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'For few mean ill in vaine': Roxolana and the clash of passion and politics in the Ottoman Court in Fulke Greville's The Tragedy of Mustapha *(1609) and Roger Boyle's* The Tragedy of Mustapha *(1665)*

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INTRODUCTION: REFRAMING WESTERN CONCEPTIONS OF TURKISH LAW AND DUTY IN GREVILLE'S *MUSTAPHA* (1609) AND BOYLE'S *MUSTAPHA* (1665)

Through an examination of the intersections between gender studies and Orientalism,[1] this article will explore how Fulke Greville's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1609) and Roger Boyle's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1665) depict Roxolana, a Turkish concubine turned Sultana, as transgressing the traditional representation of the lustful Turk as unsuccessful ruler. Critical interest has focused upon the ways in which Roxolana went against the traditional Ottoman hierarchy and rose from concubine to the position of Sultana. More specifically, literary critics have explored how she—amongst other Turkish characters—was 'Othered' for doing so in Greville's 'Turk' plays via his experimentation with the tragic form.[2] The publication of Greville's and Boyle's plays—and specifically their depiction of Roxolana's complexity as a woman negotiating her near-Machiavellian political circumstances—contributes to a collective shift in the literature of the period because the representation of the Ottoman Turkish monarch is complicated further by gender politics as opposed to centralising religious issues, which this article will seek to unpick. This is an aspect which has been largely glossed over within current critical discourses, which even sources such as Katrin Röder's 'Intercultural 'Traffique'

[1] See Lamiya Almas, 'The Women of the Early Modern Turk and Moor Plays', unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2009; Ania Loomba, 'Introduction: Race and Colonialism in the Study of Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002); Edward Said, *Orientalism.* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978); Nevsal O. Tiryakioglu, 'The Western image of Turks from the Middle Ages to the 21st century: the myth of "terrible Turk" and "lustful Turk"', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Nottingham Trent University, 2015.

[2] See Katrin Röder, 'Ottoman Kingship and Resistance Against Tyranny in Fulke Greville's Mustapha', in *Fulke Greville and the Culture of the English Renaissance*, edited by Russ Leo, Katrin Röder and Freya Sierhuis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 245–59; Russ Leo, '"Natures freedom", the Art of Sovereignty and Mustapha's Tragic Insolubility', *in Fulke Greville and the Culture of the English Renaissance*, 74–98.

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in Fulke Greville's *Mustapha*' do not fully acknowledge (despite its very useful analysis of Greville's clever appropriation of his source material to express tolerance for Islamic political practices).[3] Greville, according to Lamiya Almas, emphasises the nuances of his Roxolana's (spelt as the variant Rossa) nature because she plots to murder the Sultan's eldest son, Mustapha, (her stepson) so that his younger brother, Zanger, (her son with the Sultan) could become heir to the throne. Thus, Rossa's compassion for her own son and her scheming against her stepson as a result are opposing internal forces at play in Greville's account. Her gender as ruler may have been, according to Greville, a 'disruptive force' that created 'unstable power relations between husbands and wives, parents and children'.[4]

By contrast, Boyle was writing in the year 1665, at 'a time of political recovery in England just five years since the restoration of Charles the II' and the Dutch war had recently begun.[5] Therefore, his Roxolana functioned as a comment upon the current political climate too. Boyle's depiction of Roxolana is that of 'a prognosticator who plays an admirable and gracious political and maternal role in trying to save the Queen of Hungary and her infant son'.[6] Boyle could be offering comment here on the political turmoil that the restoration brought about in England, given that the country was more stable in a religious and political sense under the rule of Elizabeth I. Boyle's Roxolana may have been a reminder for his audience of the power and compassion that the female monarch can have. As far as Roxolana as the 'turned Turk' is concerned, both versions of *Mustapha* are suited to 'represent explorations and experiences [...such as] building alliances and carrying out negotiations between friend and foe'.[7]

Through invoking a sense of intrigue by staging exotic, splendorous settings of seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkey (such as the Topkapi Palace and the Sultan's harem), many English dramatists of the period also managed to evoke a sense of anxiety, which was centred on the threat of a new set of crusades, from their audiences. Alongside these foreign settings came cultural and religious behaviours and tendencies unfamiliar to most English Christians unless they had travelled through Turkey or neighbouring countries like Persia. These behaviours as they were depicted on stage were often vastly misunderstood by English dramatists as mindless Ottoman violence, as opposed to behaviours outlined and expected by Ottoman legal and judicial systems. As a result of maligning the stage Turk as violent, politically corrupt, and overcome by lustful passions, the English were able to communicate the message that this group of individuals was 'Other' to themselves in every possible way.

[3] Katrin Röder, 'Intercultural 'Traffique' in Fulke Greville's Mustapha', *Literature Compass* 11, 8 (2014): 560–572.

[4] Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 137.

[5] Almas, 'The Women', 144.

[6] Almas, 'The Women', 145.

[7] Almas, 'The Women', 151.

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However, it seems that this was not the agenda favoured by all dramatists of the period. Instead of solely maligning the Turk as their contemporaries did, Greville and Boyle depicted the more realistic nuances (according to the absence of fabricated Anglo-Ottoman conflicts since the end of the Crusading period) between common behaviours and values attributed to both Turks and Christians alike. By illuminating—and, as a result, partially dismantling—the misconception that the 'villainous Turkish Muslim' and 'virtuous English Christian' are polar opposites with regard to their beliefs and values, this group of dramatists, very interestingly, exposed the more realistic discrepancies between Eastern and Western schools of thought. If we are to consult existing studies, such as Akalin's analysis of demonised Turkish characters on the early modern English stage (2001), it becomes clear that the Ottoman Empire—and, by extension, its inhabitants—in the traditional Western imagination functioned both ideologically and historically 'as the paradigm and locale of the Other with its complex history and tradition of thought'.[8] That is to say that the stage Turk was a figure that prompted both fear (due to their violent outbursts) and fascination (due to the lavish costumes they donned and settings they inhabited) all at once for English audiences (within a dramatic context). All of the above allowed the English to capitalise upon defining their own identity in opposition to this Eastern figure. It was via this method of representation that the English public often learned about the political and social aims of their own nation, as they were encouraged to conceptualise the Ottomans as everything which they—and by extension, their society, government, and monarchy—were not.

