that he has represented throughout, but he once more rejects conceptions of religious hierarchy in favour of a force of nature.⁸⁸⁸

I would agree that this rejection of Muhammad places Tamburlaine more clearly in opposition to his Islamic Ottoman enemies, and so makes possible again his status as a providential 'scourge'. However, his rejection of 'religious hierarchy' seems less clear, as he self-identifies himself as the 'scourge of God', his unidentified monotheistic God, even in his last line before dying.

The death of Tamburlaine and its causation is the factor of *Tamburlaine Part Two* which potentially presents the most radical challenge to early modern Christian notions of providence. Tamburlaine rails against the impotence of 'Mahomet', daring him to 'Come down thyself to work a miracle' (Pt.II, V (i), l.187), before going to say that he is 'not worthy to be worshippèd' (Pt.II, V (i), l.188) in the light of his inability to defend his 'writ' by sending:

...vengeance on the head of Tamburlaine,
That shakes his sword against thy majesty
And spurns the abstracts of thy foolish laws...

(Pt.II, V (i), ll.194-6)

⁸⁸⁸ Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.157.

When nothing happens Tamburlaine concludes that ‘Mahomet remains in hell’ (Pt.II, V (i), l.197), denying the providential power of ‘Mahomet’ as a ‘god’. Yet within the space of sixteen lines Tamburlaine finds himself ‘distempered suddenly’ (Pt.II, V (i), l.217), and within four hundred lines he is dead.

Following the comments of Roy W. Battenhouse that ‘When Elizabethan theatre-goers viewed Tamburlaine’s attack of illness following his blasphemy’ they would have ‘certainly [...] considered the stroke God’s’,⁸⁸⁹ critics have interpreted this connection between Tamburlaine’s blasphemy against Muhammad and his death as a profoundly subversive attack on the idea of Christian providence, and this position is hard to refute. As Stephen Greenblatt observes in his treatment of this scene in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Tamburlaine’s burning of the *Qur’ān* is ‘The one action which Elizabethan churchmen themselves might have applauded seems to bring down divine vengeance’ and in his analysis concludes that the effect of this ‘is not to celebrate the transcendent power of Mohammed but to challenge the habit of mind that looks to heaven for rewards and punishments’,⁸⁹⁰ in other words to undermine the providential structure of early modern Protestant thought by placing the expected outcome of blasphemy in an unexpected context.

Matthew Dimmock also comments that the chain of events leading to Tamburlaine’s death raises ‘the distinct possibility that Marlowe deliberately endorses an idea of divine

⁸⁸⁹ Roy W. Battenhouse, ‘Tamburlaine, the “Scourge of God”’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol.LVI (1941), pp.337-348, p.347. Battenhouse’s interpretation also hinges on the possibility of the paralleling of Islam and Christianity in the minds of the early modern audience.

⁸⁹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.202.

providence that stems from ‘Mahomet’ and that this could function as ‘a satirical comment upon Christian belief,’ but he ultimately concludes that the text is ‘ambiguous’ and ‘far from explicit’ on the point,⁸⁹¹ a position mirrored by that of Jonathan Burton who concludes that ‘No explanation seems certain given the lapse between Tamburlaine’s blasphemy and his illness.’⁸⁹² There is, of course, the simple explanation that the defeat of Callapine marks the end of Tamburlaine’s diegesis and that when ‘the Ottomans are finally defeated’ this explains the ‘necessity of his death.’⁸⁹³ Ultimately this issue is not decidable, but in terms of the trajectory of the *Tamburlaine* plays as a whole I am inclined to agree with Dimmock’s observation that ‘Tamburlaine’s position as the symbolic scourge of all things Ottoman [...] qualifies him firmly as a scourge of the Christian God of Marlowe’s sources’⁸⁹⁴ and that over all, until the ambiguity of the final scenes, the plays replicate the dominant approach towards the Ottoman Turks as enemies of God whose defeat by Tamburlaine deserves to be celebrated as a providential act; a position which belies the trends in Elizabethan diplomacy through which the plays have sometimes been read.

⁸⁹¹ Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p.159.

⁸⁹² Burton, *Traffic*, p.80.

⁸⁹³ Dimmock, p.159.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.159-160.

Conclusion: The Past in the Present

Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he was a scheming imposter, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any one. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped around this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only.

Thomas Carlyle, 'The Hero as Prophet' (1840)⁸⁹⁵

This statement by Carlyle underlines the power and tenacity of the images of Muhammad created in the West during the Middle Ages and consolidated during the early modern period. In his comment on the 'current hypothesis' of his time Carlyle describes something far from novel, but rather demonstrates the survival and transmission into modernity of concepts which, as this thesis has shown, had defined Islam and its prophet in the Western gaze for over a thousand years. These powerful images were not to end with the complaints of Carlyle, although his treatment of Muhammad, including the biography of the prophet contained in his work, does mark a level of positivity and accuracy in representing the prophet of Islam which would have been all but impossible during the period covered by this thesis.

At the current time the figure of Muhammad still occupies a pivotal role in the relationship between the 'Muslim world' and the West, as is indicated by the

⁸⁹⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in Thirty Volumes, Vol. V: Heroes and Hero-Worship* (London: Chapman & Hall, n.d.), pp.43-4.

situation which arose over the depiction in 2005 of the prophet of Islam in the series of cartoons in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten*, or earlier in the furor which surrounded the publication in 1988 of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Also, in the interpretations of Muslims produced by Western commentators within certain discursive formulations, particularly post-911, it is still possible to identify the thematic pattern identified in the medieval and early modern texts examined in this thesis. Disturbingly, it is particularly within the ranks of the powerful Christian Right in America that the survivals of these medieval and early modern concepts of Islam are most prevalent.

Franklin Graham, who led the prayer at George W. Bush's inauguration in 2001, has stated that 'The God of Islam is not the same God of the Christian or the Judeo-Christian faith. It is a different God, and I believe a very evil and a very wicked religion.'⁸⁹⁶ This statement goes significantly further than many of the commentators of the early modern period, including Elizabeth I. Jerry Vines, a former president of the powerful Southern Baptist convention, stated in 2002 that 'Islam was founded by Muhammad, a demon-possessed pedophile'⁸⁹⁷ and Moody Adams, another powerful Christian Fundamentalist figure, is on record stating that:

⁸⁹⁶ Quoted in: *PBS Religion & Ethics News Weekly* at: www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week616/cover.html.

⁸⁹⁷ 'Muslims angered by Baptist criticism', CNN, June 13, 2002 at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/06/13/cf.crossfire>.

When a Christian kills, he's disobeying Scripture, and he's refusing to follow the example of his leader, Jesus Christ. When a Muslim kills, he's obeying his Scripture. He's following the example of his leader, Muhammad.⁸⁹⁸

This statement clearly echoes the approach to Islam as a religion of violence, with its roots in the figure of Muhammad, found in the early modern texts examined in this thesis. There are even echoes of the providentialist view of Islam as a 'scourge of God', and, as Tariq Ali pointed out in *Clash of Fundamentalisms*, the first reaction of Christian fundamentalists and TV evangelists in America to the attacks of 911 was to view them as "God's punishment" for the sin of tolerating homosexuality and abortions, etc.⁸⁹⁹ This reaction is somewhat at odds with the providentialist concept of 'manifest destiny' in regard to American power within the American Christian Right, an ideological position far less capable of sustaining self-criticism than even the texts of the early modern period. Of course, there are many other approaches to Islam possible in the modern West which are not so marked by the prejudices of the past, but the traces of the attitudes formed during centuries of Christian commentary on Islam that remain often exercise powerful influence over political discourse today.

In the face of the revivification of some of these atavistic views of Islam in current political and theological discourse, it is even more important that work continues to examine the relationship between Islam and the West over the centuries, and to map the ways in which Islam has come to be understood, or

⁸⁹⁸ Quoted in: *PBS Religion & Ethics News Weekly* at: www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week616/cover.html.

⁸⁹⁹ Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihad and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002), p.282.

more often misunderstood, by Western commentators. In examining the development of the images of Islam which exist in the West there is no more important era than that of the early modern period which, particularly in Britain, laid the foundations for the attitudes which would form the dominant ideologies of the imperial era and which would subsequently leave many of their traces in the present, with potentially catastrophic consequences for the lives of millions.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Early Voices: *Jahiliyah*, Byzantium and the Roots of Christian Polemic on Muhammad and Islam.

The process of producing the negative images of Muhammad and the *Qur'ān*, which survived for centuries in Christian writings, even to the present day, began very soon after the foundation of Islam; indeed, there is evidence within the *Qur'ān* itself that some of the central objections to the new religion and its book were contemporary with the emergence of the *Qur'ān*. Before going on to look at the later representations it will be worth examining a few of these early reactions to Islam. In the treatment of the later material, including that of early modern authors, it will become clear how little these ideas changed over the intervening centuries, despite the permutation in the nature of relations between Islamic cultures and the West and the increasing opportunities, through travel, trade and embassy, for contact with Islamic peoples and foundational Islamic texts which was afforded to commentators in England and elsewhere in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, in a diachronic analysis of representations of Muhammad over the centuries following the initial spread of Islam through to the early modern period, it is the historically and conceptually static nature of the images of Muhammad contained in the genre of the anti-hagiography which is the most remarkable feature, making them seemingly operate as a hermetically self-contained and self-sustaining narrative system not readily amenable to change through the reception of new

information, and these in turn fed into the unchanging bases for the approach to Islam and its adherents over the centuries.

