

A Celebration of Chivalry:  
Solyman the Magnificent and the Knights of Rhodes in  
William D'Avenant's "The Siege of Rhodes"

سليمان العظيم وفرسان رودس:  
الأخلاق والبطولات فى مسرحية وليام دافننت "حصار رودس"

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“Critical readings have neglected the play as a piece of drama and overlooked the interrelated significance of the image of the Turk that lies at its heart.”

(Birchwood, 2007, p.104)

In spite of the fact that Birchwood (2007) acknowledges *The Siege of Rhodes*'s (1661) need for a dramatic reading, he himself refrains from undertaking the task. The reading he offers does not touch the play's dramaturgy, but instead considers its relationship with contemporary issues and with D'Avenant's accusations of apostasy. Offering a different perspective, in his classic study of English Restoration drama, Derek Hughes studies the pioneering theatricality of the play (1996, pp.1-77). Janet Clare pays critical attention to the heroic love story between Ianthe and her husband, the Sicilian Duke Alphonso, whom she also considers as the protagonists of the play (2006, p.181-184). In his turn Samuel Chew believes that *The Siege of Rhodes* is not worth reading as a dramatic experience (1965, p.161). However, it is not clear whether Chew's judgement is based on the operatic version of 1656 or the dramatized one that was performed after the Restoration. After the Restoration of 1660, D'Avenant revised the operatic version and turned it into a drama, adding a new part. By 1661, he staged *The Siege of Rhodes* as a play in two parts at the Duke's Playhouse (Tupper, 2012, pp. xi-xlvii). It is noticeable that the available critical studies have treated Solyman the Magnificent as a marginal figure. However, this study attempts to reread Solyman's character and reveals his dramatic centrality. Solyman dominates the dramatic action through his chivalric conduct as a warrior and victor. His centrality receives further endorsement through the reactions of his Christian opponents to his chivalric stand as an ideal man of war and peace.

Chivalry was a set of values that emerged out of the crusading orders of medieval Europe. It occupied a distinct place among the ruling European classes between the eleventh and the fourteenth century. Edgar Prestage writes:

Chivalry was a compound of three elements...war, religion and gallantry. The three primary virtues of Chivalry, based on its military character, were courage, loyalty and generosity. The three secondary virtues, derived from religion, were fidelity to the church, obedience and chastity. The three tertiary virtues, social in their nature, were courtesy, humility and beneficence....It held up a high standard of honour, and required it to be maintained without any diminution...It instilled a courtesy, a code of fine manners based on a heartfelt consideration...especially in the relation of men towards women. (1928, p.32)

With such moral code, chivalry had been institutionalized by the ruling elite. The governing classes in Europe made it their duty and privilege to protect chivalry long after it disappeared as a practical art of war in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Prestage, 1928, pp.22-25). The historical Knights of Rhodes, the deadly foes of Solyman, were part of this ancient world of knighthood. Their history can be traced back to the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem. The monastic Hospitaller order was founded during the First Crusade in 1099. At the beginning they were responsible for providing medical care to the Christian Pilgrims. Later they became a formidable armed force responsible for the safety of the pilgrims. After the victory of Saladin in 1291, they were expelled from the Kingdom of Jerusalem. In 1309, they captured Rhodes and made it their home until their military confrontation with Solyman in 1522 (Nicholson, 2001, pp.1-115; Bradford, 1991). Long before D'Avenant's *The Siege of Rhodes*, chivalry as a practical way of life was something of the past (Ferguson, 1960, p.ix). During the fifteenth century, England was fighting

the dreadful Wars of the Roses...all rules of honour and mercy were swept away in a diabolical orgie of dynastic hatred....In Europe,...the so-called religious wars,...the very furies of hell were let loose in a pandemonium of assassination, treacheries, conspiracies, and rebellion, amid which every idea of chivalry was negated. (Prestage, 27)

When *The Siege of Rhodes* was staged, the chivalric order of Rhodes was named Knights of Malta. It was not only the name that changed but also the conduct of the knights. They experienced a severe moral decline and started to act like mercenaries. Paul Lacroix comments on their moral decline:

Inflated with wealth, laden with privileges which gave them almost sovereign powers ... the order at last became so demoralized by luxury and idleness that it forgot the aim for which it was founded, and gave itself up for the love of gain and thirst for pleasure. Its covetousness and pride soon became boundless. The Knights pretended that they were above the reach of crowned heads: they seized and pillaged without concern of the property of both infidels and Christians. (Lacroix, 1964, p.188)

The Knights of Malta's conduct, the successors of the Knights of Rhodes of 1522, the year of Solyman's military expedition, reflected Lacroix' description. This leaves chivalry, the moral institution that civilized and transformed feudal Europe, outside the scope of the seventeenth century system. The theme of the play, which is a combination of war and love, is most suitable to his audience during the opening years of the Restoration who were mostly courtiers and aristocrats. The king and his courtiers were familiar with such heroic mode and exotic setting through French plays that were frequently staged at the French court (Bellinger, 1929, pp.294-259; Langhans, 2000, pp.1-18). By the standards of many, during the English interregnum, which was the period between the execution of Charles 1 in 1649 and the

Restoration of his son Charles II in 1660, the Puritans distanced England from its aristocratic civilized image only to take it back to the barbaric medieval ages (Jones, 1978, p.15). D'Avenant was no different from his literary contemporaries who tried to reconnect England to its aristocratic past. Derek Hughes (1996) points to John Dryden's *Astraea Redux* as a celebration of the

return of the goddess justice and of the Golden Age, portraying the Civil War a rebellion of the rabble against their natural masters. This pattern, of subverted degree ceding to the revival of an earlier order of justice, recurred in many plays of the 1660s (p.30).