This, however, was not a historically accurate depiction of the polarity between English Christian culture and Ottoman culture during the seventeenth century, with several travelogues and letters, as well as etchings, woodcuts, and engravings providing testament to fruitful Anglo-Ottoman trading relations.[9] The threat posed by the Ottoman military throughout the course of the seventeenth century was relatively low. The reason for this can be found in letters such as those exchanged between English and Turkish monarchs, as well as those penned by members of the Turkey Company stationed in Istanbul. All these sources discuss shared elements of trading (in addition to mutual Anglo-Ottoman aims of furthering their respective economies) and were prompted, seemingly, by goodwill in the form of gift exchanges between parties.

Playwrights like Greville and Boyle drew upon the historical setting of the Siege of Buda in order to depict their Turkish characters. However, it was known that both dramatists held known political interests and agendas (especially Boyle, given his active political role preceding his publication of

[8] Esin Akalin, 'Discovering Self and Other, representations of Ottoman Turks in English drama (1656–1792)', unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2001, 366.

[9] Violetta Trofimova and Esin Akalin, 'The Representation of the Other in Aphra Behn's Works', *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses Año*, 54, 1 (2007): 367.

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Mustapha). Thus, we see their Turkish monarchs—both male and female—grappling with issues connected to 'tyranny, captivity, war and conquests, fratricide, dynastic loyalties/disloyalties, rebellions, pride and humiliation and passions dictated by licentiousness'.[10] This was also a common theme exhibited within the writings of Greville and Boyle, which displayed a nuanced awareness of how the laws of the Ottoman Empire during the seventeenth century affected the way in which one viewed justice on a more individual level.

To elaborate upon this analogy, Greville's and Boyle's *Mustapha* plays depict how the maintenance of law and political order in an empire were often effective in sparing those who abided by it from misfortune. This was because neither playwright appeared to believe that the divine intention of God was to abolish a sound system of organisation designed by his people, who upheld both religious and political order and justice. Instead, Greville's and Boyle's Turkish tragedies exemplify that the main factor which contributes to 'desolation and ruine' was, in many cases, a ruler's aspirations to achieve something which would have distracted them from fulfilling their political duties. Ambition which falls outside of the Ottoman justice system, therefore, is depicted negatively in both versions of *Mustapha*. This is demonstrated in the behaviour of Solyman's wife, Roxolana (also known as Rossa in Greville's version of the play), and her son, Rustem, who display the stock 'stage Turk' traits of violence and political voracity.

In order to fully appreciate English perceptions of Ottoman law and custom—as well as the way in which it relates to gender—it is crucial to consider the importance and influence that Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) had on early modern conceptions of law. Machiavelli's writing was mainly concerned with the 'authoritarian apparition of any ruler' with Th*e Prince* being the most well-known of his works.[11] Gerald Lee Ratcliff provides an outline of the main distinctions Machiavelli makes between different kinds of the states. All principalities, says Ratcliff, 'have been governed in one of two ways: either by one absolute prince, to whom all others are completely subordinate, [...], or else by a prince and hereditary nobles who hold their ranks not by the grace of the prince but by the antiquity of their lineage'.[12] According to Machiavelli, the most appropriate example of the principality governed by an absolute sovereign was represented by the Ottoman Empire, whose 'monarchical bureaucratic system', as confirmed by Wang Hui in Po*litics of Imagining Asia*, was considered 'categorically different [from] European state systems'.[13] In particular, Machiavelli's text seems to single out some interesting aspects of Ottoman rule: the way in

[10] Ibid.

[11] Önder Çakırtaş, 'Mustapha and Greville: Constructing Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Machiavellian Identities in Early Modern English Drama', in *Ideological Messaging and the Role of Political Literature*, edited by Ö. Çakırtaş (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2017), 150.

[12] Gerald Lee Ratcliff, 'Introduction' in *Niccolo Machiavelli's The Prince* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Incorporated, 1986), 32–33.

[13] Wang Hui and T. Hunters, *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 71.

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which the sultan's authority depends on his subjects' acknowledgment of the dictatorial nature of his mandate and the fact that democracy does not play any role into the way the empire is governed.

In addition, with the dismissal of primogeniture privileges, Ottomans expected—and accepted as compliant with Ottoman law—civil wars brought forward by brothers keen to defend their legitimate right to power.[14] It is this very consideration on Ottoman rule that prompts Machiavelli to state that 'the prince who causes another to become powerful [...] works his own ruin; for he has contributed to the power of the other either by his own ability or force, and both the one and the other will be mistrusted by him whom he has thus made powerful'.[15] As Harvey Mansfield points out, Machiavellian principle rationalises the catastrophic intra-familial killings for the benefit of the public, stating that 'the essence of this politics is that 'you can get away with murder': that no divine sanction, or degradation of soul, or twinge of conscious will come to punish you'.[16] Thus, the death of the physically weakest potential heir results in bettering the empire's chances of crowning a sultan who possessed the most martial prowess, which may have been reassuring for many Ottomans.

