

REPRESENTING TURKISHNESS IN NEO-LATIN DRAMA: THE CASE OF *SOLYMANNIDAE*

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Fatima Essadek

Faculty of Language Studies, Sohar University, Sultanate of Oman

Abstract. *The Elizabethan period witnessed a proliferation of Neo-Latin drama in Oxford and Cambridge universities and in the Inns of Court. Despite the sheer bulk of academic drama and its role in paving the way for the mature drama written in the vernacular, it has not yet received adequate critical attention. Consequently, this paper tries to shed some light on this neglected genre by presenting a reading of the surviving drama Solymannidae — a play which draws on the history of the Ottoman dynasty. In creating action and characters the anonymous playwright borrowed extensively from the classical dramatic conventions, but, at the same time, he was original in representing the Turkish cultural identity. The discussion unveils the drama's pioneering role in introducing plots from Eastern history on the English stage and its contribution in formulating the dramaturgical practices to perform them. In this paper there is also an attempt to verify Solymannidae's source. The present inquiry aims to extend our knowledge of English Neo-Latin drama which is customarily excluded from the mainstream of scholarship.*

Key words: *Solymannidae, Neo-Latin Drama, Ottoman history, Seneca*

1. INTRODUCTION

During the Elizabethan period, drama written in the vernacular started to flourish, but its remarkable efflorescence did not stop the production of many plays written in Latin, usually performed at Oxford and Cambridge and the Inns of Court. Despite the vast corpus of English Neo-Latin plays,¹ the genre has remained a largely uncharted domain.

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Corresponding author: Fatima Essadek

Faculty of Language Studies, Sohar University, Sultanate of Oman

E-mail: ali.fatima12@yahoo.com

¹ One hundred and fifty Neo-Latin plays survived from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Norland 2013: 471); this estimate does not include non-extant works.

The linguistic barrier generated by the use of Latin is not the only reason which discourages Renaissance critics from studying them; indeed, a number of them were translated into English in the last few decades but they have received the same uninterested response from scholars. The lack of critical interest in this type of drama is primarily due to the widely held assumption that the genre constitutes hackneyed imitations of classical models which served pedagogical and edifying purposes; hence, its value and contribution to the development of English drama has been considered insignificant.

This paper aims to contest this position by presenting a study of a Neo-Latin play which highlights the importance of the genre and its influence on the vernacular drama. The play we are here concerned with is *Solymanidae* [*The Sons of Suleiman*], which is one of the rare Neo-classical works that is based on Ottoman history. The analysis will provide a critique of the text which engages with its representation of Turkishness on the academic stage, highlighting its inventiveness in dramatizing Ottoman cultural characteristics, and its impact on later dramas which dealt with Eastern themes. The current study is based on the English translation¹ of the play; for this reason, we do not engage in linguistic or stylistic issues related to the original text, but rather concentrate on the thematic and dramatic aspects of the text.

Solymanidae is a university play but it is not conclusive where it was performed. Smith (1923:101), however, states that it was acted out at Cambridge University. The text survived in a manuscript preserved at the British Library under MS. Lansdowne 723/2. The copy does not show the author's name, which is not unexpected since a considerable number of academic dramas are of anonymous authorship because they were composed by amateur students. Little is known about *Solymanidae*'s composition or transmission history, but the fact that the play survived indicates that it was considered of good enough quality to merit preservation. Under the list of *dramatis personae* the date '1581 Martii 5us,' i.e., 5 March 1582 is inserted, which coincided with Shrove Tuesday, a time for festivities, including drama performances, at universities. The play's script is shorter than the average Elizabethan play — which could be the result of some lines missing.² Despite the impediment of the lost material and the effect of the translation process, the text manages a coherent dramatic plot. The scenes are carefully constructed to provide a smooth escalating action which leads to the tragic denouement, and the characterisation is contrived with enough clarity and detail to produce well-delineated dramatic figures.

The plot is based on an episode from the history of the Ottoman dynasty, the assassination of Prince Mustapha, the eldest son of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. *Solymanidae* was not the first work to enact the catastrophic incident — as far back as 1561, the French writer Gabriel Bounin composed the drama titled *La Soltane*, whose theme is the downfall of Mustapha. The fact that this event took place in 1553 and was performed on the French stage within less than a decade indicates a European interest in the affairs of the Ottoman Court. The tragedy of Prince Mustapha enjoyed a popularity which endured for three centuries. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the account of his tragic end provided a sensational plot for English, French, Italian and German dramas.³

¹ The only English translation of the drama was produced in 2007 by Dana F. Sutton as an annotated hypertext edition.

