مجلة رفوف–مخبر المخطوطات – جامعة أدرار– الجزائر المجلد 09 / العـدد: 02 (جويلية 2021) ص 411– 428
ISSN: 2335-1381 EISSN: 2602-5949 Legal Deposit: 2013-6352

Proto-Orientalism, the English Early Modern Theatre of Alterity, and the Cultural Logic of Nascent Capitalism

ما قبل الاستشراق, المسرح الإنجليزي الحديث المبكّر للتغيّر والمنطق الثقافي للرأسمالية الوليدة

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Received: 03/05/2021	Accepted: 29/05/2021	Published:14/07/2021

Abstract :
This article situates in a revisionist context Anglo-Muslim encounters and their representations in Drama. Drawing upon such methodologies as New Historicism and Postcolonialism, the present paper aims to yoke the incommensurable discursive and the material and to gauge the implications of Nascent Capitalism and the subsequent emergence of a market culture on the representation of Muslims. It is argued that England's belated initiative in global trade fueled a strong tendency towards contradistinction. The theatre, as a cultural institution and a rapidly expanding entertainment industry, was inextricably bound to the joint-stock companies that dominated foreign Eastern trade and contributed to diffusing and complicating those encounters further. By drawing from the perpetual process of antagonism to Islam, and by responding to the mercantilism of theatricality, the theatre was bound to an economical-religious necessity in engendering the cultural imperative of Proto-Orientalist Muslim representations.
Keywords: contradistinction, mercantilism, nascent capitalism, proto-orientalism, theatricality.

الملخص:
تضع هذه المقالة في سياق تعديلي المواجهات الأنجلو–إسلامية وتمثيلاتها في الدراما. بالاعتماد على منهجيات مثل التاريخية الجديدة وما بعد الاستعمار ، نهدف الى إلى ربط الخطاب والمادية المتضادان وقياس الآثار المترتبة على الرأسمالية الوليدة والظهور اللاحق لثقافة السوق على تمثيل المسلمين. يقال إن مبادرة إنجلترا المتأخرة في التجارة العالمية غذت ميلًا قويًا نحو التمييز المتناقض. كان المسرح ، كمؤسسة ثقافية وصناعة ترفيهية سريعة التوسع ، مرتبطًا ارتباطًا وثيقًا بالشركات المساهمة التي هيمنت على التجارة الخارجية الشرقية وساهمت في نزع فتيل وتعقيد تلك اللقاءات بشكل أكبر. بناية على العداء الدائم للإسلام ، و الطابع التجاري للمسرحيات ، كان المسرح مرتبطًا بضرورة اقتصادية دينية في توليد الضرورة الثقافية للتمثيلات الإسلامية لما قبل الاستشراق.
الكلمات المفتاحية: التمييز المتناقض, التجارية, الرأسمالية الوليدة, ما قبل الاستشراق, المسرحية.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The porousness of Islamic representations in the English early modern theatre attests to an unprecedented mania about Islamic cultures and constitutes an episode of mass spectatorship in the history of the English stage. During this period, a significant number of playwrights employed Islamic matter and characters in their plays. More than sixty dramatic works featuring Islamic themes, characters, or settings were produced in England between 1579 and 1624 (Burton, 2005, p.11); Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Dekker, John Day, Fulke Greville, Thomas Heywood and John Webster and by extending the span of time to the late Elizabethan period include the names of John Fletcher, Philip Massinger, Henry Glapthorne, Lodowick Carlell and John Denham among others represented Islamic content in their plays. While the nature of such representations, as many early modern scholars endeavoured to show, fluctuates between dismissal and acceptance, the image of the Muslim Other occupied, at least discursively, a fairly weaker position than its English counterpart, and was in most of these plays denied access, misrepresented and caricatured. The prevalence of anti-Islamic rhetoric against instances of empirical benevolent mercantilism-multiculturalism between the English and Muslim Cultures is a debatable terrain of study to which a number of explanations by leading early modern scholars have been provided already, but which still demands further reassessment.