This type of Machiavellian politics, 'where morals and principles have little account' was, according to Çakırtaş, 'identified within the characteristic managing structure of the Ottoman Empire'.[17] And thus, while Ottoman rulers become schemers and models of villainous mischief, Greville's and Boyle's Ottoman characters often offer a more complicated narrative where the actions of the rulers are not determined by the corrupted nature of games of powers—as advocated for in *The Prince*—but are instead invoked and endorsed by the law of their society, and their status within it.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ROXOLANA

Roxolana, also often referred to as Hurrem Sultan, her Ottoman title, was born in approximately 1505. Sometime between the years 1515 and 1520, according to Galina Yermolenko (2010), she was captured by Crimean Tartars from her birthplace in Ukraine. After this, she was sold into the slave market in the city of Caffa (also known as Kefe or Kaffa, and presently Feodosia) in the Black Sea region of the Crimean coastline. After her capture, she was likely transported to another Mediterranean slave market. Post-Crimea, Roxolana arrived at the Avret Pazara, or the 'Women's Bazaar', in Istanbul; yet another slave trading market. From there she was supposedly bought by Ibrahim Pasha, a companion of the then Prince Suleiman.

[14] Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 90.

[15] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, edited by Brian Richardson and translated by Leslie J. Walker. 2nd edn, (2013). (London: Penguin Books, 1513), 23.

[16] Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7.

[17] Önder Çakırtaş, 'Mustapha and Greville', 145–58.

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Ibrahim took Roxolana back to Suleiman in the year 1520, after which Suleiman housed her in his Ottoman harem, where she became known for her cheerful disposition and sweet singing voice. This is from where the term *Hurrem* (meaning 'joyful' or 'laughing one'), eventually attached to her name, originated.[18] Due to her recognisable personality traits, Suleiman soon became attracted to the young woman and openly acknowledged that she was his favourite concubine. Roxolana would eventually replace the previous chief concubine, Gulbahar or Gulfrem, who was the mother of Suleiman's eldest son, Mustafa.

The year 1520 marked Suleiman's ascent to the Ottoman throne and, the following year, Roxolana gave birth to her first child with the Sultan, Prince Mehmed. Yermolenko notes that there was a rule in place within the Ottoman harem system which stated that to every 'one concubine mother', there could be only 'one son' with the current sultan, in order to 'prevent the mothers' influence over the sultans and [their] dynastic affairs'.[19] For Roxolana, however, Suleiman made an unusual exception to this rule, since after Mehmed, Hurrem Sultan gave birth to five more children with Suleiman: one daughter (Mihrimah, born in 1522) and four sons (Abdullah, 1522; Selim, 1524; Bayazid, 1525, and finally Cihangir, 1531). This appeared to be a publicly recognised exception to the usual system as evidenced by both the Ottoman public and historical and travel narratives of the period.

Some of the most prominent of these sources include travelogues penned by Venetian Ambassadors to the Sublime Porte named Pietro Po (1526) and Bernardo Navagero (1553), the recordings of Luigi Bassano, an Italian who travelled through Turkey (1545), and *The Turkish Letters* (written c.1555–1562 and published in 1589) of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Emissary from Emperor Ferdinand of the Holy Roman Empire from 1554 to 1562. These sources detail Suleiman's closeness to Roxolana and how it was largely accepted and celebrated by the public were intrigued by Roxolana's involvement in political administrative duties.[20] Hurrem Sultan, whenever Suleiman travelled abroad, maintained order within the Ottoman court and would report to Suleiman on a wide range of issues, such as their children's illnesses and necessary treatments, the outbreak of the plague in the city of Istanbul, and speculations about the behaviour of a number of courtiers.[21] In short, she played a crucial role in the Sultan's family and in his relationship with other members of the court, thus effectively positioning herself as a figure of authority within the harem and the court.

[18] Galina Yermolenko, *Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), 2.

[19] Yermolenko, Roxolana, 3.

[20] Kevin Sharpe, *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 53.

[21] Ibid.

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ROXOLANA AND THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMININE SEXUAL POWER IN EARLY MODERN LITERARY DISCOURSES

Within early modern literary discourses, there is a strong connection between 'sexual politics' and state affairs.[22] This link is even stronger in plays focusing upon Ottoman rulers. The representation of feminine sexual power often extends to political influence in the Ottoman domain, and it can be argued that the Roxolana figure in early modern drama often portrays 'boundless passion, whether in her ambition for political or sexual power'.[23] Taking into account the promiscuous behaviour exhibited by Charles II, playwrights of the period often used Roxolana as an example of the destructive force attached to lustful relationships. The reference, evidently, functioned as a warning to Charles, who seemed to ignore the implications and possible consequences of his personal life over political matters. It is for this reason that Roxolana was represented on seventeenth-century stages as a model of 'ambition, sexuality, revenge, [and] exoticism'.[24] We see examples of this in the characterisation of Roxolana in William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663), Roger Boyle's *Mustapha* (1668), and Elkanah Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* (1677).[25] In Davenant and in Settle, Roxolana is portrayed quite negatively in order to demonstrate the threat that the sexual influence of the female 'turn'd Turk' (a Christian who has converted to Islam) could potentially pose to the governance of the Ottoman Court. Settle's and Davenant's versions seem to corroborate Busbecq's negative historical representation of Roxolana, along with her son-in-law, Rustem [the historical Rüstem Pasha] in his *Letters*, which claim that the pair were 'practicer[s] of witchcraft'.[26]

This connection of Roxolana to witchcraft also recurs in other literary accounts, such as the English translation of Nicolas de Moffan's *Soltani Solymanni* (1555), and William Painter's novella inspired by Suleiman and his seizure of Buda (*The Palace of Pleasure*; 1566). In both texts, Roxolana invokes devils to help her temper her sexual and political power. What is interesting here is that in Moffan and Painter, Roxolana's villainous qualities are always linked to religion. She is depicted as a hypocrite, feigning her religious beliefs as a Muslim convert by showing her religious devotion in public forums in an attempt to entice Suleiman. Despite this, she is cruel and vengeful because she sends clothes soaked in a poisonous liquid to her stepson, Mustapha, with

[22] J. A. Hayden, 'The Tragedy of Roxolana in the Court of Charles II', in *Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture*, edited by Galina Yermolenko. (London: Routledge, 2010), 78.