² The translator observes that there are mangled lines, especially at the beginning and end of the text; he explains that some lines fail to scan because the scribe conflates two or more lines into one long line (*Solymanidae*, Commentary Notes).

³ These include Georges Thilloys' *Solyman II* (1608), Fulke Greville's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1609), Prospero Bonarelli's *Il Solimano* (1620), Antonio Cospi's *Il Mustafa* (1636), Jean de Mairet's *Le Grand et Dernier Solyman ou*

Solymannidae dramatizes the intrigue and treachery which led to the execution of Prince Mustapha. Sultan Suleiman has doubts about Mustapha's growing popularity and power, especially after the king of the Tartars proposes a marriage between his daughter and the prince. The father's doubts are inflamed by his scheming wife Rhod⁴, and Roxanes, one of the pashas, who persuade the sultan that Mustapha is plotting against his life. Rhod aims to get rid of Mustapha and to secure the throne for her son Selim⁵. One of the obstacles in Rhod's plan is Suleiman's advisor Hybrachimus, who supports Mustapha. Rhod and Roxanes conspire against Hybrachimus and convince Suleiman that he is a traitor. Rhod's intrigue finally succeeds: Hybrachimus is assassinated and the play ends with Mustapha's execution.

2. THE SOURCE

The source material of the play has not been conclusively identified since two sources have been suggested. While Samuel Chew maintains that the plot is derived from Hugh Goughe's translation of Bartolomej Georgijevic's *The Offspring of the House of Ottomanno* (1937: 500), Dana F. Sutton, the translator of the play into English, identifies the source as *Itinera Constantinopolitanum et Amasianum*, an account written by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, the ambassador of the Holy Roman Emperor to Istanbul. The following comparative analysis reveals that Sutton's ascription of the source to Busbecq is inaccurate and Chew's proposal of Goughe's translation is the correct attribution. Eliminating Busbecq as a source is imperative because it is still treated as such in many studies: for example, Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson's *British Drama, 1533-1642* and Linda McJannet's *The Sultan Speaks: Dialogues in English Plays and Histories about the Ottoman Turks* take it for granted that the play is based on Busbecq's account.

Juxtaposing the three texts unveils that several details in the play are mentioned in Georgijevic's but not in Busbecq's text. The character of Achmet pasha, who advises Mustapha to mind his safety and to escape, is not mentioned by Busbecq while Georgijevic refers to "Acmat pascha" who "secretly warned Mustapha by a messenger, that he shoulde have a more carefull regarde unto his lyfe and saftye" (1569: 81).⁶ Convinced that Busbecq's chronicle is the source, Sutton (2007) states in the introduction that Ganger, Mustapha's brother, is "an invented character with no historical basis". Ganger, or Giangir, was in fact a real historical figure, the son of Suleiman and Roxolana, Suleiman's favourite concubine and later his wife. Busbecq (1694: 121) refers to Giangir,

la mort de Mustapha (1635), Roger Boyle's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1668), François Belin's *Mustapha et Zéangir* (1705), David Mallet's *Mustapha* (1739), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's fragmentary play *Giangir, oder der verschmähte Thron* (1748), Christian Weisse's *Mustapha und Zeangir* (1761), Nicolas-Sebastien Chamfort's *Mustapha et Zéangir* (1778), and Louis-Jean-Baptiste de Maisonneuve's *Roxelane et Mustapha* (1785).

⁴ The names given to some of the characters in the play are somewhat different from their names in historical sources. Sultan Solyman's wife, who is named Rhod in the play, was known as Rosa, Rosselana or Roxolana in Europe, while in Turkish sources she was called Hurrem. The vizier Roxanes was Rustanus, Rustan or Roostem in European sources.

⁵ Although it is Selim who appears in the play and Rhode is keen to make him the successor, according to the historical narratives, Rhoda, or Hurrem, wanted the throne for her other son Bayezid (see Clot, 2012: 165).