This study seeks to highlight the centrality of mercantilism-capitalism in shaping the discourse of the early modern playwrights who were caught up in this intricate web of Muslim representations. As the English secured entrance into the scene of global commerce, the reifying power of embryonic capitalism invaded many sectors, and the theatre as a burgeoning site of the entertainment industry and of cultural production was no exception. Through reorienting the background against which Islamic dramatic encounters took place, I maintain that the categorization bequeathed to us by postcolonial thought is impoverished in a decentred early modern scene, and as such that it fails to render an adequate account of conceptualizing difference along lines of power. It is further contended that the postcolonial conceptualization of difference should not altogether be dispelled as displaced, and that only when espoused with New

Historicist insights about Renaissance alterity and the fashioning of identities can we render a sufficient account of this admittedly equivocal tension between artefact and culture, representation and reality.

2. Proto-Orientalism and Rethinking the Saidian Conception of Alterity

In approaching English Renaissance representations of Islam in drama, structuralist readings of cultural contact, namely those neatly polarizing the two ends of the dichotomy, whereby differences are appropriated and assimilated into crude binary divides along lines of power and dominance, were stubbornly predominant from the wake and burgeoning of postcolonial thought. This resulted, as many revisionist early modern scholars remarked, in parochialism in a justly historicized early modern cadre. The breadth of complexity and the indeterminacy of the early modern scene render the application of orientalist structuralist paradigms partial if not faulty altogether in accounting for the bifurcation of English Muslim[1] cultural encounters and in reckoning power divisions of the era. The Orientalist relationship between the two unequal halves the Orient and the Occident, Edward Said insists, is overwhelmingly "of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony" (2003, p.5), which departs from and is linked to the colonial-imperial British and French experiences and to the American imperial establishments, and resulting in a marked polarization of Oriental/Westerner (Ibid, p.46). Said's insistence that imperialist Orientalism, as a political and discursive doctrine, is willed over the Orient because this latter is in a weaker position which prepared and justified the way for later colonization is problematic vis-à-vis Renaissance England for a number of reasons.

While the validity of this statement is applicable to the high British and French imperialisms of the Orient from the second half of the 18th c, that is, only after the lands of the Orient became subject for colonization and subjugation, a rich seam of scholars and critics however, argued against extending such a division along power and dominance to earlier periods in history. Indeed, as remarks Daniel Vitkus (2003), in early modern parlance, the very identification

[1] In Early modern European consciousness, and after the loss of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottomans, Muslims predominantly became known as Turks, regardless of their ethnic or racial origins.

of the "Orient" as a unified imaginary entity was yet in the making, and that "Mediterranean and Islamic alterity comprised many divergent identities" (p.8), far from being crystalized, and instead malleable and fluid, constantly invoked in cultural crossovers and exchanges, and governed by a set of overlapping identity markers. Pioneering in this reconsideration scholarship is Nabil Matar[2], who, in the first two parts of his thought provoking trilogy *Islam in Britain* (1998) and *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (1999), effectively setting the agenda for study of Anglo-Muslim relations, assiduously contends that Said's divisive lines of power maintained through *Orientalism* are unsustainable in the historical context of early modern England, that orientalist demarcations of Self and Other, so entrenched in postcolonial studies, are deemed not only untenable in an early modern English context, but more accurately, anachronistic and erroneous. If the essence of orientalist demarcation is "the ineradicable distinction between western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (Said p.42), it was the English who were so conscious of their conspicuous lack of empire building capacities and who lingered in belatedness[3] , emphasizing that "Islam

[2] While Matar is accredited for enlivening early modern English Islamic scholarship and pioneering in rethinking Said's Orientalist division, Prior to him, the earliest work that established the canon of Renaissance works on Islamic themes is unequivocally Samuel Chew's encyclopedic *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* (1937). Chew's exhaustive study, mostly of a historiographical tone, has for long been a landmark for later scholars approaching the field. Chew explores how the Islamic worlds of Turkey, Persia and Barbary heavily influenced Renaissance England. His study spans from the fall of the Byzantine Empire till the closing of theatres (1453-1642). Chew's study covers a large body of English texts from travel histories to state papers to poetry but it is drama that is covered more thoroughly as Chew asserts "The drama is a fairly accurate reflection of the popular mind" (p.538). Though not explored meticulously, a total sum of two hundred and thirty plays are catalogued and summarized in his narrative.