[23] Pat Gill, '"Across the Divide": The Contemporary English Elegy', *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics* 12, 13 (2013): 367.

[24] Gill, 'Across the Divide', 368.

[25] See Hayden, 'The Tragedy of Roxolana' 87–104; I. S. Gülter, '"The Greatest Empresse of the East": Hurrem Sultan in English Restoration Drama', *Litera* 31, 1 (2021): 203–27.

[26] Ogier de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554–1562*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 114.

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the intent of killing him so that her biological son, Zanger, would succeed Suleiman.

In her study on representations of female figures in early modern 'Turk' plays and Anglo-Ottoman commerce between female monarchs, Linda McJannet argues that Painter's novella 'anticipates the tendency of later historians, such as Knolles, to narrativise their sources, setting events in a master narrative of East-West enmity and Ottoman decline'.[27] In both Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and in Goughe's translation of Moffan's *Soltani Solymanni*, it is Roxolana who is blamed for the instigation of Mustapha's tragic and unjust death sentence at the hands of his father (with Roostem merely being the one carrying out her orders as opposed to being a schemer who also instigates his demise, as he was in Settle's and in Davenant's plays). This was a portrayal that heavily influenced dramatic representations of Hurrem Sultan on the early modern London stage and in Western literature. Historical representations of female Ottoman figures were overwhelmingly positive in comparison to their representation in cultural and dramatic discourses. It seems that Greville's (to an extent) and certainly Boyle's representations of Roxolana were inspired by some of the more positive—and, as I will argue, historically accurate—representations of this Turkish Sultana.

GREVILLE'S REPRESENTATION OF ROXOLANA IN *MUSTAPHA*

Greville's initial version of *Mustapha* (1633) was written during a time of uncertainty regarding who would succeed Elizabeth, given her childless state. This uncertainty in the political life of England is also reflected in the precariousness of his own position. *Mustapha* embraces this political disquietude and thematises it within the narrative web of his Turkish tragedy. Ronald A. Rebholz states that the initially published version of Greville's play, which was thought to have been pirated and published in 1609 without Greville's permission (see Joan Rees, 2013), accentuates 'the psychology of the individual person's moral choice' (1971, p. 3). By contrast, the latter version (1633; published in full after the dramatist's death) of Greville's play explores more than a mere personal disagreement at court, instead favouring the discussion of more pressing political issues, such as the question of legitimacy. Dramatising the story of the factual Suleiman and his son, Mustafa, allowed Greville to discuss a variety of issues related to Anglo-Ottoman contact (and conflict) during the early 1600s. In addition, it also enabled him to cultivate his opinions on political matters, such as the guaranteed reign of a king, so long as they were legitimate heir to a throne, be they politically efficient or tyrannical.

[27] McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks*, 73.

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In addition to exploring the relationship among male Turkish characters, Greville focuses upon the dichotomy of love/power in the character of Roxolana (spelled as the variant Rossa) and of Mustapha's half-sister, Camena. Rossa manipulates her husband Solyman into falsely believing that Mustapha will attempt to usurp him. Greville initially frames this solely as a reflection of her evil nature, evident when she selfishly ponders, 'My selfe! What is it but my desire?' (*Mustapha*, 1609, 3.2.24). Therefore, his portrayal of Rossa is far less positive and less humanised than Boyle's. However, it seems that what Greville does is exemplify Rossa's noble justifications for committing acts of treachery and violence. In addition to this, Greville also illuminates the way in which Rossa's unfavourable decisions are taken out of necessity to comply with the strictures of Ottoman law and do not necessarily align with her nature.

Greville emphasises Rossa's intention to have Mustapha executed to save her own son and, thus, it is clear that her actions, however manipulative, are governed by loving maternal intentions. Rossa, upon her failure to manipulate Solyman on two separate occasions realises that her attempts of imparting 'Power to doubt' (*Mustapha*, 1609, 3.1.112) result in her forming her expectations on 'quick-sand' (*Mustapha*, 1609, 3.1.54). Thus, instead of attempting and failing to convince Solyman to kill Mustapha verbally, Rossa 'must commit some outward act of violence and cruelty whose pressure of proof and horror will arm the King with a resolution'.[28] The 'outward ac[tion]' that Rossa carries out is the murder of her own daughter, Camena. After murdering her, Rossa creates a textile which she uses as proof to display to her husband that Camena has been assisting Mustapha in his treachery. To kill her own daughter in order to substantiate the treachery that she claims Camena and Mustapha have together committed is Rossa's way of demonstrating the truth of her accusations. However, Rossa and Solyman do not remember (as Greville's Rustem does in act three, scene one and as Chorus Secundus often suggest to the audience), that the Ottoman subjects support Mustapha.[29] Due to this conflict of interest between head and body of the Ottoman Empire, fighting between Solyman and his people occurs. This internal conflict is also exacerbated because Solyman's subjects believe Mustapha is innocent of treachery against his father.

The physical conflict within the Ottoman State is not the only internal conflict that Greville draws upon, as he also makes reference to the internal war that the characters face with regard to their passions and vices. For example, Rossa is always at war with her internal desire for power and the guilty conscience this brings her, and Solyman faces an internal conflict between the maintenance of his power, his love for his son, and his lust for Rossa. By the final act of the play, Rossa is consumed by her own set of passions (both those

[28] Peter Ure, *William Shakespeare, the problem plays* (London: Longmans for the British Council, 2010), 320.