⁶ The book is not paginated and the figures in citation refer to the numbers allocated to the images of the pages on *Early English Books Online* website.

not within his account of Mustapha's death but much earlier in his book, where he is said to have died from "a grievous Passion" after having been informed of Mustapha's murder. The writer of *Solymannidae* definitely did not utilise Busbecq as a source because he did not ascribe Ganger's death to a broken heart, but followed Georgije vic's account, according to which he committed suicide after discovering the body of his brother: Giangir "takyng in hande his dagger, wherwith hée was girded, he thruste it throughe his inwarde boweles, and so sodainlye gave up the ghouste" (Georgije vic 1569: 87). Reproducing Georgije vic's version, the messenger who reports his suicide in the play relates that "Soon he struck his own breast with a great sword, the savage steel raged within his inmost parts" (5).⁷

Another historical anecdote which uncovers what Georgije vic's narrative and *Solymannidae* have in common is Mustapha's dream, which is not mentioned in Busbecq. According to Georgije vic (1569: 83-84), Mustapha "semed to have seene Machomet appareled with glisteringe robes, takyng him by the hande, to bringe him unto a certaine place moste delectable, garnished with exquisite and gorgiouse palaices, and environed with a most pleasant garden". The dream is dramatically elaborated in the play when Mustapha relates to Achmet how Mohammed appears in his dream: "his shoulders and body all clad in white linen. Flying wings covered his feet. In his hand he held an olive and a thin palm frond. He had a golden crown around his laurelled head, and the glory of his beard was like that of the star of the east when it ascends its oblique course". In the dream Mohammed tells Mustapha that "before the third day has passed for you, you will stand on happy feet with me in a better place". Georgije vic (1569: 84) recounts that Mustapha "commaunded the Doctor to be sent for, & opened unto him the whole course of his dreame", and the doctor replied that the dream was ill-omened and foretold a danger coming to Mustapha. The doctor's role in *Solymannidae* is taken by Achmet, who interprets the dream as "Whoever dwells in Mohamed's blessed place is stone dead. No man alive can behold him or enjoy his bounties".⁸ The absence of Achmet pasha, Giangir's suicide and the dream episode in Busbecq's text excludes it from being the source, while the inclusion of this information in Georgije vic's, and the parallels between the play and Georgije vic's narrative in the details of the events, and even in the expressions used to describe them, testify that Goughe's translation of Georgije vic's book is the one the dramatist relied on.

In addition to *The Offspring of the House of Ottomanno*, I add William Painter's *Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure* as a possible source. In fact, the versions of Mustapha's story in *The Offspring of the House of Ottomanno* and *Palace of Pleasure* are identical; both include the same information which is presented in the same order and the only difference between them is in the language used by the translators. The two accounts definitely had the same source. As Painter translated the story from Nicholas de Moffan's pamphlet, *Soltani Solymanni horrendum facinus inproprium filium*, consequently Bartolomej Georgije vic must have elicited his story from Moffan's text. Hence, whether *Solymannidae*'s author used Georgije vic's *The Offspring of the House of Ottomanno* or Painter's *Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure*, the ultimate source of the play is Moffan's pamphlet.

⁷ *Solymannidae* has acts but no scene divisions. All subsequent citation numbers in parentheses refer to the acts of the play in the online edition.

⁸ All quotations in this paragraph are from act 5.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF SENECA

English Neo-Latin drama produced during the sixteenth century was largely influenced by the model of tragedy introduced by the Roman dramatist Seneca, and *Solymannidae* was no exception. Senecan tragedies are characterised by the use of a chorus, ghosts and the five-act structure. The first scene of *Solymannidae* represents a typical Senecan opening with the chorus who start the action with an inquiry about a gaping hole which reveals a ghost with “lofty shoulders and blazing hair.” The apparition turns out to be “the unhappy ghost of Selim” (Sultan Selim I (1512-20), Suleiman’s father), who prophesises the crisis which will befall his dynasty when “a savage stepmother will overthrow my princes, and, violent in her victory, will drag down the Emperor’s son, taking advantage of the gullible man’s silly fears”.⁹ In keeping with Senecan conventions, the chorus, throughout the play, concludes each act in a didactic—rather trite—style, commenting on the moral lessons of what has been acted and giving clear clues about the subsequent action.