[3] The Tudor Age and the early Stuart Age were not ages of Empire, The English imaginary imperialism, or the "empire nowhere," to summon Jeffrey Knapp, was yet germinating. As has been revisited by a large number of scholars, England lingered in its belatedness vis-a-vis the all-encompassing, hegemonic empires. The Afro-Eurasian arena saw the emergence of an immense commercial system dominated by a chain of world powers. The Hapsburgs Empire in Spain and its dominions, the mighty Ottoman Empire in Anatolia and the Balkans, the Safavid Persians in Iran and Iraq, the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria, the Mughal Empire of India, the China Japan force power and the spice Eastern Islands in the Far East were controlling the trading system. The last third of the sixteenth century witnessed the emergence of a Global Trade System that was never since to regress. Wealth and capital were concentrated in this shrieking number of empire centers. Many historians and critics duly dubbed the 16th century

'dominated" and "taken possession of" might be applicable in the post-Napoleonic history of the Middle East; to apply it retroactively to the 16th and 17th centuries is historically inaccurate" (Matar, 1998, p.13). In a similar vein, Jonathan Burton (2005) stresses that although it is true to say that the English at the time sought to control the Muslims discursively, given power division of the era, such control is far from being practices of dominance but rather practices of making sense of a growingly powerful "Other" and hence remains quintessentially "compensatory" in nature (p.36). This was the era of the Ottomans and the English were coping with the fact from a fairly weak position.

Gerald MacLean, Daniel Goffman, Daniel Vitkus, Jonathan Burton, Mathew Dimmock and Richmond Barbour among others challenged such application and sought to rethink Edward Said's hegemony-bound paradigm, each charting new and apt perspectives of approaching the intricacies of English early modern cultural contacts.

Matthew Dimmock (2005**)** likewise refutes the retrospective imposition of the Saidian paradigm of a dominant colonizing west and a colonized and objectified east, a critical push, he holds, to which many zealous critics have become so entangled with the flourishing of Saidian postcolonial theory. He likewise deems it not merely misleading but even assertive of the very basic orientalist divisions that are sought to be disavowed. Dimmock alludes to the complex web of English-Ottoman relations dominating the early modern period, recognizing the centrality of mercantile exchanges, and how such an elastic atmosphere had marked a high point in the cultural productions. "To rediscover the permeable nature of boundaries and transactions both real and imagined" (p.9) is a reorientation much indispensable in transcending enduring East-West boundaries and oppositions. To historically contextualize each dramatic encounter with the Muslim world so as to better decipher the paradigms of dramatic representation at hand, acknowledging and appreciating the ambivalence of English attitudes

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the Age of the clash of civilizations, wherein England's position and status as an isolated insular protestant country on the fringes of Europe was barely perceptible amidst this world system. In fact, England was classified as a third rank power compared to its rivals and the English were never more than relatively peripheral players in this global geopolitical world.

coupled with a comprehensive recognition of its presence in English texts is the dynamic that Dimmock proposes.

In the same vein, Jonathan Burton in *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama 1579-1624* (2005) joins this cohort of scholars in reassessing the overarching assertion that early modern English representations of Muslims were immovably stereotypical and argues instead that such representations were far from being simplistic and that they were moved by a complex and nuanced amalgam of conflicting forces, economic, political and cultural, and "rang[ed] from the censorious to the laudatory, from others to brothers" (p.12). He proposes "Traffic and Turning" to account for the instances of "ideological compromise and divisiveness alike" (p.12) that sprout from overlapping zones and traditions, that so inform and infiltrate what he prefers to call "Turkish Plays". By stressing the Anglo-Ottoman bilateral mercantile exchanges on the one hand, and the concomitant concern of conversion, renouncing Christian virtue or "turning Turk" on the other, Burton contends that the anxiety was then how to "turn Turk without turning Turk" and the outcome was an inconsistent, "divided rhetoric" of Islam, that tinged various kinds of discourse, and sometimes tantalizingly even existed within single texts[4].Burton holds that the keynote to understand representations of Islam when examining such ambivalent plays lies in "charting the logic by which [these] interrelated and contested discourses are collected and assigned priority" (p.28), that in fictions, whatever facet of the Turk is conjured up and presented as an essential truth, represents the most prioritized of an ambivalent and contradictory set of responses to Islam.