[29] Ure, *William Shakespeare*, 319.

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virtuous, such as love for Zanger, and those considered vicious, such as violent and murderous outbursts). Her passions are the only thing she is left with after the death of her children and after being banished by her husband (*Mustapha*, 1609, 5.2.116–24). At various points throughout Greville's play, Rossa's utterances suggest that she is overcome by these passions, or 'Furies', by 'choice' (*Mustapha*, 1609, 5.2.48) and that she intentionally acts upon them in order to further her political aim of assisting Zanger in gaining the Ottoman throne. The nature of Rossa's passions was previously explored in Greville's play when she claims that she obtained them by summoning 'ugly Angells of th'infernall Kingdomes' (*Mustapha*, 1609, 3.2.39–41), to 'become a vessel charged with their power to harm'.[30]

Despite Rossa's 'Furies', she is still capable of possessing genuine affection for both Zanger and Solyman. What is also worth noting here is that Greville does not position her religious or cultural beliefs as the source of her villainous actions. These stem instead from the fact that she is trapped within a system of law that forces her to order the murder of Mustapha to save Zanger's life. Greville, however, complicates this even further by depicting the necessary sacrifice that the mother should accomplish in order to save the life of her son: killing her daughter. Greville's portrayal of Rossa's violence is situated within the wider framework of the play in which he discusses in some depth the influence of the supernatural. Here, as Ure points out, the 'dramaturgical problem is mixed with the theological' because, being a Calvinist, 'Greville holds to the doctrine of predestination, but it is difficult to write a drama of the inward war in which the nature of the *personae* is already so irrevocably determined'.[31] Greville uses spirituality to avoid creating a binary between the 'chosen', virtuous Christian and irredeemable Turkish characters. In doing so, the characters do not appear as 'predestined' by the irremediability of their own actions.

In 'A Letter Written to an Honourable Lady' (c.1595) Greville claims that:

> [the] extremities of good or evil will not easily be believed to reign in these middle natures of flesh and blood: in respect that God hath decreed the angels to heaven, the devils to hell; and left the Earth to man, as a mean creation between these two extremes.[32]

Here, Greville outlines the discrepancies between the 'Furies' or 'devils' that Rossa speaks of invoking and the Calvinistic representation of angels and devils. Despite this, it is still possible for his Turk play to veer away from a conflation of the 'objective evil spirits'[33] themselves and an individual's—in this

[30] Ure, *William Shakespeare*, 321.
[31] Ure, *William Shakespeare*, 321.
[32] Fulke Greville, 'Letter to an Honourable Lady', in *The Works in Verse and Prose Complete of the Right Honourable Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke* (Blackburn: Printed for private circulation by C. Tiplady in 1870), 78.
[33] Ure, *William Shakespeare*, 322.

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case, Rossa's—internal 'Furies' or passions. Whilst Rossa employs evil spirits to charge her violent actions, her need to do so suggests that the ability to murder is not inherent to her and that the inner passion that drives her the most is maternal affection.

In order to further understand Greville's seemingly misogynistic representation of Rossa and her ability to distinguish between the inner 'Furies' and the supernatural 'Furies', it is useful to look at the dramatist's own statement in *A Dedication* (1652) where he states that many women 'are of that nature, even as we are—I mean strong in weakness—and consequently, in these orbs of passion, the weaker sex commonly the most predominant'.[34]

Greville states that, through Rossa, he wishes to present women as being 'strong in weakness'. He describes women as weaker than men in a physical capacity, but as being more accomplished than men in their cunning wiles. As Matthew Hansen outlines, this is a notion, which can be recognised through 'the actions and language of the female characters [because it] frequently requires them to divorce themselves from their assigned gender identity in order to reach their fullest potential in depravity'.[35] Hansen also touches briefly upon the way in which Greville's representation of his Rossa may have been inspired by the Medea figure because of the two women's mutual 'exercise of political ambition, murdering her daughter in order to solidify her influence over her husband and eventually placing [or trying to place] her son on the throne'.[36]

In the final scene of the play, Rossa discusses the way in which she has convincingly played the role of the dutiful Turkish woman when she

> [Rossa]: [...] ventur'd; first to make the father fear,
> Then hate, then kill, his most beloved Child.
> My daughter did discover him my way
> [...]
> I kill'd her: for I thought her death would prove
> That truth, not Hate, made Mustapha suspected:
> The more it seem'd against a Mothers love
> The more it shew'd, I Solyman affected:
> Thus, underneath severe, and upright dealing,
> A mischievous Stepmothers malice stealing,
> It took effect: *For few mean ill in vaine.*

(*Mustapha*, 1609, 5.2.35–55)

[34] Fulke Greville, 'A Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney, ca. 1652', in *Sir Fulke Greville's Life of Sir Philip Sidney; Etc.*, (Oxford: Creative Media Partners, 2019), 133.

[35] Matthew Hansen, 'Gender, Power and Play: Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham*', *Guelph*, 19, 1 (2001): 8.

[36] Hansen, 'Gender', 14.

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Instead of the ceremonial 'disengendering[37] with which Medea is often associated, Greville's Rossa makes a highly effective attempt to appear to Solyman as if she is the supportive and dutiful Sultana, wife, and mother. It is important to remember, however, that Rossa does not necessarily wish to engage with the type of cunning that Greville speaks of in his *Declaration* because she is deviant by nature. Instead, it becomes clear in the above speech that she utilises her feminine ability to manipulate Solyman because of her 'Mothers love' for Zanger. Her primary aim is to remain technically compliant with Ottoman law whilst still enabling her son to live.