The early appearance of the ghost is another Senecan feature incorporated into the scene. The opening lines recall the first scene in Seneca’s *Agamemnon*, where the ghost of Thyestes rises from the underworld to foretell the misfortune which will strike his family: “Leaving the murky regions of infernal Dis, I come, sent forth from Tartarus’ deep pit” (Seneca 1917); imagery comparable to the smoky gaping hole which brings forth the ghost of Selim. Like Selim, the Senecan ghost heralds violence and destruction to his family: “Now, now shall this house swim in blood other than mine; swords, axes, spears, a king’s head cleft with the axe’s heavy stroke, I see; now crimes are near, now treachery, slaughter, gore—feasts are being spread” (Seneca 1917).

Selim’s ghost moralises that “Blood atones for blood, unjust murder demands the crime be requited by fresh killing” (1). The apparition considers his family’s impending catastrophe as justice meted out by the gods, the “avengers of a father, [who] will not allow a crime to go long unpunished” (1), thus portraying himself as Suleiman’s victim. A subsequent scene includes yet another reference which describes Suleiman as a parricide; in the third act Roxanes tells Suleiman that “Selim overcame Bayezid, then his son overcame him. Think of all the examples provided by your family [...] The father’s life is unsafe” (3). Dramatizing Suleiman as a parricide is in disagreement with the historical accounts which attribute Sultan Selim’s death to a fatal illness, but it seems that the dramatist is more interested in abiding by the Senecan dramatic traditions than taking heed of historical records. Contemporary revenge tragedies, in Latin and the vernacular, necessitate the presence of the ghost of a dead relative who reveals the fact of his murder and demands the death of its culprit. The revenge-seeking ghost features in Elizabethan commercial plays as well such as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1602), Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* (1587) and the anonymous *Lochrine* (1595). The inclusion of such a figure has a pivotal role in motivating and bringing about the revenge and ultimately the tragic catastrophe. Hence, regardless of the historical truth, Selim is depicted as a victim of his son so that his unavenged ghost can, in a Senecan manner, forecast the disaster for the Ottoman dynasty as vengeance for his own murder.

The influence of the Senecan model on the play does not only impact the action but also the characters who are modelled on classical prototypes. Mustapha is represented as

⁹ All quotations in this paragraph are from act 1.

a typical Herculean hero: “He often gleams in his armor and whirls his sword, brandishes his spear, and powerfully controls his war-horse [...] the only one who is wont to be caught up in every warlike pursuit” (1). Suleiman’s scheming wife, who is bent on paving the way for her son to the throne, is depicted as the classical wicked stepmother, ready to use assassination, poison and magic to get rid of her step-son. The classical stamp is equally discernible in the characters’ names: while some characters retain their Turkish names, the names of others, like Roxanes and Hybrachimus, are Latinized, or entirely of classical origin, such as Ajax. The Turks were, furthermore, depicted as worshippers of mythological gods. For the wise advisor Hybrachimus, his duty to Suleiman “is second only to that I have for the all-ruling gods of Olympus” (4). Roxanes warns that “the gods of the Underworld grant nobody his baleful wish unless he first vows something to the pools of the Styx” (2). Indeed, the Ottomans are portrayed as devoted and pious heathens, including the evil Rhod, who believes that “the gods of heaven let no crime to go unpunished. Whatever savage man plans a dire crime in his ungrateful mind, neither Mother Earth, nor Phoebus, shining with his golden light, nor deadly Jove, thundering with his wrath, nor even Phlegethon itself can suffer him to live in safety” (3).

The dominance of the classical frame of reference is not necessarily dictated by the lack of information about the Turks. Like most early modern accounts about the Ottoman history, Georgijevic’s treatise gives detailed information about the religious and cultural aspects of life in the Ottoman Empire, which the dramatist could have utilised to construct realistic Turkish figures. The pervasive influence of the classical model on *Solymannidae* was, nonetheless, unavoidable; the dramatist and his audience were from a scholarly class which was instructed in the classics and which appreciated the faithful adherence to Greco-Roman dramatic models in general and Seneca in particular. It has already been demonstrated how the text manipulates its source and sacrifices historical accuracy for the sake of producing the Senecan effect. The extent of the deviation from historical records can be further exemplified by the insertion of the historical figure of Ibrahim Pasha (Hybrachimus), Suleiman’s Grand Vizier who was murdered in 1536, within dramatized events which took place in 1553. In the introduction of the play, Sutton (2007) attributes this authorial disregard for historical truth to the dramatist’s aim “to produce one of those tales of court intrigue that appealed so greatly to Elizabethan tastes”. Sutton’s (2007) observation is pertinent but it can also be suggested that the character of Hybrachimus is included in the plot to highlight yet another favourite Senecan theme, the instability of fortune and the fickleness of princes. The lesson illustrated by the downfall of Hybrachimus is that “the prince’s favor is seen to be fickle, his wrath to be headstrong, the twists of Fate to be various” (5).