It is in the writings of Byzantine commentators, near neighbours and opponents, both religious and political, about the new and rapidly spreading religion of Islam, that the earliest identifiable roots of the tradition of the polemic biography of Muhammad can be found. Before embarking on a thematic analysis of the polemic biographies of the late medieval and early modern period it is salutary to examine briefly two of the most influential early Christian commentaries on Islam, those of St John of Damascus (Arabic name, Mansūr) and of Theophanes the Confessor. Even a brief analysis of the material produced on Islam by these patristic figures demonstrates that many of the ideas still current in Britain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had their roots in periods and cultures very different from their own, and also shows the tenacity of the ideas produced by these Eastern Christian commentators in surviving through the centuries, sometimes barely challenged, into the works of their Western Christian counterparts.

John of Damascus

Of the early commentators on Islam it was John of Damascus who seems to have had the best opportunity to investigate the religion first-hand. John's father had been a Christian who occupied an official position at the court of the Umayyad Khalif at Damascus,⁹⁰⁰ and so John had grown up as a native Arabic speaker at the very centre of the Muslim world, before withdrawing to the monastery at Saba where he spent much of the rest of his life and produced the majority of his work. It was in a work called *De Haeresibus* (On

⁹⁰⁰ John W. Voorhis, 'John of Damascus on the Muslim Heresy', *Muslim World*, 24, 1935, pp.391-398.

Heresy) that John produced his most influential tract on Islam, which John W. Voorhis describes as ‘the armoury for all future controversial writings against Islam in the Eastern church.’⁹⁰¹ John also produced a fictional dialogue between a Christian and a Saracen, to constitute what Voorhis describes as ‘a manual for the guidance of Christians in their arguments with Muhammadans (sic)’, a genre which would retain its popularity in Christian polemic against Islam, including a version of *Mandeville’s Travels* where the Knight of St Albans conducts a not altogether successful dialogue with the Sultan.

John’s version of the life of Muhammad focuses first on the connection between Islam and the figure of Ishmael, a matter which would retain its importance as a polemical device well into the early modern period. John, in the context of other heresies, describes as ‘prevailing until now, the deceptive error of the Ishmaelites’, which he then calls ‘a fore-runner of Antichrist’.⁹⁰² John then describes what he believes to be the derivation of Islam and of the label ‘Saracen’:

It takes its origin from Ishmael, who was born by Hagar to Abraham; for the which reason they are called Hagarenes and Ishmaelites. But they call themselves Saracens, as those (sent away) empty by Sarah (Σάρρα κενούς), because of that which was said by Hagar to the angel, “Sarah sent me away empty (Σάρρα κενή).”⁹⁰³

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., p.391.

⁹⁰² Voorhis, p.392.

⁹⁰³ Ibid., p.392.

At this stage John also highlights the idolatrous nature of the Ishmaelites, stating that they ‘served idols, and worshipped the morning-star and Aphrodite, whom they also named in their own tongue “Chabar,” which signifies “great.”’⁹⁰⁴

This idea of the Arabians as worshippers of Aphrodite/Venus can be seen in many of the early modern polemic biographies, along with the identification of the the Ka’ba, the central shrine of Islam in Mecca (John seems to conflate “Chabar” with the Arabic term ‘Ahkbar’, meaning great) as a shrine to the goddess and the connecting of this with the institution of the Muslim holy day as a Friday, which had traditionally been her day of worship. This idea also intimately connected in Western polemic with the idea of Islam as a religion of sensuality and aberrant or incontinent sexuality. John continues to describe how ‘until the time of Heraclius they openly served idols’ and then then states that:

From that time until now a false prophet arose for them, surnamed Mamed, who, having happened on the Old and New Testament, in all likelihood through association with an Arian monk, organized his own sect.⁹⁰⁵

Here is the first appearance, albeit without a name, of what would become the familiar figure of Sergius (or occasionally Nestorius), including the connection of the figure with the Arian heresy which, as with Islam, denied the divinity of Christ. John goes on with his version of Muhammad’s prophetic career to describe how:

[...] when by a pretence of godliness he had gained the favour of the people, he declared that a scripture had been brought down to him from heaven. Wherefore

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.392.

⁹⁰⁵ Voorhis, p.392.

when he had inscribed in his book certain things worthy of ridicule, he gave it to them as an object to be revered.⁹⁰⁶

John then describes some of the contents of the *Qur'ān*, including both those matters in which it corresponds with the bible and the 'other marvels, worthy of ridicule'.⁹⁰⁷ In his polemic examination of the contents of the *Qur'ān* John demonstrates something notably lacking in most of the early modern polemic on Islam: a working knowledge of the Muslim holy book (although he shows little sign of knowing the *sirat*, beyond the attribution of descent from Ishmael to Muhammad and the 'Saracens'). John particularly pays attention to the Muslim denial of Christ's divinity and of the crucifixion (although the Jews are accused of trying 'unlawfully' to do so) and recounts a fictitious meeting between God and Christ, which is nowhere in the *Qur'ān* (although the sentiments expressed are correct), where God asks of Jesus, "O, Jesus, did you say, 'I am the Son of God, and God'?" and Jesus answers, "Be gracious to me, Lord; you know that I said not so, nor did I count myself above being your servant; but erring men wrote that I said this thing."⁹⁰⁸ This passage records the most fundamental variance in belief between Islam and Christianity, one which, in the eyes of many Christian commentators, made Islam, its prophet and its believers capable of any blasphemy or excess.

The next section of John's tract takes the form of a series of questions which could be posed to Muslims in order to prove the falsity of their faith, including asking why Muhammad's coming was not foretold in the scriptures, the question of Christ's divinity as 'association' with the godhead, and the question of idolatry. On the matter of

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.392.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.393.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.393.

association John describes how the Muslims ‘call us “*Hetairiasti*” (Associators),’⁹⁰⁹ for believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Firstly John points out that ‘the prophets and the Scriptures transmitted this’ so that ‘If we then say wrongly that Christ is the Son of God, it is they who taught and delivered this to us’, also pointing out that Muslims claim to ‘receive the prophets’.⁹¹⁰ He then anticipates two other Muslim arguments: firstly one based on interpretation, that ‘we read such things into the prophets’ and ‘then attribute such things to them’ and, secondly, that ‘the Hebrews, because they hated us, deceived us by writing those things as though they had been written by the prophets in order that we might be destroyed’.⁹¹¹ In this sense John has the Muslims making the same argument as that made by later Christians about the *Qur’ān*; that it was a Jewish redaction and consequently false, displaying the possible currents of anti-Semitism latent in some of the arguments of both faiths.

John does not directly answer these allegations, but rather moves on to a sophisticated syllogistic argument that if Muslims believe Jesus to be ‘the Word of God and Spirit’ and that ‘the Word and the Spirit are not separated from the one in whom they are by nature’, it follows that ‘If therefore His Word is in God, it is evident that the Word is also God. But if the Word is outside God, then according to you [the Muslims] God is without reason and without life’ and concludes that the Muslims ‘fearing to provide an Associate for God [...] have mutilated Him’, earning them the title “*Koptai*” (Mutilators) of God.⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.394.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., p.394.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., p.395.

⁹¹² Ibid., p.395.

John continues his ‘manual’ for disputation by returning to the matter of idolatry. He rebuffs the Muslim accusation that Christians are ‘idolators because we bow before the cross, which indeed they despise’ by returning the question ‘How is it then that you attach such significance to a stone in your Kabatha [Ka’ba], that you kiss it and embrace it?’⁹¹³ John then anticipates a Muslim reply that the rock is the place where ‘Abraham had intercourse with Hagar’ or that it is the place where he tethered his camel when he was about to sacrifice Isaac⁹¹⁴ and replies that it cannot be, as the scriptures describe a wooded mountain, where Abraham gathered wood for the burnt offering, whereas no wood can be found in the region of the Ka’ba, and states that this is an answer by which the Muslims are ‘put to shame’. John then goes on to pose a question to the Muslims; assuming that ‘it be Abraham’s (stone) as you foolishly maintain’, he asks them:

But are you not ashamed when you kiss it simply because Abraham had intercourse with a wife upon it or because he fastened a camel to it; yet you take us to task because we worship before the cross of Christ through which the power of demons and the deceit of the devil has been destroyed?⁹¹⁵

The inclusion of this sexual tale of Abraham links with the John’s next observation, as he goes on to connect the black stone of the Ka’ba back to pagan worship, and particularly to the worship of the goddess of sexual love Aphrodite, describing how:

⁹¹³ Ibid., 395.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid., p.395. In fact neither of these is an accurate account of Muslim belief regarding the Ka’ba, which in fact centres on the raising of the temple by Abraham and Ishmael, the fathers of monotheism, as described in verse 126 of Sura 2 *Al-Baqara* (The Cow) of the Qur’ān:

And while Abraham and Isma‘il raised the foundations of the House [the Ka’ba], they prayed: “Our Lord accept [this] from us. Surely You are the All-Hearing, the Omniscient”

The temple then returned to polytheism and was later purified by Muhammad.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid. p.396.

[...] this stone about which they speak, is head of Aphrodite whom they worship, whom they call Chaber [Ka'ba]; for upon this stone, even until now, an engraved image is apparent to those who scrutinize it carefully.⁹¹⁶

In John's attack on the perceived idolatry of the Ka'ba it is possible to see the roots of many of the medieval diatribes against Islam which identified the faith as idolatrous and even polytheistic, including the attribution of the worship of the idol of Muhammad (mahum/mahound) which can be seen in the *chanson de geste* and in other medieval crusade epics and romances. The worship of Aphrodite also links the roots of Islam to the sensuality and sexual profligacy which would become such a feature of Western representations of Muhammad and of Muslims in general.