Shortly after Rossa's explanation of her own cunning and concealment of it, which she confesses to Zanger, he tells her of the way he (because of his friendship with Mustapha) contests it:

> [Zanger]: Mother! Is this the way of Woman's heart?
> Have you no law, or God; but Will, to friend?
> Can neither Power, not Goodnesse scape your Art?
> [...]
> 'Tus plague enough that I am borne of thee.
> Mother! O monstrous Name! shall it be said,
> That thou hast done this fact for Zangers sake?
>
> (*Mustapha*, 1609, 5.2.79–93)

In Zanger's speech, his devastation and sense of betrayal at the death of Mustapha are apparent, and Rossa is witness to his suicide as a result. Despite her shame at witnessing such a visceral reaction from her son, Rossa still chooses to live and withstand the grief she now experiences due to her regret of engineering the prompt for her son's suicide. At this point, she accepts that she 'will bear with [her] [...] What curse soever to the earth remains' as punishment (*Mustapha*, 1609, 5.2.113–114). Here, it is clear that Greville's Rossa is damned to an existence of self-inflicted guilt, which once again recalls the 'Stoic endurance of [Greville's] brand of Calvinism [which] led him, at least at this stage of his life and career, to endorse'.[38] At the end of the play, it is only possible for his Rossa to take vengeance upon herself by accepting culpability for the death, directly or indirectly, of all three of her (step)children and to endure the subsequent distress that this causes her. Even after all of her children are deceased and she has been banished from the Ottoman court by Solyman. He cannot bear to sentence her to death so exiles her instead; she never fully accepts the stereotypical role of the Turkish woman. This is because she, once again, manages to

[37] Hansen, 'Gender', 14.
[38] Hansen, 'Gender', 139.

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manipulate her assigned role of bereaved mother to facilitate her own agenda of playing the 'suffering Stoic'.[39]

BOYLE'S REPRESENTATION OF ROXOLANA IN *MUSTAPHA*

When Roger Boyle came to write his account of Roxolona more than fifty years later, he had a wealth of negatively-tinged theatrical representations on which to draw. Instead, he turned to a historical (although not wholly factual) source—Richard Knolles' *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*—and as a result, Boyle's Roxolana is more complex and sympathetic than her theatrical contemporaries. However, it appears that Boyle's dramatisation of her political involvement and intrigues during Sultan Solyman's rule significantly deviates from historical events. This also could be said for other elements of the Turkish tragedy which Boyle dramatises. For example, Knolles discusses how Zanger (Jihangir) was never actually pitted against Mustapha as Solyman's possible successor. This was because, as Busbecq speculates in his *Letters*, he was 'disfigured by a hump' and possessed 'no strength of mind or body to enable him to resist the shock' of witnessing the death of his stepbrother, Mustapha, as ordered by his father, Solyman.[40] Busbecq also outlines how, in contrast to Boyle's portrayal, Jihangir did not die of suicide, but from an unspecified sickness triggered by the anxiety he faced regarding the Ottoman law that he must die upon his brother's accession to the throne.

Boyle, in his *Mustapha*, makes a pointed effort to emphasise that, by nature, his Roxolana was not meant to be regarded as an inherently evil character. This is because her plot to have Mustapha killed to thereby instigate the succession of her own son to the Ottoman throne was spurred on by Boyle's malevolent counsellor character, Rustem Pasha. As seen in earlier plays like Thomas Goffe's *The Courageous Turk* (1619), evil counsellors or teachers often featured in early modern drama as backseat instigators of Ottoman corruption. Interestingly, this may have been a tool used by playwrights of the period to illuminate the political inefficiency caused by governmental figures prone to tyrannical tendencies. More specifically, in Boyle's case, it may have pointed to the behaviour of the First Earl of Clarendon, Edward Hyde, who was chancellor to Charles II. Like Rustem Pasha, Hyde was known for his self-interested nature by other members of the monarchy.[41]

Not dissimilar to Boyle's divergent retelling of Roxolana's story is the complex representation of his dramatised versions of the Turkish figures

[39] Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33.

[40] Busbecq, *Turkish Letters*, 114.

[41] Yermolenko, *Roxolana*, 76.

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involved in it. This is especially apparent when it comes to his Roxolana, who possesses a heightened sense of her own authority over both her husband and Ottoman dynastic affairs. In act one, scene four (before Roxolana develops her deviant bond with Rustem), Rustem interrogates Roxolana because she has instructed Solyman's mutes to strangle him. Roxolana replies:

> [Roxolana]: I'le not dissemble as you Viziers do.
> A Viziers power is but subordinate,
> He's but the chief dissembler of the State;
> And oft for publick int'rests lies; but I
> The partner of Supreme Authority,
> Do ever mean the utmost that I say.
>
> (*Mustapha*, 1665, 1.4.347–52)

In describing herself as the 'partner of Supreme Authority', Roxolana suggests that she possesses almost equal power to that of her husband's. Following this, Achmat (Solyman's 'eunuch bassaw') discusses how he feels a sense of reprieve after hearing that Roxolana banished Rustan instead of sentencing him to death. At this, Roxolana asks: 'Can you your safety doubt whilst you are mine?' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 1.4.373), thus making known her perceived ownership of her subjects and, by extension, her ability to keep them safe.