4. THE REPRESENTATION OF TURKISHNESS

In certain respects, *Solymannidae* breaks away from the confines of classical traditions and portrays some aspects of the Ottoman religious and cultural identity. The play refers directly to Islam through its several mentions of Mohammed. The amateur writer did not follow the common misconceptions about Mohammed as an idol or impostor but labelled him as a prophet—the information might have been elicited from his source which clearly identifies Mohammed as a prophet. Generally speaking, the play does not reiterate the stereotypical representations of the Turks which were common

during the sixteenth century. During that era the negative stereotypes of the Turks prevailed; histories, news pamphlets, travel accounts and religious writings depicted the Ottomans as aggressive, barbarous and cruel. The hostility towards the Turks was generated by the threat these eastern people represented to their European neighbours: the Ottoman empire subjugated most of the southern eastern parts of Europe and was trying to expand its territories within the centre of the continent itself. The views towards the Turks, however, were not always negative as they were often thought of as proud and valiant, and their military discipline and respect for order and law were often noted and admired by European writers. *Solymannidae* seems to give a neutral depiction of its Turkish characters and their culture; the material is treated dramatically, like any story taken from a classical or biblical source, without any preconceptions or stereotyping.

It is worthy of note though that the text does not consistently dramatize the Turkish characters as followers of Mohammed but predominantly as worshippers of classical deities. In the decades preceding the 1580s, the nascent academic and commercial drama, portrayed the familiar belief systems, the classical and Christian, but a religion like Islam was a novelty on the English stage. Muslims were considered infidels and there was a general ignorance concerning their beliefs and practices; nonetheless, the depiction of the Turks as pagan believers could not be solely attributed to these ideological and cultural undercurrents. Such an authorial choice was dictated by dramatic constraints. Academic drama can be compared to a closed domain regulated by a set of rules and conventions which playwrights had to observe and one of these intrinsic rules, inherited from classical models, is depicting characters as worshippers of mythological gods.

Taking into consideration such a cultural and dramatic climate, dramatizing Islam on the academic stage must have been a real challenge for our anonymous dramatist. To avoid disrupting the dramatic status quo, the amateur playwright seemed to improvise a new approach in portraying the exotic faith by showing the Muslim characters as simultaneously believing in classical gods and Mohammed. The play can be credited with ushering in this dramaturgical practice which influenced later vernacular plays. In Robert Greene's *The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587-1591) classical and Muslim creeds are confusedly mixed. The Great Turk Amuracke believes in both Mahomet and ancient Greek gods. Amuracke is featured as a pious sultan who insists on consulting his mysterious god Mahomet; he believes that he must secure Mahomet's approval to launch any war and credits his victories to his deity's guidance. At the same time, the Great Turk believes in Jove as his supreme god and asks for his help to set him free from his captivity after losing the war and being captured by his enemy Alphonsus. The fusion between Islam and paganism is likewise present in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great I and II* (1587-88), where the supposedly Muslim characters are appealing to both Mahomet and mythological deities; not surprising then that Tamburlaine's wife, Zenocrate, exclaimed "Ah, mighty Jove and holy Mahomet" (Marlowe 2014: 5.2.301).

The dramatic practice of merging Islam and paganism can be considered as a sign of development in English drama signifying its gradual departure from the constraints of classical models. During the last two decades of the sixteenth century the scope of English drama, academic and commercial, broadened substantially when it started to engage with themes and characters from foreign cultures, especially the near Eastern nations. The evolving process necessitated the gradual break with classical traditions and the inclusion of new dramatic conventions. The change was not abrupt, and the importance of this transitional stage emerged when oriental Muslim characters, especially in plays produced

during the 1580s and 1590s, seemed to oscillate between Islamic and mythological beliefs. In due course, and with further development in the English dramatic art, Muslim characters, in post-sixteenth-century theatrical productions, started to shed their commitment to classical deities and portray aspects from their distinctive religious identity.