Emily Bartels (1993) has demonstrated the marked double-sidedness of the Renaissance vision of the east (as cited in Burton 2005). Gerald MacLean (2007) acknowledges the new and surging theoretical paradigms that seek to decenter Anglo-Ottoman, or East-West relations, while highlighting their reciprocity and mutuality. He shares a similar view contending that pre-colonial England was busy re-making itself against what lays outside her insular realm, mainly against the Ottomans, and that such a re-making has been loaded with a restructuring of

[4] Burton suggests that the English attitudes about the Turks and Islam responded to a tripartite conjoined inventory: the textual-historical; the experiential, which he considers his point of departure from previous Anglo-Muslim scholarship; and the domestic.

desire, knowledge, and power, terming it "imperial envy", the dynamic most apt, he holds, for early modern English discourse of the Ottomans and which involves both identification along differentiation; sameness along otherness; desire and attraction along revulsion (p.22). Linda MacJannet in the *Sultan Speaks: Dialogue in English Plays and Histories about the Ottoman Turks* (2007) stresses pragmatic ambivalence instead of ideological consistency as the keynote to English attitudes towards the Ottomans and Islam. Richmond Barbour likewise contends, in his perceptive study *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East 1576-1626* (2003), that fictions of the early modern Jacobeans were lacking in the material enforcements that are so typical of later Orientalism (p.6). He states that "on the London stage, Turks were represented as the demonic antagonists of Christians, and converts to Islam were ridiculed and punished; at the same time that the London merchants and Queen Elizabeth pursued alliances with Islam against Catholic and other European rivals" (p.5).

Vitkus, Dimmock and Burton in their paramount studies share the same line more often than not. By demonstrating the extent to which representation of Islamic matter and characters were complex, ambivalent and hence ultimately inconsistent, they engaged, each in a specific way, to untangle the contexts under which these forms of representing the Muslim Other were conducted. Burton (2005) considers mapping the logic by which to approach and examine such representations challenging, and he describes the process as "amount[ing] to a decoction" (p.28). Representation of Muslims is usually multi-faceted and contradictory facets are invoked accordingly with the situations. As a result, the representative practice of the Muslim fluctuates from the cruel image of the turbaned Turk to that of the commercially beneficial one.

Barbara Fuchs**,** in her seminal study *Mimesis and Empire* (2001), explores the highly intricate dynamics of imitation and contradistinction present in early modern literary and historiographical text which resulted of the confrontation with Islamic culture, in its many incarnations (p.2). Her study entails critical readings of identity and difference and Mimesis. This latter, Fuchs stresses, "emerges as both a powerful rhetorical weapon and a cultural-i.e. not simply literary- phenomenon" (p.3), and as such relations in the Early Modern were not all rigid and binaristic but rather permeable.

3. Reconciling Representation to Reality

In choosing not to flatten the experiential Anglo-Ottoman encounters into crude polarizations, I align with the critics who exposed the inadequacy and limitations of the postcolonial template in encoding difference and in accounting for alterity; a template that is predicated on the assumption of the west and east divide along lines of power. However, I argue further that while the rigid power divisions of Orientalism which gave way to implacable delineation are inapplicable to the era, and despite the power of mercantilism, the ensuing permeability of boundaries, and the growing profitable contacts between the English and the Muslims, there still remains a stubborn, indeed vexing and prevailing perpetuation of antagonistic tropes towards Muslim Others that has an enduring hold on English popular consciousness. Otherwise said, while the newly charted logics by revisionist scholars have stressed the importance of mercantile exchanges (i.e. reality) in engendering elastic ideologies and permeable borders, the dialectic that is tantalizing is the persistence of Islamic figures in English renaissance drama that are humiliated, ridiculed, and demonized on stage (i.e. representation).