John himself develops this approach, moving from this imputation of the worship of Aphrodite to one of the central strands of Christian polemic against Islam: sexuality, polygamy and the concupiscence of Muhammad himself. John begins by returning to the 'many foolish sayings' of Muhammad, describing how 'to each of these he gave a title'.⁹¹⁷ John then makes it clear that these 'sayings' are the suras of the *Qur'ān*, as he relates that in a passage called "Concerning the Women" Muhammad:

[...] permits by law that one can openly take four wives, and may take a thousand concubines if he is able, or as many as his hand can support beyond the four wives...

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., p.396.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., p.396.

John gives the reference '(4:3)' for this quotation, and it does indeed paraphrase the contents of Sura 4:3 of the *Qur'an, Al-Nisa'* ('The Women'), the title which John gives this 'foolish saying'.⁹¹⁸

This area of Islamic belief, as will be shown in the examination of the early modern polemic, remained a central feature of Christian attacks on Islam as a 'religion of the flesh'. John then moves on to the Muslim law on divorce, stating that the religion 'permits by law that one may divorce whomsoever he pleases and that, should he desire it, for such causes one may take another'.⁹¹⁹ John now explains the provenance of the law on divorce in Muhammad's own lust, by telling the story of Muhammad's 'co-Worker named Zaid' and his 'beautiful wife whom Mamed desired'.⁹²⁰ The couple in question were, in fact, Muhammad's freed-man and adoptive son Zayd ibn Hāritha (sometimes known as Zayd ibn Muhammad) and his wife, the prophet's cousin, Zaynab bint Jahsh, and the events of this story were to form a keystone of Christian attacks on the probity of Muhammad's revelations and on his personal sexual behaviour and, indeed, were the cause of some discontent and comment among Muhammad's contemporaries and subsequent Muslim commentators. John describes the scene between Zayd and Muhammad in this way:

When they were seated together, Mamed said, "O thou, God has commanded me to take your wife." And he replied; "Thou art an apostle; do as God has said to you, take my wife." Or rather, that we tell it from the beginning, he said to him; "God commanded me that you should divorce your wife." And he divorced her.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., p.396.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid., p.396.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., p.396.

Then John then demonstrates the shock of the Christian commentator at Muhammad's actions stating that, 'when he had taken her, and when he had committed adultery with her he made such a law', the law being recorded by John as:

“Let him who desires it divorce his wife. But if after the divorcement he shall return to her, let another (first) marry her. For it is not lawful (for him) to take her, unless she shall have been married by another. And if a brother divorce her, let his brother, if he be willing, marry her.”⁹²¹

There can be no doubt of the shocking nature of this version incident to a Christian audience, comprising, as it would in their eyes, a mixture of lust, incest, deception and adultery (indeed, this was exactly how it was later read by the early modern commentators). Yet a fully accurate version of the story would have proved no less shocking, and indeed seems to have proved so within Islam also. In Maxime Rodinson's version he has Muhammad coming to the house of Zayd who he tell us, 'He had married to one of his cousins, Zaynab bint Jahsh, who was, it is said a girl of great piety, some say a widow' and who was 'certainly very lovely in spite of her age which, at rising thirty-five, was by no means young for an Arab'.⁹²² Rodinson's version then has Muhammad knocking the door at which point 'Zaynab met him in a state of undress and asked him

⁹²¹ Ibid., pp.396-7. John gives the Qur'ānic reference 2:230 for this 'law', but rather confuses the matter. The verse in question refers to a woman returning to her former husband after divorce:

If you divorce your woman and they reach the end of their [waiting] period, do not prevent them from marrying their [former] husbands if they agree among themselves in the rightful manner. (2:231)

⁹²² Maxime Rodinson, Anne Carter (trans.), *Muhammad* (London: Taurus Parke Paperbacks, 1980), p.205. For other discussions of this incident see: Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (London: Pheonix Press, 1991), pp.195-6, Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp.156-8.

in’, adding that ‘After all, he was as father and mother to her’. Muhammad declines the invitation but we are told that ‘the wind lifted the curtain, evidently while she was hurriedly dressing’, at which point Muhammad ‘fled in some confusion, muttering something that she did not quite catch’; all Zaynab heard was: ‘Praise be to Allah the Most High! Praise be to Allah who change’s men’s hearts!’⁹²³

Following this incident Zayd comes home and Zaynab tells him all about it, at which point he goes to Muhammad and says that he will give up his wife if she had ‘found favour’ with the prophet. Muhammad tells him to keep his wife, but Zayd ceases to have sexual relations and lives apart from her. Rodinson then describes how Muhammad still refused to marry the wife of Zayd ‘for fear of the scandal it would cause’, the reason, Rodinson states, being that ‘Adoption amongst the Arabs was regarded as being to all purposes the same as natural fatherhood’ and so consequently ‘marrying Zaynab would be the equivalent to marrying his daughter-in-law, almost his daughter, and dreadfully incestuous’.⁹²⁴ Rodinson then states that in the situation with Zaynab Muhammad ‘clearly felt himself to be in the wrong’, but then describes how ‘as always in cases of difficulty, Allah came to the rescue’.⁹²⁵ Rodinson then describes how at the house of his young wife Ā’isha Muhammad went into his revelatory trance and then declared ‘Who will go to Zaynab and tell her the good news, that Allah has just married me to her?’ At this point he recited the following verses of Sura 33 (*Al-Ahzab/ The Confederates*) of the Qur’ān which justifies his actions and allows him to marry Zaynab.⁹²⁶ This whole incident and

⁹²³ Ibid., p.205.

⁹²⁴ Ibid., p.205.

⁹²⁵ Ibid., p.206.

⁹²⁶ The full passage reads as follows:

the revelation that followed it became, for fairly obvious reasons, one of the central foci in Christian deconstructions of Islam and, as Daniel J. Sahas puts it in his detailed examination *John of Damascus on Islam*, it formed, ‘a central theme in recriminating Muhammad as a prophet.’⁹²⁷ Yet, as Rodinson points out, this was also a cause of controversy within Islam and cites Arabic histories and traditional texts which also stress ‘Muhammad’s disturbed state of mind’ after seeing Zaynab undressed and, pointing out that it is these texts that ‘describe her remarkable beauty.’⁹²⁸

Theophanes Confessor

In the entry for AD 629/630 in his *Chronographia* Theophanes Confessor (c.760-817), an official or *strator* at the court of the Byzantine Emperor Leo IV, noted that this was the year ‘died Mouamed, the leader and false prophet of the Saracens’, noting that, ‘At the same time his repute spread abroad and everyone was frightened.’⁹²⁹ This forging of the image of Muhammad in an atmosphere of fear and threat would be a defining characteristic of Christian writings from this time to the present, and was, as I will show later, certainly a marked feature of Early Modern writings on Islam and its prophet. Theophanes also includes several other matters which would recur throughout the centuries in depictions of Muhammad, including Muhammad’s cultural and familial

And [remember] when you said to him whom Allah favoured and you favoured [Zayd]: “Hold on to your wife and fear Allah”, while you concealed within yourself what Allah would reveal and feared other men, whereas Allah had a better right to be feared by you. Then, when Zayd had satisfied his desire for her, We gave her to you in Marriage; so that believers should not be at fault, regarding the wives of their adopted sons, once they have satisfied their desire for them. For Allah’s command must be accomplished. (33: 37).

⁹²⁷ Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: the “Heresy of the Ishmaelites”* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), p.91. The (mis)understanding of Muslim laws of marriage that come out of this incident seem to have influenced Martin Luther in his comments on Islamic ‘disregard’ of marriage, see pp.51-4.

⁹²⁸ Rodinson, *Muhammad*, p.207.

⁹²⁹ Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.464.

background, his epilepsy and his opportunistic use of his sickness as a sign of revelation, his creation of the *Qur'ān* under the influence and tutorage of heretical Jews and Christians and the place of violence and sensuality within the central tenets of Islam.⁹³⁰

Theophanes comments of Muhammad that:

[...] at the beginning of his advent some misguided Jews thought he was the Messiah who is awaited by them, so that some of their leaders joined him and accepted his religion while forsaking that of Moses, who saw God.⁹³¹

Theophanes goes in to describe how these Jewish converts, on seeing Muhammad eating camel meat (presumably something forbidden to their Messiah), realised that they were in error but, 'being afraid to abjure his religion, those wretched men taught him taught him illicit things directed against us, Christians, and remained with him.'⁹³² This concept of Muhammad producing the *Qur'ān* under Jewish instruction obviously fed into the anti-Semitic concepts already present in Christian discourse.

Theophanes develops his version of Muhammad's career, stating that from a beginning as 'destitute and an orphan' he went on to enter the service of a rich widow, named as 'Chadiga' (Khadija), with whom 'he became bolder and ingratiated himself', until he eventually marries her and 'gained possession of her camels and her substance.'⁹³³ This depiction of Muhammad as a calculating and mercenary figure, using marriage to satisfy

⁹³⁰ Norman Daniel refers to this version of the life of Muhammad as the 'Corozan' tradition; based on the section of the narrative which has Muhammad marrying the lady of Corozan (Khadija) and the subsequent part played by her in the inception of his prophetic career. See Daniel, Norman, *Islam and the West*, pp.30-1.

⁹³¹ Ibid., p.464.

⁹³² Ibid., p.464.