The play's influence on drama with Eastern plots should not be surprising because it was the first work to be sourced from the history of Eastern nations. Before *Solymannidae* the English stage was dominated by classical or religious themes, and a limited number of plays were based on English chronicles; hence, I would argue that the play germinated an interest in Eastern history, not only on the university stage but also in the commercial theatre. The date of the drama coincides with the period when Marlowe and Greene attended Cambridge University, so it is very likely that they were acquainted with the play either as contributors, in writing or acting, or simply as spectators. *Solymannidae* demonstrates that, like any classical or biblical theme, tales from the history of Ottoman dynasty can be readily appropriated by current theatrical conventions to illustrate the popular themes of ambition, revenge, power struggle and court intrigues. Consequently, the staging of the play should have suggested to the two dramatists the potential of using episodes from Eastern history as plots. Undoubtedly, Marlowe and Greene were two of the early prominent playwrights who popularized the genre of Eastern history plays in the next two decades: Marlowe through his celebrated *Tamburlaine I and II* and Greene with his *Selimus* (1592). It is very probable that they influenced other members in their University Wits circle to produce dramas in a similar vein such as George Peele's *Turkish Mahomet and Hiren the Fair Greek* (1588) and *Battle of Alcazar* (1589) and Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (1592).

Solymannidae is equally pioneering in introducing the character of the Mufti—a new dramatic figure which represents Islamic religion and law. Although this character symbolizes Islam, it seems to be heavily indebted to classical prototypes. For example, when Suleiman, eager to get rid of Hybrachimus, confides to the Mufti that he had sworn by the “great gods” to preserve his advisor's safety and happiness, the Mufti offers a peculiar, overly complex, solution as to how Suleiman might be absolved from his oath. Suleiman may

kill Hybrachimus in the middle of the night, when Diana steers her wandering car and occupies the height of Olympus. When all things are still as they are overcome by sleep and slumber possess you as you lie abed, you may allow Hybrachimus to be dispatched to Orcus. But don't command this. Point out the steel with which you want his throat to be cut, and leave the rest to your trusty slaves. (4)

The Mufti reasons that sleep “is a likeness of dull death [...] so while sleep overmasters your weary limbs, you can do that which you scarcely could when awake” (4). The Mufti's speech utilises classical tropes and concepts which are alien to Islamic beliefs, but if we turn to the prophet character in Seneca's *The Daughters of Troy* we can fathom the archetype of the Mufti. In the Senecan tragedy the Greek host asks Calchas, the prophet, to guide them on their war campaign. Calchas decides that “A virgin must be slain upon the tomb/ Of the Thessalian leader” (Seneca 1898: 2.3.365-366), then “nobler blood [...] Whom fate demands/ Grandchild of Priam, Hector's only son/ Hurl'd headlong from Troy's wall shall meet his death” (Seneca 1898: 2.3.374-377). The similarity between the Mufti and Calchas is evident in the reverence offered to them; their rulings have a binding force and brook no contradiction. They are also alike in their whimsical verdicts which involve human fatality.

Modelling the Mufti's character on classical precedents is not unexpected because the priest is the only figure in the Greco-Latin dramatic tradition which can serve as a prototype for the Mufti. There is, nonetheless, novelty in including him since it is the first time that such a character was introduced on the English stage. The Mufti would become a recurrent figure in several dramas produced in the following two centuries.¹⁰ His character would also undergo major modifications. Later English plays show more refined Muftis who have more to do with Islam than with classical myths. In less than two decades we see another Mufti in Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612) who is unmistakably identifiable with Islamic religion. In John Ward's conversion scene, the Mufti performs the ritual by clothing Ward with a turban, adorned with half a moon, a robe and a sword. The historical authenticity of the practices performed in this particular scene are highly doubtful, but what interests us is that the scene includes performative and visual signifiers which substantiate the Mufti's Turkish identity: he is shown as a figure enacting his religious duties through administering the conversion and the scene includes visual signs such as the Turkish turban, robe, sword and the crescent emblem. The dramatic evolution of this character on the English stage would continue to produce Muftis who have more complexity and depth; for example, the Mufti Abdalla in *Don Sebastian* (1689) who is a well-rounded, sophisticated figure which is full of craft, deception and hypocrisy.