Is it by the tradition of citationality, that is, the accretion and overlay of antagonistic conceptual repertoires of earlier canonical writers, and by way of canonicity, that the characters who were appealing then and stood the test of time are the vilified, vile or ridiculed ones? Does the emergence of stock characters obscure the breadth of complexity and present forth a small number of Islamic characters, by way of canonicity, as representing the essential type, in a manner of simplification?[5] Or is this quandary between the real and the representational unravelable. It is, Greenblatt insists in his perceptive study *Marvellous Possessions* (1991), "a theoretical mistake and a practical blunder to collapse the distinction between representation and reality, but at the same time, we cannot

[5] Arguing against Nabil Matar's assertion of the paucity of Muslim heroic and favourable characters on stage, Burton points out "the nobility of Greville's Mustapha and Camena, Marlowe's Orcanes and Selim Calymath, Heywood's Joffer, Wilson's unnamed judge, and Peele's Abdelmalec" (p.20), attesting to the variety of Muslim characters. I conversely am still inclined to contend, similar to Matar, that the Islamic essence of these plays is rather defined by the villainous fallen Muslim characters, the like of Eleazer, Othello, Bajazeth, Ithamore, and Amureth.

keep them isolated from one another; they are locked together in an uneasy marriage in a world without ecstatic union or divorce" (p.7).

The historical anachronism of applying Orientalist hegemonic paradigms in early modern England should not, doubtless, deflect our vision away from nor obscure the existence of analogous vocabularies of alterity, tenacious binaries and theological conceptions of differentiation that feed, in their hostility and bigotry, into the orientalist outlook of othering. [6]This study is then an attempt to construe the nexus of determinants: economical imbedded in culture and religious, that fashioned the representational practice of Muslim figures in the age, while going beyond the orientalist model and still holding that its discriminatory features were very much effectual and viable.

The perpetuation of the denigrated image of the Muslim, it is maintained, was the resultant espousal of two deeply enmeshed logics; first that the theatre as a historically specific cultural institution, and in response to the complex and global nascent-capitalist matrices, was a crucial site of the entertainment industry. This latter and in accordance with the power of rising capitalism, ensured that its spectacles were saleable and profitable, an aspect of paramount importance about the theatre as an entertainment industry which, so far, only benefited from scant attention. In the wake of global trade and the capitalist economy, the theatre and the staged hostility and hatred towards Muslims, it is argued, obeyed the basic, capitalist logic of supply and demand; the stage had to thrive in the marketplace and its spectacles were commodities that needed to be answerable to this logic. The image of the Muslim as cruel and threatening was more commercial and lucrative in the London theatres. Furthermore, the theatre's intersection with the joint-stock companies enclosed the famous artistic creators and their productions in the logic of capital and salability. The type which sold more staged the cruel Turk and his wishful demise, the tragically unintegrated Moor and his expulsion and not the benevolent, amicable Muslim. Then as today, shrewdly remark Nabil Matar and Gerald Maclean (2011), "accounts of conflicts, captivity, and religious polarizations were deemed more marketable" (p.10). It

[6] For more about the similarities of Orientalism and Proto-Orientalist English writings see Gerald Maclean " Before Orientalism*" Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire Before 1800* (pp.18-20)

follows that the writers whose staged productions were successful and secured them canonicity later, registered in their artifacts and staged precisely the type of characters who would draw in a larger number of theatregoers and expand the profits of the theatre.

Second, that the theatre was highly informed by the dogmatic and religious logic, what Nabil Matar calls "the doctrinal venue" and Burton "the textual-historical inventory", [7]which perpetuates long-standing antagonisms against Muslims, the kind of which saw unprecedented demand in the early modern theatre[8]. The English' "collective memory", to summon Mauritz S.Berger (2014), resonated better with the European pan-Christian image of Islam as a threat, a perpetuating image that is centuries old, an image that is dismantled from reality but that has much to do with "the perception of the Muslim as the embodiment of everything that the Westerner is not" (p.15), an image that was produced during an intense period of fashioning identities.

the newly formed political liaisons and the rapprochement with the Muslims, all subsumed under what Matar calls the secular venue of engaging with Islam[9], engendered new diplomatic and mercantile configurations, which instead of