Boyle also explores Roxolana's methods of utilising her power when Rustan states that she is 'faster conquer[ing Solyman], than he his foes' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 2.1.2), reiterating that she has made her power play very clear. Despite Rustan viewing Roxolana's authority as being threatening to that of Solyman's, he understands that, because of her influence over her husband, Rustan must re-establish his trusting relationship with her. The purpose of him doing so is to further his political relationship with Solyman and climb the ranks within the Ottoman court. This instance, as Hayden points out, could function as Boyle's political comment upon what was happening in Restoration England regarding Henry Bennett, the Earl of Arlington. Bennett was 'anxious to dominate the mistress (Frances Stuart), in order that he might obtain control of her master'. So, according to Hayden, Bennett invited Frances and her sister, Margaret Brooke to celebrations to flaunt them in front of the King, knowing that he would be in attendance.[42]

In act three, scene three, it once again appears that Boyle does not wish to totally demonise his Sultana. Here, Roxolana realises that she can further her plot and continue to criticise the innocent Mustapha, which will result in his death sentence. Alternatively, she can let Mustapha live and succeed his father.

[42] Gramont in Hayden, 'Tragedy of Roxolana', 77.

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However, the consequence if she chooses the latter option would be to watch her own son be sentenced to death upon his elder brother's ascent in keeping with Ottoman law. She expresses both feelings of guilt and a recognition of the injustices brought about by this specific law, since an innocent son will die no matter which course of action she chooses. In addition, Roxolana understands that allowing Solyman to falsely believe Mustapha to be treacherous would be for the Sultan to resist 'Nature' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 4.5.661). However, she herself cannot ignore her duty to embrace that same nature in the form of loyalty to her own son (*Mustapha*, 1665, 4.5.652–65). Accordingly, she chooses to fulfil what she believes is her personal bind with 'Nature'. It is thus clear that Roxolana does not become involved in a plot against Mustapha's life because she is inherently evil, but because Ottoman law dictates that Zanger must die if Mustapha is to succeed Solyman. Boyle portrays Roxolana not as monstrous but as a mother who will take the necessary measures to save her own son's life.

Critics have described Boyle's treatment of Roxalana as 'sophisticated, compassionate, and just'; a position in keeping with the idea that the playwright did not wish to solely demonise his Sultana.[43] An example of this compassion as a Turkish virtue can be found in a scene in which the Hungarians are discussing the most effective way to save Buda from being besieged by the Turks. The Cardinal suggests to Isabella that she send her infant son, as well as the crown jewels to Roxolana, so that she may protect them. Boyle's retelling of the siege of Buda under Sultan Solyman's order draws upon the historical blockade of the city under the command of Sultan Suleiman in 1541. The historical Isabella of Hungary (the daughter of Sigismund, King of Poland) married the King of Hungary, John Zapolya in 1538. The marriage took place after Zapolya's ascent to the throne, thus he did not yet have a legitimate heir to succeed him at the point of his ascension. Due to this, Zapolya 'signed a secret treaty with the Hapsburg Ferdinand I in 1538, which stated that upon Zapolya's death, Ferdinand would receive Hungary'.[44] However, by the following year, Zapolya was married to Isabella and the couple had a son, John-Sigismund, which effectively invalidated the treaty with Ferdinand. Zapolya died not long after John-Sigismund was born. Ferdinand, choosing to ignore the infant as legitimate heir to the throne, then controversially captured Buda. After Ferdinand occupied the city, Isabella contacted Suleiman in the hopes that he would assist in banishing Ferdinand. This then prompted Suleiman's attempt to seize Buda, with the Sultan giving the Hungarian Queen his word that he would allow John-Sigismund to assume power in Hungary once he had reached adulthood. In the meantime, Isabella and her infant son were 'sent to Transylvania where he was to rule as a vassal of the Porte'.[45]

43 Almas, 'The Women', 143.

44 Yermolenko, *Roxolana*, 84.

45 Yermolenko, *Roxolana*, 85.

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Boyle's recounting of this subplot, in contrast to that of the main plot revolving around the death of the two brothers, appears to follow historical accounts of the story more closely. However, Roxolana's involvement in the battle is Boyle's addition to the plot: his Sultana accompanies Solyman to set up the Ottoman army's camp in Buda. In addition, Boyle has his Solyman order that Queen Isabella hand over her son to the Ottomans so that the infant can be murdered. Instead of sending her son to the Sultan, the Cardinal recommends that Isabella befriend Roxolana by entrusting her with her baby. He explains to Isabella that 'In gaining [Roxolana] you make the Sultan sure' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 1.2.123) so that the infant Prince of Buda may live.

Isabella, after much deliberation, agrees to do what the Cardinal has advised, and therefore Boyle portrays her as an individual who is able to entrust a Muslim convert (Roxolana)—who would under most circumstances be portrayed as her enemy—with her most precious possession. Roxolana, when this task is requested of her, agrees to take the child under her wing and protect him. Roxolana's offer to assist her counterpart in her time of need, despite their people being in conflict, underscores Boyle's representation of the Turkish Muslim as gracious and trustworthy.

Whereas Roxolana's scheming is one of the main contributing factors leading to both of the Ottoman Princes' deaths, Boyle emphasises her interactions with Isabella prove to be quite the contrast to this as her compassion for the Hungarian Queen and her son. Thus, much like the male Turkish characters in Boyle's play, his representation of Roxolana is also one that challenges the stereotype of the evil, lascivious, barbaric Turk. Roxolana's compassionate intentions in protecting Isabella's child, given the fact that she has previously proven unable to display this same level of compassion towards her own stepson, are debatable. After all, Boyle markedly has his Sultana engage in plots against Mustapha's life like in act two, scene three when she requests that Rustan 'by fresh intelligence / Charge Mustapha with some new offence' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 2.3.299–300). Following this, in the presence of her husband, she puts on an elaborate performance of outlining the (false) treacheries Mustapha may be planning to commit before persuading the Sultan to show leniency towards Mustapha and 'injure him whose virtues you conceal' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 3.2.241).