The Ottoman costume is another aspect in *Solymannidae* where it takes the lead in performing and popularizing Turkishness on the English stage. In all probability the production of the play showed characters dressed in a distinctive Ottoman attire. Turkish fashion had been known in England since the late medieval period and the early Renaissance, and it was worn by Tudor monarchs. In a banquet, Henry VIII "with the Erle of Essex, came in appareled after Turkey fashiō, in long robes of Bawdkin, powdered with gold, hattes on their heddes of Crimosyn Velvet, with greate rolles of Gold, girded with two swordes, called Cimiteries hangyng by greate bawderikes of gold" (Hall 1809: 513). The interest in wearing Turkish clothes survived during Elizabeth's reign. Safiye, the favourite concubine of the Ottoman sultan Murad III, sent an Ottoman outfit as a present to Queen Elizabeth (Hakluyt 1903: 6:102). The gift was chosen according to the advice of the English ambassador in Istanbul Edward Barton. The ambassador's suggestion of a Turkish garb indicates its popularity at that time. In fact, this Eastern fashion was not exclusive to the upper classes but was a popular trend and its influence extended to hair styles. Commenting on the fashion in his own day, the Elizabethan author William Harrison (1994: 146) observes that fashion trends changed rapidly from Spanish to French and German, then "by and by the Turkish manner is generally best liked of". About facial hair style, he adds that "some are shaven from the chin like those of Turks" (1994: 146). As the Turkish clothes were publicly worn by loyalty and commoners alike, then they should have been familiar and accessible for theatrical productions.

Examining the conditions of producing academic plays during the period will further establish that the characters in *Solymannidae* were dressed in identifiable Turkish costume. Decades before the performance of the play, the university theatres had shown

¹⁰ These plays include Fuike Greville's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1609), Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612), William Whitaker's *The Conspiracy* (1680), John Dryden's *Don Sebastian* (1689), David Mallet's *Mustapha* (1739) and Cornelius Arnold's *Osman* (1757).

great interest in their productions evident in the lavish expenditure on costumes, scenery and stage apparatus.¹¹ At Cambridge University, where *Solymanidae* is believed to have been performed, as far back as 1548-1562, the inventories of St. John's College list diverse types of special clothes related to the stage players at the college such as Spanish fashion, a devil outfit and death costume (Billington 1978: 1-10). With this attention given to stage costume, it is not likely that the people in charge of producing the play would perpetrate the blatant mistake of showing Turkish characters in apparel which did not denote their cultural identity.

In the last act in *Solymanidae* we find a rare reference to the characters' appearance when Mustapha addresses a chorus of armed janissaries "greetings to you, noble gentleman. I like your costume, they are worthy of heroes" (5). Mustapha's mention of the janissaries' attire is of note because the text is sparing with references to the physical aspects of the performance, i.e., scenery, props or costumes; hence, it is interesting to find this direct remark that attracts the attention to the actors' clothes. Atypical as it is, Mustapha's comment on the soldiers' attire indicates that the actors were supposed to be dressed in a distinctive way. Describing the clothes as proper for heroes means that they were intended to be extravagant. As it has been previously mentioned, academic theatres were greatly interested in the visual aspects of their performances and it seems that they realised that the Turkish fashion might achieve their goal of creating a spectacle to impress their audience.