[7] Matar (1998) declares that "a luggage of tropes and assumptions passed down from when Islam first appeared and challenged Christendom was still to perpetuate in the Christian European's mind and the English were no exception" (p.185). Jonathan Burton in *Traffic and Turning* (2005) defines it as the ensemble of late medieval and Renaissance repertoire of ideas, by no means truthful, about Muslims, shaped by confrontational Christian-Muslim conflicts from the crusades, that indeed can be traced back as far as the rise of Islam, and which sought to produce the Muslim, that was later projected on the Turk, as "amoral barbarian, inhuman scourge and even anti-Christ, but also as a paragon of order, piety and strength" (p.22).

[8] "Not a single reference in eschatological exegesis" assiduously remarks Matar (1999), "spared the "Mahumetans" from destruction either by war or conversion. "In literature and theology, and thus in the emergent ideology of early modern Britain**,** the Muslim was depicted as occupying a place beneath the civilized European/Christian" (p.14).

[9] Two venues govern Anglo-Muslim relations: the secular venue uunder which the military, diplomatic and commercial interests were held; and the doctrinal venue, under which issues of conversion to and from Islam, the representation of renegades and the ultimate destiny of Muslims were held (Matar, 1998 p.185).

sparing the image of the Muslim vilification on the stage, conversely helped to foster and complicate it even further, due to the theatre's itinerary commercial functions and of the absorption of the theatre in the entertainment industry, two defining aspects which need to be brought into the light of critical attention.

4. England's Trade, Nascent Capitalism and the Theatre

England's trade with the Ottomans and the Barbary states, then under the sovereignty of the Ottomans, was secured during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and this venture decreased England's marginality in the world of global trade. In 1600 the Levant Company was chartered, marking a decisive moment in England's trade history. The joint-stock companies and the merchants' ventures succeeded in ensuring lasting foundations for an emergent trade Capitalism. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, and through the chartered trade routes she helped initiate[10] , England finally succeeded to enter the scene of Merchant-Capitalism. It betrays historical veracity to think of the reign of Elizabeth I using the totalizing and paradoxically reductive nomination - the Golden Age of discovery and exploration and to approach it- as has for ages been envisioned, without truly historicizing England's just position at the wake of this global system. Prior to the revisionist proclivity of the early modern scholars outlined above, Scholarship about England and the Early Modern had failed to envision England's peripheral place in the European and Mediterranean worlds. Queen Elizabeth's turn to the Muslim Levant was a matter of necessity not of choice, and it signalled a diplomatic stance of a nation so conscious of its inferiority and so eager to establish new paradigms of contact. The English initiative with the Muslim potentates was defined by commercial necessity and trade and did not spring, as often and wrongly claimed, from imperialist or expansionist desires.

As England's economy was slowly taking on a capitalist form, thanks to trade in the Mediterranean basin and the Near East, London, as a consequence, was becoming a world city and its theatre, too, as a cultural institution witnessed its heyday. Daniel Vitkus (2008) in "the Common Market of All the World"

[10] Under Elizabeth's Reign, four trading companies received her royal charter: the Turkey Company, 1581 renamed Levant Company, 1592; Barbary Company, 1585; East India Company, 1600), and the Guinea Company, 1588.

demonstrates the extent to which the English theatre was itinerant to the Global System of the Marketplace, and bridges a clear link between the created joint-stock companies, the East India and the Levant companies, and the London theatre companies. Vitkus assiduously remarks that as overseas maritime trade became a global enterprise, the theatre was imagining this new economic identity of England in theatrical productions of the era. Just as England was pursuing change through the adoption of an ambitious capitalist economy and identity, so was its theatre both reflecting and collaborating in the foregrounding of this new identity. It is no coincidence then, declares Vitkus, that "for every profit-taking share-holder in the Globe, there were dozens of wealthy merchants making money in foreign markets" (p.20). As a matter of fact, the theatre joint-stock companies were among the earliest forms of capitalist engagements in England, whereby shareholders of capital venture in investments for the playing company with the aim of augmenting the gains. Along similar lines, Richmond Barbour (2003) demonstrates that " kindred alliances of corporate and royal interests generated both playing houses companies and trading companies, and London's merchants committed joint-stock to both enterprises" (p.41). These merchants took great interest in promoting and expanding the industry of the theatre. Famous among these entrepreneurs is James Burbage whom Queen Elizabeth granted the first royal patent and who succeeded in building the very first theatre "The Theatre".