Despite the untrustworthiness Roxolana exhibits in her interactions with the male characters, her interactions with Isabella allow Boyle to portray the sole 'turned' Turkish female character of his play in a much more complex way with regard to deviance from cultural and dramatic stereotypes. Boyle may have taken inspiration from the alternative type of Anglo-Ottoman commerce shared by Elizabeth I and Valide Sultana Safiye in their exchanges of letters and gifts and applied it to his depiction of Roxolana's interactions with Isabella. Each Queen teaches the other about tactics which they, as

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female monarchs, were able to adopt to develop their political (and familial) relationships.

In addition to the above, and despite both Mustapha and Solyman becoming infatuated with Isabella, it is clear that she grieves for the recently deceased Hungarian King and therefore decides to leave Buda to escape romantic involvement with either of the Ottoman Princes. Isabella advises Roxolana to take into account the close bond between Mustapha and Zanger and, if not for the Sultana's stepson's sake but for her own son's well-being, she should consider showing temperance to Mustapha. Roxolana seems, at the very least, to acknowledge Isabella's suggestion because she, in exchange, offers her own advice to the Hungarian Queen. She tells Isabella that she acts as though she feels affection towards Solyman, evidenced when she states that 'The Great should in their Thrones mysterious be; / Dissembling is no worse than mystery' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 4.1.155–6). Here, Roxolana is presented by Boyle as an individual who understands how to utilise her sexual prowess (adhering to the stereotype of the lascivious Turkish woman) to further her political agenda successfully. Through Roxolana's ability to utilise her sexual power to further her political influence, Boyle represents her as departing from the stereotype of the Turkish woman who is detached from politics. Instead, he represents his Roxolana not only as being involved in the political affairs of the Ottoman Court but as possessing efficient political skills.

Isabella, by contrast, does not yet possess this skillset and is described, instead, as possessing 'un-courtly, ill-bred innocence' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 4.1.175). Roxolana then advises Isabella that she can counter this by falsely 'dissembl[ing her] love to Mustapha, / And mak[ing] him think what [she] often say[s], / that [she] for Love can mourn and languish too' (*Mustapha*, 1665, 4.1.177–9). Initially, Isabella seems uncomfortable with Roxolana's suggestion, but the Cardinal also agrees that she should follow the Ottoman Sultana's advice because Isabella requires her friendship for the continued protection of her son (*Mustapha*, 1665, 4.1.267). Arguably, this is much the same as Roxolana's intentions to frame Mustapha as a traitor in the eyes of his father to save her own son from being executed. Both women's intentions, although each takes different courses of action to try and facilitate their aims, are the same; to focus upon their maternal instincts and save their own sons from death. If this analysis is to be taken as key, then it is difficult to view Roxolana's scheming early on in the play as fundamentally malevolent. Ultimately, Boyle adapts the historical siege of Buda and allows the two female monarchs to meet (albeit only in the realms of theatre) to provide commentary upon what an 'ambitious woman might accomplish in satiating her greed for power'.[46]

[46] Yermolenko, *Roxolana*, 83.

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Roxolana was a historical figure represented continually on Early Modern English stages as both an influential and a threatening force of feminine appeal. Early modern dramatists sometimes omit proto-Orientalist sentiment by denouncing the 'double standard where women pay dearly for their gullibility or assertive sexuality, while men remain in or rise to positions of power'.[47] Although Roxolana (in both Greville's and Boyle's plays) is punished for her 'gullibility or assertive sexuality' through her banishment from the Ottoman Court, it can be concluded that she, as argued by some early modern commentators, 'not only took over Suleiman's heart, but also his Empire when she became his political advisor'.[48] She thus remained a 'social and political paradigm' within literary and dramatic discourses.[49] Roxolana is presented by both dramatists (but especially by Boyle) as an individual who understands how to utilise her sexual prowess (adhering to the stereotype of the lascivious Turkish woman) to further her political agenda successfully. Through Roxolana's ability to utilise her sexual power to further her political influence, Greville and Boyle represent her as departing from the stereotype of the Turkish woman who is uninvolved in the political sphere. Instead, they represent his Roxolana not only as being involved in the political affairs of the Ottoman Court, but as possessing efficient political skills.

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[47] Linda McJannet, 'Islam and English Drama: A Critical History' *Early Theatre*, 12, 2 (2009): 167.

[48] Almas, 'The Women', 117.

[49] Hayden, 'The Women', 88.

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Abstract
Despite the many historical references to wealth, military strength and political efficiency, Turks were generally represented as violent, lustful and despotic figures in early modern cultural discourses. The stereotyped cultural Turk soon populated the London stages, thus moulding a recognisable dramatic type whose brutality and sexual appetite were also combined with political corruption. However, as this contribution seeks to demonstrate, Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1609) and Roger Boyle's *Mustapha* (1665) instead discuss characters who digress from traditional Orientalist portrayals of Turks whose sexual incontinence parallels with political corruption. In particular, this article engages with intersections between gender studies and Orientalism to investigate how Roxolana, in both plays, transgresses traditional representations of the female Christian-to-Muslim convert, whose lust distracts the Turkish ruler from his political duties. Both playwrights explore Roxolana's active interest in affairs of the Ottoman Court and the unexpected alliance she forms with Hungarian Queen Isabella when she, at the Hungarian Queen's request, protects Isabella's infant son and the Hungarian crown jewels. Their friendship appears to echo gift exchanges between Queen Elizabeth I and Turkish Queen Mother, Safiye Sultan, after the establishment of the Levant Company, which are detailed in various letters exchanged between the two monarchs in 1599. In light of this, I explore how Greville and Boyle could be commenting upon the political turmoil that James I's succession and the Stuart Restoration brought about in England, given that the country was more stable in a religious and political sense under the rule of former monarch Elizabeth I.

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