⁹³³ Ibid., p.464.

both his dynastic ambitions and his concupiscent nature, would also form a central theme in the depictions of Muhammad throughout the history and would be linked with readings of the matrimonial laws of Islam and the nature of the Islamic heaven to produce an image of Muslims in general as sensualistic and worldly. Theophanes goes on to reiterate his view of Muhammad as tutored by ‘heretics’ of other faiths and of the *Qur’ān* as a synthesis of the teaching of other faiths, specifically Christianity and Judaism, when he describes how on trading missions to Palestine Muhammad, ‘consorted with Jews and Christians and sought from them certain scriptural matters.’⁹³⁴

This concept of the *Qur’ān* as a *bricolage* of Biblical, Midrashic and pagan material would be a central theme in the interpretation of Islam in Christian theology and indeed a whole mythology regarding the heretical Jewish and Christian ‘tutors’ of Muhammad, particularly featuring the figure of the heretical Nestorian monk ‘Sergius.’ The concept would develop over the subsequent centuries and would be repeated in a plurality of texts, proving remarkably resistant to emendation or refutation in the light of new information.

The account of Theophanes goes on to introduce the figure of the Christian monk, commenting that Muhammad was ‘afflicted with epilepsy’ and that his wife ‘was greatly distressed, inasmuch as she, a noblewoman, had married a man such as he, who was not only poor, but also an epileptic.’⁹³⁵ He then describes how Muhammad ‘tried deceitfully to placate her’ by relating to his wife how ‘I keep seeing a vision of a certain angel called Gabriel, and being unable to bear this sign, I faint and fall down’; the story of this

⁹³⁴ *Chronographia*, p.464.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.464.

deceptive use of his epilepsy would remain a consistently restated element in relating the pseudo-prophethood of Muhammad in Christian texts into the early modern period and beyond. The actions of his wife in contacting ‘a certain monk ... a friend of hers’, who Theophanes describes as having been ‘exiled for his depraved doctrine’, would also form a central feature of the polemic biographies and the monk’s confirmation of Muhammad’s prophethood would, in different forms, also be a consistent theme in these texts.

Theophanes ends by describing the violent nature of the teachings produced by Muhammad, whom he describes as teaching his ‘subjects’ that ‘he who kills an enemy or is killed by an enemy goes to Paradise’⁹³⁶; this understanding of Islam as a religion of violence also continued to be a dominant trope throughout the Medieval and early modern period, and indeed in the writings of Christian commentators on the religion and its adherents until the present day. The Paradise promised to the Islamic faithful is also briefly treated by Theophanes who describes Muhammad promising a paradise which was:

One of carnal eating and drinking and intercourse with women, and has a river of wine, honey and milk, and that the women were not like the ones down here, but different ones, and that the intercourse was long-lasting and the pleasure continuous; and other things full of profligacy and stupidity.⁹³⁷

The Christian reaction to the Islamic concept of heaven would also form a vital hermeneutic tool in representation of Islamic cultures and in constructing ideas of

⁹³⁶ *Chronographia*, p.465.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.465.

Muslim sexual behaviour. Theophanes ends his description of Islamic belief with a note that Muhammad also instructed that 'men should feel sympathy for one another and help those that are wronged', but chooses to make no comment on this aspect of Islam. In this early Byzantine polemic against Islam are found all the categories which would form the central focus of Western polemic against Muhammad and Islam in general over the centuries to come, including those of early modern Britain, and which will, consequently, form the structure of the rest of this section: race and religion, deception, sexuality and violence. Each of the next sections will examine one of these aspects of Western representations of Muhammad and of subsequent Islamic cultures and figures, including that of the Ottoman Turks, which was foremost in the minds of early modern Christian commentators.

Jahiliyah

Indeed, the accusation that the *Qur'ān* was little more than a composite text, a *bricolage* of earlier scriptural materials which Muhammad had developed through the tutelage and connivance of Jews and heretical Christians seems to have been levelled at the holy book of Islam from the time of its initial recitation, the period known as the *Jahiliyah* in Islamic history. Certain suras of the *Qur'ān*, which speak out against unbelievers, the contemporaries of Muhammad who rejected the faith, hold in their castigation of these groups echoes of their objections and so show, at the very inception of Islam, the appearance of criticisms of Muhammad and the nature of his revelation which would persist throughout the history of Christian approaches to Islam. In Sura 16 (*Al-Nahl*) The

Bee) there is a description of the reactions of the unbelievers to the content of the Qur'ānic revelations:

And if it is said unto them: "What has your Lord revealed?" they say: "Fables of the ancients."

So let them on the Day of Resurrection bear in full their burdens of the ignorant whom they lead astray. How evil is that which they shall bear! (16:24-5)

This accusation that the *Qur'ān* is little more than a redaction or restatement of pre-existing scriptural material is repeated in Sura 25 (*Al-Furqan*/The Criterion), where it is augmented by the accusation that Muhammad was assisted in the production of his revelations:

The unbelievers say: "This is nothing but deceit, which he has invented and was assisted therein by other people [footnote: 'the Jews']. They have simply come up with wrongdoing and falsehood."

And they say: "Legends of the ancients which he solicited their writing down. Hence they are dictated to him morning and evening." (25:4-5)

Here, in the *Qur'ān* itself, is evidence that one of the principal criticisms of the *Qur'ān* and its revelation throughout the history of Christian commentary on Islam, that of the borrowing of scriptural sources and of the collaboration or even authorship of Jewish (or often heretical Christian) associates of Muhammad, began during the prophetic career of Muhammad. It is not difficult either to see why such an accusation was made, and indeed continued to be made. The *Qur'ān* contains many figures and narratives which would have been familiar to Christians and Jews from their own scriptures, and presumably to pagans who had encountered these stories through their contacts with them; narratives

featuring Adam and Eve, Moses, Abraham, Jonah, Jacob, David, Gabriel, Lot, Noah and Jesus are all included in the *Qur'ān* and so the view of the revelations of the new religion as 'Legends of the Ancients', a restatement of pre-existing scriptural material, is, however offensive the idea may be to Muslims, certainly not surprising. Indeed, it is difficult to see how Jews and Christians could have viewed the inclusion of these narratives in any other way.

Appendix II

Ishmaelites and Saracens: The Interpretation of the Line of Muhammad

Ishmaelite, one descended from Ismael (son to Abraham by his wife Agar) of whom it was foretold before his birth, *hic erit feras homo, manus ejus contra omnes; & manus omnium contra eum*, Gen. 16⁹³⁸. One like to Ismael in conditions and manners.⁹³⁹

Although the term ‘Ishmaelite’ is never used by Muslims themselves, who use only the term *muslimun* (‘believer’ or, more literally, ‘one who submits’ to God) to describe themselves collectively, Muslims certainly see themselves as followers of the religion of Abraham and his son Ishmael (Ismael in Islam) who are seen as having established monotheistic worship at the Kaba in Mecca. The *sirat* tradition also traces Muhammad’s lineage back to Abraham and Ishamel.

In Muslim tradition it is also Ishmael, rather than Isaac, as in the Old Testament version, whom Abraham is asked by God to sacrifice. In his discussion of the use of these terms in the work of John of Damascus, Daniel Sahas refers to the term ‘Ishamelite’ in the sense of a descendant religiously and genealogically of Ishmael, as a term ‘fully acceptable to

⁹³⁸ And he shall be as a wild ass among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him’ (Genesis XVI, 12).

⁹³⁹ Thomas Blount, *Glossographia, or, A dictionary interpreting all such hard words of whatsoever language now used in our refined English tongue with etymologies, definitions and historical observations on the same : also the terms of divinity, law, physick, mathematicks and other arts and sciences explicated* (London: Thomas Newcomb, 1656).

the Muslims.’⁹⁴⁰ The exegetical status of Ishmael is highlighted by R.W. Southern in his *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* during a discussion of the Venerable Bede’s writings on the ‘Saracens’. In describing the lineage of the Saracens, who as Southern points out had just become ‘a matter of European concern’⁹⁴¹ during the lifetime of Bede, the great English exegete named them as the descendants of Hagar, the Egyptian maid of Abraham’s wife Sarah, and mother of Ishmael.

The term ‘Hagarene’ derived from the mother of Ishmael, the bondwoman Hagar and, as Sahas points out, this became a common term for Muslims among Byzantine authors.⁹⁴² Southern describes the status of Abraham’s sons Isaac and Ishmael in Christian symbolism; whereas Isaac, the son of a freewoman, prefigures Christ, Ishmael and his descendants represent the Jews. As Southern points out, this was the ‘allegorical meaning of the events described in Genesis. But *literally* the actual descendants of Ishmael were held to be the Saracens’⁹⁴³: this is explained by the story in which Ishmael had been driven into the desert and was ‘a wild man whose hand was against every man’s,’ a status which fitted neatly with the Western view of the ‘Saracens’. As Norman Daniel points out, the polemic association of Ishmael with Islam was made by William of Auvergne, in being seen to fulfil the prophecy of God contained in Genesis XXI, 13 that ‘also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation’ and from Genesis XVI, 12, as commented on by William of Tripoli, that Ishmael, and by implication his descendants, would be ‘as a wild-

⁹⁴⁰ Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: the ‘Heresy of the Ishmaelites’* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), p.70.

⁹⁴¹ R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.16.

⁹⁴² Sahas, *op.cit.*, p.70.

⁹⁴³ Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, p.17.

ass among men; his hand shall be against every man.'⁹⁴⁴ As Daniel comments, this association, by logical extension, 'imputed the lawlessness of the desert nomad to the whole people of Islam.'⁹⁴⁵

The construction of cultural/racial identity on the basis of biblical exegesis was neither an isolated example, nor a practice which was to die out in the early modern period.⁹⁴⁶

Although, as Southern points out, Bede was not the first Christian commentator to make the identification between the Arabs and Ishmael, he does credit him with introducing it into the medieval tradition of exegesis and comments that 'after his day it was a commonplace of Western scholarship.'⁹⁴⁷

In this way the descent from Ishmael came to signify very different things for Christian and Islamic commentators, with its positive associations for the Muslims being counterbalanced by its association with the outcast Ishmael and even of reinforcing the linking of Islam with Judaism within Christian thought; a link already made through rites such as circumcision and the abstinence from pork and reinforced through the polemic biographies through the attributing of partly Jewish parentage to Muhammad himself. These associations evidently survived into the early modern period quite naturally as part of the exegetic inheritance of commentators on Islam and on Muhammad, forming a

⁹⁴⁴ Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp.100-101.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.101. All Biblical quotes are from *the Holy Bible* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1948).