The theatres of London took on an essentially financial role, with entrepreneurs, performers and playwrights collaborating to thrive the business. Jonathan Burton in *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (2016), states that: "dramatists thrive on paradox and uncertainty, and in the late sixteenth century England's unsettling encounters with the Islamic world provided Shakespeare and his contemporaries with a rich variety of characters, settings and scenarios" (p.27). This, in turn, meant that the theatrical productions had to attract huge audiences. The authors thus found themselves caught up in a system in which their art was commoditized. Alvin B.Kernan (1983) states that the "saleability [of art] depended on its attractiveness to a diverse audience with widely varying tastes drawn from all levels of society" (p.192). Furthermore, the social historian, Christopher Hill, provides the following account of the conditions under which stage productions of the time were produced,

> The way in which capitalist relations came to pervade all sectors of society can be illustrated from an industry not often considered by economic historians—the entertainment industry. ... The financial genius of James Burbage brought playing from a small-scale private enterprise to a big business. ... The drama was the first of the arts to be put on sale to the general public. Larger theatres brought bigger profits if the dramatist could draw his public. This created exciting new possibilities for the writers. (As cited in Alvin, 1083, p.191)

The writers were sensitively registering in their artifacts both contingent and fanciful concerns/anxieties that complied with their audiences demands. Stephen Greenblatt, in his edition of *Representing the English Renaissance* (1988), asserts that the negotiations of the boundaries between the aesthetic (literary) and the Real (material) are "all social [and that] they do not occur in a private chamber of the artist's imagination, for that imagination, in its materials and resources and aspirations, is already a social construct" (p.vii). It is deemed then, of paramount importance, to reckon that these writers' imaginations were defined by a sweeping, stubborn anti-Islamic national consciousness, communicated in a vast array of staged productions, and which was the defining spirit of their age, at least strongly in the time span of 1550-1690. Bereft of their ostensible transcendence and ahistoricity, these productions, if justly contextualized in the midst of capitalist machinations, the materiality of the theatre and the immersion of their producers in both, give way to a more demystified naturalistic explanation to this mania with the Muslim Other and of its twisted representation. The implications of England's entrance to the global system of trade altered the social reality which was grasped by the writers and embedded in systems of signification i.e. the theatre.

5. The Creation of Alterity and Contradistinction

The pioneer of New Historicism Stephen Greenblatt asserts in his groundbreaking reorientation of Elizabethan drama *The Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) that "in the 16th century, there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulate, artful process" (p.3). Radically changing the nature of Renaissance studies, Greenblatt argues that the Renaissance is marked by a highly increasing self-consciousness

about the fashioning of identities that is held under a complex nexus of deeply vexed pressures both internal and external (p.3). Such fashioning of selves, Greenblatt sets about analyzing, is carried through and embedded in the cultural productions of the time and critics should not "wall off literary symbolism from the symbolic structures operative elsewhere as if art alone were a human creation, as if human themselves were not, in Clifford Geertz's words, cultural artifacts" (p.3). In this respect, Greenblatt stresses investigating both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text to discern the context leading to such artifact and how it was grasped, embedded, and voiced by its makers (p.5).

Self-fashioning in the Renaissance is always "achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange or hostile. This threatening Other, heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, antichrist must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed" (p.9).In the same vein, Gerald Maclean (2007) states that the early modern period is focal in that national identities were busily remaking themselves in accordance with what is not them; and when it came to insular English "personal and national desires and identities could no longer be simply constructed from the local, the familiar and the traditional, but increasingly became inseparably related to notions about the global, the strange and the alien" (p.22).Such engagement of identity construction, arguably, entailed a complex dynamic in which the imposition of binary divides was crucial.