Utilising Turkish clothes and accessories for such an end is not unprecedented, especially if we consider it in the context of earlier popular and theatrical entertainments. Documents related to the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558) show that court masques included masquers dressed in Turkish costume. Around the middle of 1550s the royal court hosted a masque of "Turkes Magistrates" enacted by characters donned in "Turky gounes of redd cloth" with "hedpeces of white sarsenett"¹² decorated with tassels of gold (Feuillerat 1914: 181), which seems a clear reference to turbans. Some masquers were dressed as archers and torchbearers, while another masque "Goddesses huntresses" showed Turkish women. The inventory of the costume in both masques attests to the scrupulous attention given to the distinguishing details in each type of costume. The efforts to create a visually impressive show in the masque of "Turkes Magistrates" can be elicited from constructing huge turbans supported by wooden structures as the designer devised "hedpeces of Asshen hoopewood in queynte and strange fassion by him made and prepared for the men turkes maskers & torcheberers" (Feuillerat 1914: 173). The dresses were, additionally, complemented with decorative weapons: the scimitar and falchion. These items usually accompany Turkish attire but what is interesting is that even the quivers of arrows and bows for the archers were designated as Turkish: "turky bowes and vj turky quevers of arrowes" (Feuillerat 1914: 182). The weaponry specified in the document might be similar to the oriental bow which appears in Sir Robert Shirley's portrait of 1622 where he is depicted wearing oriental dress and holding a bow with a distinctive curve. Turkish fashion was characterized by an air of luxury, exoticism and grandeur and these qualities seemed to generate interest in exhibiting Turkish clothes and paraphernalia in court revels during that time.

¹¹ See Boas (1914: 23-24 and 348-9), Robertson (1969: 41-50) and Nelson (1989: 719-720).

¹² A soft fabric made of silk.

The reference to the special costume of the janissaries in *Solymannidae* invites us to re-evaluate the conventional notion that Neo-Latin drama was composed solely for didactic purposes. Dressing the characters lavishly ascertains that the production was not a mere exercise in rhetoric and classicism, but that it was also intended to provide a visually aesthetic experience. As one of the earliest plays to elicit its plot from Turkish chronicles, the drama certainly blazed the trail in highlighting the potential of utilising Turkish costume and accessories for creating a spectacle. Indeed, Turkish fashion might be one of the factors which attracted Elizabethan amateur and professional playwrights to the tales from Ottoman history.

5. CONCLUSION

Although the plots of Neo-Latin plays were predominantly classical or religious, *Solymannidae* was the first English drama to borrow its story from the history of Eastern nations. The text reveals its obvious indebtedness to the Senecan dramatic model: the anonymous author reproduces all the Senecan effects including the chorus, ghost and the general classical frame of reference, but at the same time it was original in incorporating elements from the Turkish culture through the references to Mohammed, the inclusion of the character of the Mufti and the utilization of Turkish costume. Dramatizing an episode from Ottoman history demonstrates how the source material was easily adaptable for Neo-Latin drama. The Eastern tale was moulded successfully by Elizabethan dramatic practices to explore themes such as the struggle for power, ambition, revenge and divine punishment, which were popular on the sixteenth-century stage. Definitely, this early play had a pioneering role which should not be underestimated—especially in the light of the fact that in the period from 1585 to 1624 there was a surge in the number of English plays which were based on Eastern material.¹³

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¹³ During this period, fifty-eight plays included Eastern characters and themes (Burton 1915: 257-8).

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PRIKAZ TURSKOG U NEOLATINSKOJ DRAMI: PRIMER DRAME „SULEJMANOVI SINOVI“

Tokom elizabetanskog doba veliki broj neolatinskih drama napisan je i izveden na univerzitetima Kembridž i Oksford kao i u profesionalnim udruženjima. I pored izuzetno obimnog opusa akademske drame i njenog značaja za kasniji razvoj drame na govornom engleskom jeziku, ona i dalje predstavlja kritički nedovoljno istraženu oblast. Stoga je ovaj rad pokušaj da se naučno-stručnoj javnosti predstavi taj dugo zapostavljeni žanr kroz čitanje drame „Sulejmanovi sinovi“, jednog od retkih sačuvanih komada koji je zasnovan na istoriji otomanske dinastije. Nepoznati autor ove drame se u stvaranju zapleta i likova obilato koristio klasičnim dramskim konvencijama, ali je istovremeno imao originalni pristup kod predstavljanja turskog kulturnog identiteta. U radu se prikazuje i značajna uloga koju je ova drama imala u uvođenju istorije Orijenta na englesku pozornicu i njen doprinos u stvaranju dramaturških praksi za izvođenje orijentalnih običaja na pozornici. Takođe, autori pokušavaju da utvrde i potvrde izvor drame „Sulejmanovi sinovi“. Cilj istraživanja je da se produbi znanje o neolatinskoj drami koja uglavnom nije predmet izučavanja i interesovanja kritičara.

Ključne reči: *Solymanidae* („Sulejmanovi sinovi“), Neolatinska drama, Otomanska istorija, Seneka