⁹⁴⁶ For example, the medieval theory of the Noachic descent, the descent of races from Ham, Shem and Japhet, the sons of Noah, remained in use during the early modern period. See: Benjamin Braude, 'The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 54, No.1 (Jan. 1997), pp.103-142.

⁹⁴⁷ Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, p.17.

powerful background to the interpretation of Islam, its cultures and of the figure of the prophet himself.

The transference of the term 'Ishmaelite' to the Turks during the early modern period can be seen in the 'Epistle' of Peter Ashtons's translation of Paolo Giovio's *Turcicarum rerum commentarius* entitled *A shorte trEastise upon the Turkes chronicles* (1546).

Ashton refers to the Turks as 'a scourge to whip us for our synnes,' calling them 'the wicked and cursed seed of Hishmael.'⁹⁴⁸ The use of a link between Ishamel and the Turks in the context of inspiring Holy War, can be clearly seen in the first book of Edward Fairfax's *Godfrey of Boulogne: or The recouerie of Ierusalem* (pr.1600), a translation of Torquato Tasso's *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (c.1580), where the text exhorts the 'Christian Princes':

To win faire Greece out of the tyrant's hands
And those usurping Ismaelites deprive
Of woeful Thrace, which now captive stands,
You must from realms and seas the Turkes forth drive,
As Godfrey chased them from Iudais lands

(Book 1, Canto 5, ll.32-8)⁹⁴⁹

The use of the analogy between the original 'Ishmaelites' and the Turks to collapse the temporal space between the era of the Crusades and the early modern period

⁹⁴⁸ John Ashton, *A shorte treatise upon the Turkes chronicles*, (London: Edwarde Whitcurche, 1546), No age number in text.

⁹⁴⁹ Toquato Tasso, Edward Fairfax (trans.) *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or The recouerie of Ierusalem. Done into English heroicall verse, by Edward Fairefax Gent* (London: Ar. Hatfield, for I. Iaggard and M. Lownes, 1600), Sig. B2. For a modern edition of this text see: Lea, Katherine M. and Gang (eds), *Godfrey of Bulloigne : a critical edition of Edward Fairfax's translation of Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata, together with Fairfax's original poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). This was one of the favourite poems of James I.

demonstrates the continued polemic use of exegetical formula in approaching Islam, especially in the area of military conflict, and also demonstrates the transference of the attributes of the medieval Islamic 'other', the Arabs, to the contemporary Islamic enemy the Turks.

Appendix III

Martin Luther's *On War Against the Turk (Vom Krieg wider die Türken, 1529)*

Luther begins his analysis of Islam in *On War Against the Turk* with an attack on Muhammad's syncretism and misuse of Christian material, which was frequently seen as a central feature of the deceptive nature of the instigation of Islam. He opens by drawing attention to Muhammad's praise of 'Christ and Mary as being the only ones without sin', but then goes on to highlight the Muslim denial of Christ's divinity and of Muslims believing of Christ 'nothing more [...] than he is a holy prophet.'⁹⁵⁰ In this premise, which Luther calls the 'chief doctrine of the Turkish faith', *locus* of the most fundamental theological rift (that of the denial of the incarnation) between Islam and Christianity identified in any of the texts of the medieval or early modern periods, are contained, Luther concludes, 'all abominations, all errors, all devils [...] piled up in one heap.'⁹⁵¹ Here Luther identifies Islam as 'a patchwork of Jewish, Christian, and heathen beliefs',⁹⁵² a classic statement of Islamic syncretism and from this draws the conclusion that Islam is a religion of lies and that lying and deception, of 'wiles', with which 'they [the Turks] put wicked and dangerous examples before men's eyes every day and draw men to them'.⁹⁵³ This use of a syncretic 'patchwork' of beliefs, along with a series of false miracles, by Muhammad in order to attract converts and spread his faith will be examined in detail later, when the role of Muhammad's collaborators, in particular the entirely fictional Christian heretic Sergius will be examined in detail, as will the perception in early

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.176.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., p.177.

⁹⁵² Ibid., p.177.

⁹⁵³ Ibid., p.175.

modern texts of the primarility political purpose of Muhammad in utilising such deceptions.

Luther then expounds on the second category which he identifies as essential to Muslim nature and law: the use of force, which he sees as growing directly out of the deceptive nature of Muhammad's teaching and from the satanic roots of these ideas. Luther begins by stating that:

The Turks's Koran or creed teaches him to destroy not only the Chrisian faith, but also the whole temporal government. His Mohammed, as has been said, commands that ruling is to be done by the sword, and in his Koran the sword is the commonest and noblest work.⁹⁵⁴

He then goes on to describe 'the Turk' as 'really nothing but a murderer or a highwayman' and goes on to say that all empires have come into being through 'robbery, force and wrong', and gives the biblical example of 'the first prince on earth' Nimrod in Genesis 10: 9, who, he points out, was described as 'a mighty hunter.'⁹⁵⁵ Luther moves quickly from this general condemnation of the rulers of empires to a statement which makes violence a particular feature of the Turkish Empire and one which is rooted in their religion, describing how the 'robbing and murder, devouring and destroying' of the Turks 'is commanded in their law as a good and divine work; and they do this and think that they are doing God a service.'⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.178.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.178.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.178.

Here Luther draws one of the central distinctions perceived between the actions of Christian princes and the Turks: when Christians perform such actions they sin against the teachings of Christ, whereas in the case of the Turks their religion is not just supportive of such crimes, but is in fact causative. Luther then connects this to the providential role of the Turks whose government is 'not a godly, regular rulership, like others, for the maintainance of peace and the protection of the good and the punishment of the wicked,' here referring presumably to the ideal form of Christian government, but is rather 'a rod of anger and a punishment of God upon the unbelieving world.'⁹⁵⁷

Luther then locates the violence of Islam as central to its spread, stating that 'the Turkish faith [...] has not made its progress by preaching and the working of miracles, but by the sword and by murder' and this he once again reconnects to the idea of the spread of Islam as a product of 'God's wrath' which made God decide that 'since the world has a desire for the sword, robbery and murder, one should come [Muhammad and his successors] who would give it enough of murder and robbery.'⁹⁵⁸ This providential connection of the spread of Islam to the sins of Christians follows a homelitic tradition probably as old as the first Christian contacts with Islam, certainly at least as old as the First Crusade in

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.178. Luther also relates how this 'second' aspect of violence 'must follow' directly from the 'first' matter of the deception or 'wiles' of Muhammad, as inspired by the Devil. He paraphrases Christ's words in John 8:44 to the Pharisees that 'the devil is a liar and a murderer,' (Ibid., p.178) and argues that as the root of Muhammad's teaching was the devil, so murder must follow:

If he [the Devil] wins with a lie, he does not take a holiday and delay; he follows it up with a murder. This when the spirit of lies had taken possession of Mohammed, and the devil had murdered men's souls with his Koran and had destroyed the faith of Christians, he had to go on and take the sword and set about to murder their bodies. (Ibid. p.179)

Here it is possible to see the intimate connection, or interdependence, between the categories which defined Muslim behaviour to the Christian theologian and commentator, and their relation to the root idea of Muhammad as being inspired, or even possessed, by the devil or his analogue the 'spirit of lies.'

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.179.

1098. Luther demonstrates the Protestant reorientation of this tradition into the construction of Anti-Catholic polemic by turning the concept against ‘the most holy father, the pope’ who, along with his bishops have become ‘worldly lords’ who ‘led by the spirit of lies, have fallen away from the gospel and embraced their own human doctrine, and thus have committed murder down to the present hour.’⁹⁵⁹

Luther exhorts his readers to ‘read the histories’ where he avers that they will find that:

The principal business of popes and bishops has been to set emperors, kings, princes, lands, and people against one another, and they themselves have fought and helped in the work of murder and bloodshed.⁹⁶⁰

The paralleling of the ‘Turk’ with the pope, which would become such a central feature of early modern Protestant polemic and construction of cultural identity, is cemented by this link with ‘the spirit of lies’ through which the devil, in the case of both Muslims and Catholics, is shown, ‘once he has made his disciples the teachers of lies and deceivers,’ to carry on to the logical conclusion (for Luther and later his Protestant inheritors) of having ‘no rest until he makes them murderers, robbers and bloodhounds.’⁹⁶¹

Luther then brings up the Antichrist, a pivotal figure of Christian eschatology, and identifies the figure in a way which would become familiar in the Protestant polemic of the next centuries. Luther asserts that the pope had not only committed all the deceptions and violent crimes already mentioned but in doing so ‘persecutes the innocent, the pious,

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.179.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.181.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid., p.180.

the orthodox, as a true Antichrist.⁹⁶² The reason that Luther gives for the pope being the Antichrist instead of the ‘Turk’ is that ‘he does this while sitting in the temple of God [II Thess. 2:4], as the head of the church; the Turk does not do that.’⁹⁶³ Luther concludes this comparison by stating that ‘just as the pope is the Antichrist, so the Turk is the very devil incarnate,’⁹⁶⁴ a nice distinction, which accords the status of enemy of Christ, and so of all ‘true’ Christians, to both. This section ends with the statement that ‘The prayer of Christendom against both is that they shall go down to hell’, interestingly recasting ‘Christendom’ as the community of Protestant believers, and with the eschatological hope that ‘even though it may take the Last Day to send there; and I hope that day will not be far off,’⁹⁶⁵ giving the vision of eventual victory for the ‘true’ faith, even if it must be seized from the jaws of apocalypse.