Burton (2013) stresses, that at the basis of European perceptions of Others, subsumed under the process of contradistinction, there poured forth diverse imaginings which culminated in a wide range of writings, in which lies an undeniable "pattern of external condemnation and internal disavowal" (p.500). This latter pattern of contradistinction is at the basis of identity formation of westerners, of the assumption of the Europeans' superiority as set against the alleged inferiority of the Non-Europeans they later subjugated. English fabricated imaginings of Islam, which the dramatists of the age took interest to cement in their plays, relied on this concept of alterity and springs mainly from antecedent confrontational clashes with Islam. This discursive ordering and discerning of traits and the accentuation of polarizations was held at the same time that the English were ardently pursuing liaisons with Muslim potentates and wishing to

emulate them. Within the literary and theological realms, alterity was ample precisely because the Muslims were colonially inaccessible, manifesting itself in an implacable demonization and polarizations that defined the English early modern image of the Muslim (Matar, 1999, p.13)

It is Homi Bhabha (1994), whose theoretical guidelines emerging out of a shrewd understanding of the poststructuralist works of Derrida, who tackles this process of identity formation in *The Location of Culture* as he first states that to exist is "to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus" (1994, p.44). Once this Other is found comes "the question of identification [which] is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy- it is always the production of an 'image' of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (p.45). Constructing an image of one's own is always in relation to an Other and the Self must mutate by taking, negating, and negotiating with this Other. Bhabha sets about analyzing that representation of this Other is always ambivalent disclosing a lack in the self and this will lead to an in-between space between the Self and the Other which could be used to adjust, accept and emulate certain enviable traits in the Other. Bhabha names this liminal space between the two cultures "Cultural Hybridity" and for the early modern period, the English were engaged in a similar form of cultural hybridity only that it was not between a colonial subject and the native one as Homi Bhabha's departure point is premised on but between a pre-imperial, pre-colonial English subject with the Muslim Others. The experience of the English in the Mediterranean and with Muslim empires was one of cultural hybridity as religious, racial, and cultural differences were experientially eschewed which challenged the already ingrained tropes of difference that were profoundly entrenched in English polemic and rhetoric. A whole segment of what is later to be an English cultural identity is produced in these in-between boundaries, in the intersections and overlaps between the English and Muslims.

Ania Loomba (2002) further maintains that the urge to accentuate differences of language, skin colour, religions, that contradistinction against Others was central to the early modern age because of the intense cross-cultural contacts of exploration and trade. Such dynamism of difference in relation to others recharged and rearticulated old tropes from the moment of the crusades.

Jonathan Burton (2013) declares that "As European encounters with the non-European world widened, older tropes about particular places were reiterated and recirculated, to new and diverse effects" (p.504). An anxiety to generate identities was intensified as European encounters with different non-Europeans grew heavy during the age of exploration, older tropes of difference were reiterated but to new and contingent effects. These intricate configurations of fashioning subjectivities, it is held, involved various mappings of difference, during heavy cross-cultural times overloaded with (mis)information about the Muslims. The discriminatory conceptualization of difference regarded the non-English and Muslims specifically as aberrant from the norms, a conceptualization which is both the product of the moment and a deeply-rooted perpetuation of earlier forms of differentiation.

CONCLUSION

The English early modern discourse of the Other is far from being a colonial or imperial discourse, in which the subjectivities of Others are constructed from the stand of authority and empowerment and ordered into neat polarizations. The nature of English interaction with the Muslim potentates, their primary partners of trade, confirms the anachronism of locating early modern dramatic representations of the Muslims in the Orientalist agenda. The prevailing representations of the Muslim Other are, on the one hand, the result of England's Eastern initiative in Capitalism, the commercial energies of which extended to the theatre and informed its productions. This explains the huge number of plays utilizing Islamic content and characters as an attempt to make sense of a powerfully growing Muslim Other. The denigrating nature of these representations, on the other hand, is weakly rooted in the newly configured Anglo-Muslim relations, but rather stems from a discursive scrambling and a rehearsal of older tropes of demarcation that date back to the time of the crusades, the images of which proved to be gainful in the theatres, and satisfied the appetites of audiences whose penchant was predominantly adversarial to Islam.

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