Luther sums up what he has already said about the violence of the Turks with a recapitulation of the belief that ‘where the spirit of lies is, there also is the spirit of murder’ and reconnects this once again to Muhammad with a rhetorical question which states the inevitability of Turkish violence in the face of his teaching:

Since, then, Mohammed’s Koran is such a great spirit of lies that it leaves almost nothing of the Christian truth remaining, how could it have any other result than that it should become a high and mighty murderer, liar, and murderer under the appearance of truth and righteousness?⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶² Ibid., p.180.

⁹⁶³ Ibid., p.181.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.181.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.181.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.181.

Luther reiterates that the Turks, and by implication of course Catholics, can never be capable of ‘praiseworthy temporal government’ as ‘just as lies destroy the spiritual order of faith and truth, so murder destroys all temporal order which had been instituted by God’⁹⁶⁷; in other words, the following of both Islam and Catholicism has a deterministic effect on the behaviours and political formations of their adherents.

Finally, Luther goes on to outline the third category: that of deviant sexuality. Luther opens his ‘third point’ with the statement that ‘Mohammed’s Koran has no regard for marriage, but permits everyone to take wives as he will,’ and goes on to observe, that ‘It is customary among the Turks for one man to have ten or twenty wives and to desert or sell any whom he will,’ which in turn leads Luther to the conclusion that ‘in Turkey women are held immeasurably cheap and are despised; they are bought and sold like cattle.’⁹⁶⁸

This misreading and misrepresentation of Islamic rules on polytheism and marriage, based largely on the tranference of salacious Western observations of the Ottoman Sultans’ *harem*, the much-described ‘seraglio’ of the ‘Great Turk’, became a common component of representations of Islam and its cultures and also fed into a perception of Islam as a wordly and ‘fleshly’ or sensualistic faith. Luther contents himself with arguing ‘That kind of living cannot be marriage’ and employs a conventional reading of the

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.181.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.181.

reference in Genesis 2:24⁹⁶⁹ to man and wife becoming ‘one flesh’ as an exhortation to monogamy.⁹⁷⁰

Luther ends his catalogue of ‘Turkish’ practices by drawing the three aspects of deception, violence and sexuality together for his summing up in which he answers the idea that their ways may be ameliorated by the presence of Christians, both ‘monks and ‘honourable laymen’, living amongst the Turks. He states that again:

[...] what good can there be in the government and the whole Turkish way of life when according to their Koran these three things rule amongst them, namely lying, murder, and disregard of marriage [...] What could be a more horrible, dangerous, terrible imprisonment than life under such a government?⁹⁷¹

Of the Christians living amongst them he draws attention to their plight in not being able to speak up, as in the Islamic ‘Turkish’ society:

⁹⁶⁹ ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be as one flesh.’

⁹⁷⁰ Luther is, in fact, less febrile in his treatment of Islamic sexuality than many of his later followers would be; he ends this section of his definition of this aspect of Muslim behaviour with the observation that ‘Turks’ maintain the sort of marriage that best suits a martial people, as he states, not without irony, ‘the marriage of the Turks closely resembles the chaste life soldiers lead with their harlots; for the Turks are soldiers and must act like soldiers; Mars and Venus, say the poets, must be together.’ (Ibid., pp.181-2). Luther does not here go on to list at length, as other authors did before and after him, examples of the sensuality, sexual excesses and deviant sexuality of Muhammad and of subsequent Muslims; for instance there is no mention of the common accusations of homosexuality or adultery, found in so many other commentaries on Islam.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid., p.182.

Everyone must be silent about the Christian truth and dare not rebuke or reform these three points, but must look on and consent to them (as I fear), at least to the point of keeping silent.⁹⁷²

Here Luther shows the view of the other form of Islamic repression commonly represented by early modern and medieval commentators: the suppression of discussion of religion or of the application of reason to faith, which I will discuss at greater length in the section dedicated to violence. Luther concluded that such a life must be a ‘horrible, dangerous, terrible imprisonment’ and once again draws together the ‘three aspects’ of deceit, violence and aberrant sexuality:

As I said, lies destroy the spiritual estate; murder, the temporal; disregard of marriage, the estate of matrimony. Now if you take out of the world [...] true spiritual life, true temporal government, and true home life, what is left but the world, the flesh and the devil? It is like the life of “good fellows” who live with harlots.⁹⁷³

He also extends this to reply to the idea that among themselves the Turks are ‘faithful, friendly, and careful to tell the truth’, in other words the possibility that ‘good Turks’ might lessen the iniquities of their society. Luther quickly responds that:

[...] I believe that and I think that they probably have finer virtues in them than that. No man is so bad that there is not something good in him. Now and then a woman of the streets has more good qualities than do ten honourable matrons.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁷² Ibid., p.182.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., p.182.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.182.

He concludes that ‘The devil would have a cloak and be a handsome angel of light, so he hides behind certain works that are works of light’ and that ‘Murderers and robbers are more faithful and friendly to each other than neighbours are, even more so than many Christians.’⁹⁷⁵ Ultimately, in terms of the Turk’s ‘law’, Luther concludes that ‘if the devil keeps the three things – lies, murder, and disregard of marriage – as the real foundations of hell’ it is easy for him to tolerate ‘carnal love and faithfulness being built upon it.’⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid., p.182.

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.182.

Appendix IV

‘Falling Evil’: Epilepsy and the Feigning of Revelation

The ‘falling sickness’ or ‘falling evil’ had been closely related from early times with demonic possession and lunacy; the Byzantines, for example, related the *cadacus* closely with the *demoniacus* and the *lunaticus* and the significance of the attribution of the disease to Muhammad also, in all probability, had its beginnings in Byzantine polemic biographies such as that written by Theopanes Confessor.⁹⁷⁷ As Owsei Temkin observes, demonic possession was associated in the medieval and early modern periods with ‘periodic ecstasies, raptures, and prophetic trances comprehended vaguely under the name of possession,’⁹⁷⁸ and this made the symptoms of epilepsy fit the profile of a demonic possession. This viewing of epilepsy as the ‘sacred disease’, wherein the ‘victim is within the power of a supernatural being whose will he must obey’ or the ‘intrusion of a god, demon or ghost,’⁹⁷⁹ made its association with Muhammad a powerful tool in the discrediting of his revelation.

Temkin, in his discussion of specifically Christian approaches to epilepsy, also draws attention to the dual causes proposed by the mystic and scientific writer Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), who suggested that epilepsy might be caused either by wrath or by the unstable or easy morals of the subject, either of which, she suggests, allowed the devil

⁹⁷⁷ For a detailed history of the perception of epilepsy throughout the ages see: Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness: a History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology* (London: John Hopkins Press, 1971).

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.86.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

to exert influence while the body was off-balance.⁹⁸⁰ Both of these weaknesses are repeatedly given as aspects of Muhammad's character in the polemic biographies, and in some of the texts the link between Muhammad's profligacy and his epilepsy is explicitly made. In the translation of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*, in a passage explaining why Muhammad 'commaunded abstinence of wine and fleshe, that he might ye more easlye cloake his disease,'⁹⁸¹ the text goes on to explain that:

[...] wyne taken more excessiue and intemperantly in stopping the passages of the brayne, yt no respiracion may be had, doth breede & norishe the fallynge sickenes, and swynes fleshe maketh grosse humors wherewith obstruction of the brayne commeth quickely, and manye other diseases springethe thereof.⁹⁸²

This survival of the medieval idea, and its direct application to the life of Muhammad, is repeated in Joseph Wybarne's *New Age of Old Names*, where Muhammad is described 'by drunkenness (as it is thought) falling into the falling-sickenes,'⁹⁸³ again linking the epilepsy of Muhammad to a dissolute life.

Temkin shows how the demonic nature of epilepsy is also depicted by Dante in the *Inferno* where it is suggested that, 'E qual e' quel che cade, e non sa como/ Per forza de demone ch'a terra il tira' [And as he is who falls, and knows not how, By force of demons who to earth down drag him] (*Inferno*, 24, 112-3).⁹⁸⁴ This idea was undoubtedly strong in both educated and folkloric traditions and so its inclusion in the polemic

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid., p.97.

⁹⁸¹ Sebastian Münster, *A Brief collection*, Fol.65.

⁹⁸² Ibid., Fol.65.

⁹⁸³ Joseph Wybarne, *The New Age of Old Names*, p.94.

⁹⁸⁴ Temkin, *The Falling Sickness*, p.98.

biographies of Muhammad would have had significant power. Temkin also highlights the way in which doctors in the early modern period saw the incidence of epileptic prophets as being particularly ‘common among the Arabs’⁹⁸⁵ and describes the role of possession, in this case by *jinn*, in the prediction of the Arab *kāhin* (pre-Islamic soothsayers) and in the poetic output of the *shā‘ir* (pre-Islamic poets), a form of possession could also be seen as causing madness and epilepsy.

A comparison between the work of the *kāhin* and the *shā‘ir* was provoked by the metrical nature of the *Qur‘ān*, from the time of the revelation of the first *suras*. Temkin draws attention to the work of the Arabic author Alī b. Rabban at-Tabarī (c.850) who mentions ‘the diviner’s disease’ as a synonym for epilepsy, beginning his discussion of brain diseases with the falling sickness (*sar‘un*), which he ‘expressly identified with epilepsy’, remarking that ‘the people [...] call it the deviner’s disease, because some of them prophesy and have visions of wonderful things.’⁹⁸⁶ This connection between the hallucinations of certain epileptics, Temkin suggests ‘temporal lobe epilepsy’, is therefore compared to the visions of the *kāhin*. Temkin uses this connection to investigate whether the accusation of epilepsy levelled at Muhammad was a later invention or whether it could have been contemporary with the revelation of the *Qur‘ān*.

Obviously the accusation has no root in the *hadith* or the *sīra*, but Temkin points to the descriptions of the state Muhammad is said to have entered on receiving revelations, including the passage where his wife ‘Ā’isha describes him receiving a revelation:

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.150.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.151.

And, by God, the apostle [Muhammad] had not moved from where he was sitting when there came over him from God what used to come over him and he was wrapped in his garment and a leather cushion was put under his head ... Then the apostle recovered and sat up and there fell from him as it were drops of water on a winter's day.⁹⁸⁷

Temkin points out that evidence of Muhammad entering an 'abnormal condition' while receiving revelations was read by believers as 'signs of Muhammad's truly prophetic status.' It can easily be seen how in the construction of polemic by writers opposed to the prophetic nature of Muhammad such details could readily be employed for another purpose, including the attribution of epilepsy with all its attendant associations. Temkin also points out that in other places in the *sīrat* various insults are applied to Muhammad, some of which persist in the polemic biographies, including the 'foolish men who called him a liar ... and accused him of being a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and of being possessed',⁹⁸⁸ but that no mention is made of the 'falling sickness'; in fact, at another point of the *sīrat* an enemy of Muhammad is recording as saying that in his prophetic state he had seen 'no choking, spasmodic movements and whispering',⁹⁸⁹ again militating against a reading of epilepsy. Yet whatever the provenance of the idea of an epileptic Muhammad, which H. R. Gibbon dismissed as 'an absurd calumny of the Greeks',⁹⁹⁰ its place as a feature of the polemic biographies remained a central element of the narrative in both medieval and early modern texts.

⁹⁸⁷ Ibn Ishaq, A. Guillame (trans.), *the Life of Muhammad (Sīrat Rasul Allah)* (Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.497.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.130.

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.121.

⁹⁹⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p.154.

Appendix V

The Religious Identity of Tamburlaine in Marlowe's Sources

The fixing of Tamburlaine's religious identity in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays can be seen to be, to a certain extent, a product of the possible sources from which Marlowe is thought to have constructed his play. Although in the confrontation with the explicitly Muslim Turkish Sultan Bajazet in Part I it is dramatically convenient to efface Tamburlaine's religion, channeling his identity as 'Scourge of God' into that of scourge of Islam, or as Paul Whitfield White terms it, 'the scourge of the scourge,'⁹⁹¹ a feature of other texts dealing with the figure of Tamburlaine; in fact, in eventually allowing Tamburlaine to be identified as a Muslim (even though he rejects the faith shortly afterwards) Marlowe goes further than many earlier works. In the collection of source material for *Tamburlaine* found in Vivian Thomas and William Tydeman's *Christopher Marlowe: the plays and their sources* there seems to be a conspicuous absence of reference to the actual religious affiliation of the 'Scourge of God', and little to indicate that it is in the name of Islam that he conquers. In the introduction to the anthology of sources, the tale of Tamburlaine is described by Thomas and Tydeman as being 'embedded in the consciousness' of Europeans, with as many as one hundred treatments in existence in a variety of languages⁹⁹². The story of Timur the Lame (Persian *Timur-i-Lang*, Turkish *Timur Lank*) and his leadership of a conquering steppe army from 1336-1405 seemed to owe its popularity, in the Christian West at least, mainly to his defeat of various Islamic foes, but most notably the defeat at Angora (Ankara) in 1402 of Bajazet

⁹⁹¹ Paul Whitfield White, 'Marlowe and the Politics of Religion' in Patrick Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.71.

⁹⁹² Vivian Thomas and William Tydeman (eds.), *Christopher Marlowe: the plays and their sources* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.70.

II, the Ottoman Sultan known by his own people as *Yildirim* (the ‘Thunderbolt’). Bajazet had earned his nickname as a successfully expansionist *ghazi* (holy warrior) Sultan, who included amongst his successes the invasion of Serbia and Hungary in 1390 and of Bulgaria and Wallachia in 1393. Yet the religious identity of Tamburlaine himself emerges as a far more confused matter in these accounts.

From Thomas Fortesque’s *The Forest Collection of Histories* (1571) Marlowe could have derived the idea that ‘cruel kings and bloody tyrants are the Ministers of God’, but would have found no other reference to Tamburlaine’s own faith, only learning that ‘incarnate devils’ such as the Scythian were ‘instruments wherewith God chastiseth sin’⁹⁹³.

Interestingly, of course, the designation of ‘Scourge of God’ was one frequently applied to the Turks during the early modern period. The Second Edition of John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (1570) is also another of the possible sources for *Tamburlaine* which, while describing Tamburlaine as the instrument of ‘the providence of God’⁹⁹⁴ in resisting the advance of the Turks in the section on the life of Bajazet, does not specify Tamburlaine’s own religion. Fortesque goes on to describe Tamburlaine as man who ‘from his cradle and infancy ... was vowed to Mars and martial affairs only’⁹⁹⁵, giving only a metaphorical association with the Roman god of war. In George Whetstone’s *The English Mirror* there is only mention of Tamburlaine’s conquest of Persia as being an act by which he freed by ‘industry and dexterity in arms his country from the servitude of the Saracens and the Kings of Persia’⁹⁹⁶, again casting Tamburlaine almost as a form of *naturaliter* Crusader. Whetstone also cites a statement by Tamburlaine to some Genoan

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁹⁹⁴ Foxe, p.28.

⁹⁹⁵ Thomas and Tydeman, p.84.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.93.

traders where he warns them, 'thou supposest that I am a man, but thou art deceived, for I am none other then the ire of God, and the destruction of the world,'⁹⁹⁷ so providing a possible source for the almost semi-divine self-image of Tamburlaine in Marlowe's play, but giving no clue as to which god is being invoked.

It is in Laonius Chalcondyles *De origine rebus gestis Turcorum* (trans. Conrad Clauserus 1556) and Petrus Perondinus *Magni Tamerlanis*, two of the Latin sources available to Marlowe, that some statements of Tamburlaine's Islamic identity are given. In Chalcondyles there is a description of Tamburlaine's wife as being 'very superstitious with regard to important matters'⁹⁹⁸ and the work goes on to describe how:

She would not allow Timur to take the offensive against Bajazet, a praiseworthy man who had fought with great glory against the Christian faith in defence of the religion of Mohammad.⁹⁹⁹

Here Tamburlaine's wife is seen as encouraging her husband to appreciate the efforts of Bajazet as a *ghazi*, and the piece goes on to describe how in her opinion Bajazet 'had not deserved to suffer harm at the hands of those who support the same religion'. She goes on to say how she would 'not consider it right to make war on this man who battles on behalf of our god against the Greeks [i.e the Christians of the Byzantine Empire]'¹⁰⁰⁰. Obviously if Marlowe did examine this work he chose to ignore these wifely objections, as no such speeches are given to Zenocrate, even though she is the only member of Tamburlaine's camp identified with Islam in Part I, through her own swearing by 'might

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.95.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.143.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.143.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid., p.143.

Jove and holy Mahomet' (I, 5.1, 362) and also through her status as daughter to the Sultan of Egypt, who clearly indicated his faith by observing of Tamburlaine that 'Mighty hath God and Mahomet made thy hand' (I, 5.1, 478). No other followers of Tamburlaine are seen to object to attacking a Muslim enemy, and certainly the 'Scourge of God' himself has no qualms at any point about assaulting coreligionists, not that in Part 1 there is any indication that he and Bajazet are such.

Petrus Perondinus' *Magni Tamerlani* (1553) again repeats the idea of Tamurlaine as 'the Wrath of the greatest God and Disaster and Death to a depraved world'¹⁰⁰¹, but actually contains in a section entitled 'Of the religion which engaged his mind'¹⁰⁰². The analysis does not seem to open with much hope, starting as it does with the question, 'Who could possibly maintain that instances of religious sentiment could be drawn from the profane and impious mind of a Tamurlan?' and continues giving instances which the author seems to think would militate against the possibility of Tamburlaine following any religious code, being a man who:

Destroyed the former Sultanate of Persia and so monstrously ravages everything to the south and West in inexorable savagery, who burnt cities and towns wherever they might be.¹⁰⁰³

Yet despite these examples, which a brief perusal of the behavior of Christian armies throughout history would have shown to be not incommensurate with 'religious sentiment', the author still concludes that Tamburlaine was 'nevertheless touched by a

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid., p.117.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., p.119.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., p.119.

sense of religion or perhaps rather was inspired by some secret power (which I consider to be the same)¹⁰⁰⁴. The evidence given for Tamburlaine's possession of religious sentiments by Perondinus is that 'he always spared Muslim mosques, which can be seen this day to be the most beautiful of buildings'; here is a statement which, however circuitously, connects Tamburlaine with the religion of Islam, and is also contrary to the actions of Marlowe's Tamburlaine at the end of Part II when he embarks on his destruction of Muslim materials. This identification with Islam is made ambiguous once more by Perondinus' reference, in a section titled 'Of other works that he did'¹⁰⁰⁵, to Tamurlaine's efforts in 'Marakanda' (Samarkand), which he tells the reader he 'devoted himself to providing ... new buildings, temples for the *gods*, all beautifully decorated [my emphasis]'¹⁰⁰⁶; here there is either an allusion to a polytheistic culture, or possibly an example of the ancient confusion regarding the monotheism of Islam, either of which would fit to some extent with the representation of Tamburlaine's religion in Marlowe's play. Of course the actual 'temples' built by Timur were mosques and they still stand in Samarkand to this day.

Although certainly not a direct source for Marlowe's play, it may have influenced some of the sources through the intangible web of translation, oral report and rumour, there is an interesting comment on the religious identity of Tamburlaine to be found in a late 14th century Arabic biography written by Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, who was the secretary to a ruler of Baghdad, presumably one of the *Aq Quyunlu* ('White sheep') dynasty who came before the Safavid Shahs, referred to as 'Sultan Ahmed' by the translator J.H.Sanders.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., p.119.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid., p.120.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., p.120.

Although Tamburlaine's sacking of Baghdad in 1401 would undoubtedly have secured him an infamous reputation in the city, this translated work nonetheless gives a fascinating insight into the religious status of Tamburlaine from an Islamic perspective.

The account of Ahmed Ibn Arabshah opens with a description of the allies which Tamburlaine gathered around him at the beginning of his career of conquest and described how he 'sought men like and equal to himself and neglected God, and collected Satanic companions,'¹⁰⁰⁷ the commentator eventually states that Tamburlaine has gathered 'forty men without resources or religion.'¹⁰⁰⁸ At this stage it seems that Tamburlaine is viewed as an atheistic, or even satanic, figure; as the history goes on to describe his rise it also seems to make clear that any association with religion was a matter of *realpolitik* for him. Tamburlaine is described as visiting a local religious and political figure called Shamsuddin Fakhira and tells of how when 'the Sheikh turned his eyes towards him, he at once kissed his hands and threw himself at his feet,'¹⁰⁰⁹ but the history makes clear that this is a politically motivated 'conversion' as it describes how the religious leaders 'assisted him with his prayers, by which they aided his desire' and how in carrying out these religious acts Tamburlaine 'acted the part of the fox.'¹⁰¹⁰ This use of religion in the pursuit of political advantage is also hinted at when the history speaks of how 'Tinur loved learned men, and admitted to his inner reception nobles of the family

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, J.H. Sanders (trans.), *Tamerlane or Timur the Great Amir* (London: Luzac & Co., 1936), p.2.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

of Mahomed,¹⁰¹¹ again suggesting that his was a move motivated by the usefulness of such people to his cause, rather than having its roots in any deep spirituality.

The most damning section of this history regarding the religious beliefs of Tamburlaine comes in the second volume, when the historian describes the nature of the 'law' by which he rules. The history states that Tamburlaine:

Clung to the laws of Jenghizkhan [Ghengis Khan], which are like branches of law from the faith of Islam, and he observed them in preference to the laws of Islam. This it is also with all the Jagatais, the people of Dasht, Cathay and Turkistan, all which infidels observe the laws of Jenghizkhan, on whom be the curse of Allah!¹⁰¹²

Interestingly this seems to establish a hybrid form of religious and legal identity for Tamburlaine. Included as he is here with other Asian Steppe peoples, he is seen to be guilty of allowing the laws of Ghengis Khan, from whom he claimed descent, to override Islamic belief. The history goes on to provide a list of Islamic *ulema* (religious authorities), described in the translated text as 'doctors and banners and leaders of Islam',¹⁰¹³ and states that they have, 'Given an answer to all, that Timur must be accounted an infidel and those also who prefer the laws of Jenghizkhan to the faith of Islam, and also for other reasons'; these 'other reasons' are not elucidated, but the message of the whole passage is clear: Tamburlaine is not considered a good Muslim, but rather an infidel, by this particular school of Islamic jurisprudence. Obviously this

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid., p.298.

¹⁰¹² Ibid., p.299.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid., p.299.

Arabic history could not have served as a source for Marlowe's play, although it is possibly that it may have had an influence on earlier Western texts in Tamburlaine tradition; yet it does demonstrate that even in the Islamic world there was some ambivalence regarding the religious identity of the figure of Tamburlaine.

Appendix VI

Francis Bacon's *An Advertisement Touching a Holy War*

In 1622 Francis Bacon, the Lord Chancellor of England and one of the country's foremost political and scientific thinkers, began work on *An Advertisement Touching a Holy War*, a text which Nabil Matar suggests was a direct reaction to the failed attack on Algeria in 1621 through which, regardless of the explicitly mercantile motivations for the English attack, 'Bacon sought to remind them that the true enemy of England and the rest of Christendom was the "Turk."' ¹⁰¹⁴ Matar suggests that:

The "Advertisement" was not an attempt by Bacon to seduce King James "with a fiction into a war of the Cross against the Crescent." It was a vindication of the unsuccessful attack on Algiers on the ground that the attack had been part of King James's holy war against the infidels... ¹⁰¹⁵

This is a very categorical interpretation of Bacon's work, the ultimate position of which on holy war is left ambiguous due it being incomplete at the time of his death and also due to its dialogic form, which had various characters debate the concept from a variety of religious and political positions. Matar suggests that the text 'urged the Protestants to wage a holy war against the Muslims in which they would either destroy the Muslims or convert them,' yet the only such explicit statements of the rectitude of holy war are put into the mouths of the Catholic 'Militar Man' and the 'Romish Catholic Zelant' Zebedaeus, the only Protestant figure included in the dialogue being Gamliel the

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid., p.152.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid., p.152.

‘Protestant Zelant’, who only speaks once in order to comment negatively on the expulsion of the Moors from Granada. The matters of whether to destroy Muslims or convert them are located within the text as questions posed by the moderate ‘Politique’ Eupolis, who along with the courtier Pollio present the philosophical and theological middle ground in the debate.

In his interpretative essay on the *Advertisement* to his edition of the work Lawrence Lampert suggests that the Bacon’s work seeks to ‘pit philosophy against religion with a view to bringing religion under philosophy’s control.’¹⁰¹⁶ The text sets the moderate positions of Eupolis and Pollio against the militant views of figures such Martius and Zebedaeus, who without analysis accept the rectitude of the holy war, Maritius’ assertions that there has been a ‘meanness in the design and enterprises of Christendom’¹⁰¹⁷ and that secular war is ‘not worthy of the warfare of Christians’ in the same way that ‘the propagation of the Faith by arms,’¹⁰¹⁸ an argument which is the reason that the debate that constitutes the *Advertisement* is initially instigated. The comments of Martius, including his praise of the Christian victory at Lepanto,¹⁰¹⁹ do seem to echo James’s views of holy war, including his assertion that ‘There is no such enterprise, at this day, for secular greatness and terrene honor, as a war upon the infidels’¹⁰²⁰ and that:

¹⁰¹⁶ Lawrence Lampert, ‘Interpretive Essay’ in: Francis Bacon, Lawrence Lampert (ed.), *An Advertisement Touching a Holy War* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 2000), p.41. All quotations from the text come from this edition.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., p.18.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., p.19.

¹⁰¹⁹ Martius also praises the actions of Sebastian of Portugal at Alcazar, which, as discussed above (pp.16-23) was a failure and the ‘brave incursions of Sigismund, the Trasnylvanian prince’ (p.20), a reference to the attack on Russia by Sigismund II of Poland in order to bring it under Catholic control (1610-12), an action hardly likely to be praiseworthy to a Protestant reader.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., p.21.

...a war upon the Turk is more worthy than upon any gentiles, infidels or savages, that either have been or now are, both in point of religion and in point of honor...¹⁰²¹

The timing of Bacon's text also seems to suggest that the attack on Algeria might be recuperated, in retrospect, as such a 'worthy' enterprise.

Yet ultimately Bacon's work remains ambiguous. In the essay 'Of Unity in Religion' (published in 1625 as part of his *Essays or Counsels Civil and Moral*) Bacon comments that there were 'two swords amongst Christians, the spiritual and moral,' going on to say that 'both have their due office and place in the maintenance of religion.'¹⁰²² However, he continues by observing that:

[...] we may not take up the third sword, which is Mahomet's sword, or like unto it; this is, to propagate religion by wars or by sanguinary persecutions to force consciences...¹⁰²³

This seems clearly to answer one of Eupolis's questions within the dialogue: namely whether it is right to 'enforce a new belief' in this way, or whether it is better simply to conquer the Turks with the 'temporal sword' allowing 'the spiritual to enter, by persuasion, instruction, and such means as are proper for souls and consciences.'¹⁰²⁴ A

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., p.24.

¹⁰²² Francis Bacon, Brian Vickers (ed.), 'Of Unity in Religion' in: *Francis Bacon, The Major Works, including 'New Atlantis' and 'Essays'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.346.

¹⁰²³ Ibid., p.346. He gives the political exceptions of 'cases of overt scandal, blasphemy or intermixture of practice against the state' (p.346).

¹⁰²⁴ Bacon, *Advertisement*, p.28.

comment by Pollio on the problematic nature of the concept of holy war given the division of Christendom also raises questions about Bacon's position. Pollio comments that 'except you could bray Christendom in a mortar, and mould it into a new paste, there is no possibility of a Holy War', and goes on to state that 'I was ever of the opinion, that the Philosopher's Stone, and a Holy War, were but the *rendez-vous* of cracked brains, that wore their feather in their head instead of their hat.'¹⁰²⁵ The idea of moulding Christendom into a new unity seems to echo James's self-appointed role as *Rex Pacificus* in the context of European division, yet the comment on holy war as the '*rendez-vous* of cracked brains,' delivered as it is by the respected and moderate figure of Pollio, seems to present a definite possibility of Bacon's text being interpreted as something other than the call for a Protestant holy war identified by Matar.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid., p.26.

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