D'Avenant finds it suitable to remind the English audience with their aristocratic past through invoking the moral code of chivalry. Richard W. Kaeuper (1999), points out the historically firm relationship between English Kingship and Chivalry:

Although a part of common patterns of medieval civilization, England regularly shows fascinating and instructive differences from societies across the channel. By the 'age of chivalry' one of the most significant differences is the long-term growth of royal power.... Chivalric ideas, whatever qualifications about royal control they embodied, did little to prevent English Knighthood from serving the crown regularly and loyally. (p.107;110)

After all, invoking chivalry with its royal ties is not a difficult task as chivalric heroes were made popular through the writings of many. Perstage (1928) argues that

Literature took up the task of rehabilitation,...to infuse life into a dying institution. Hector and Achilles, Alexander and Caesar, the British King Arthur and the Frankish Emperor, Charlemagne, all were made knights of romance, clad in fourteenth century armour. (p.28)

However, what is unconventional about D'Avenant's attempt is that he refrains from employing the traditional European heroes and knights. He creates an exotic and oriental chivalric knight who is wearing Ottoman Kaftan and Turban. Due to the absence of chivalry as part of his audience's daily life, his choice of the Turkish Sultan, who is well known in Europe, is understandable (Ahmed, 2006). The exotic Solyman is a suitable medium to attract interest and create an objective dramatic space that can enable the English to value the nobility embedded within the chivalric character (Birchwood, p.104).

D'Avenant ensures that as a warrior and victor, Solyman, emerges to be an ideal chivalric knight. Thus, as a warrior, Solyman displays the best qualities of a knight which are high sense of honour, valour, gallantry and beneficence (Milman, 1864, p.204; Bouchard, 2010, p.18). Solyman's attack and subsequent siege of "rocky" Rhodes is the best testimony of the Sultan's pursuit of honour. The Knights of Rhodes with their ancient experience in war and legendary bravery were formidable opponents (Giertz, 2010; Nicholson, 2001; Nicolle, 2001). During their two hundred years in Rhodes, the knights sustained and overcame several serious attacks and sieges. In 1479 and 1480, the Ottomans' expeditions to the island proved costly and futile as the knights forced them to retreat (Brockman, 1971; Devries and Smith, 2012). To attempt another assault against the island and undertake such a dangerous task indicates that Solyman is in pursuit of honour. The Admiral of Rhodes describes the fleet:

...the Bassa's fleet appears;  
Her shady wings to distant sight,  
Spread like the curtains of the night.  
Each squadron thicker and still darker grows;  
The fleet like many floating forests shows. (1:1. 1. 9-14)

As a true chivalric knight, Solyman, "refuses no challenge from an equal and never to turn the back upon a foe." (Prestage, p. 25). The enormous size of the fleet reveals that Solyman takes his foes seriously.

It also shows his determination to win this war against the Knights of Rhodes. The experienced Admiral's metaphoric description of the enormous fleet foretells the fate of Rhodes. As the task of capturing Rhodes proves difficult, Solyman expresses his determination to succeed. When his vizier Pyrrhus explains that the task the Turkish army is facing is an extremely difficult and dangerous situation under the fortified walls of Rhodes, the Sultan reminds him of the slow but assured labour of ants. Ants face high hills "rais'd, in scorn/of labour, to be levell'd with a spurn" (2. 2. 74-76). The Sultan insists on being as patient and determined as the ants. This is clear through his plan to build a castle upon Philermus Hill that overlooks Rhodes. The Sultan explains his new tactics, as Grecians from Lycia will:

A spacious palace in a castle raise:  
A neighbourhood within the Rhodians view;  
Where, if my anger cannot them subdue,  
My patience shall out-wait them, whilst they long  
Attend to see weak princess make them strong:  
There I'le grow old, and dye too, if they have  
The secret art to fast me to my grave. (1:3. 1. 60-66)

To the ambitious Sultan, abandoning the siege is not an honourable option. As a result, patience seems to be the only suitable tactic. He insists that he is ready to spend his lifetime besieging Rhodes. Thus, building a castle overlooking the town is practical evidence of his determination. It is of note that Solyman's sense of honour though strong is not fiery. This shows that Solyman is a toned version of the exaggerated heroes of his predecessor, Marlow's Tamerlane and his successor, Dryden's Almanzor. Thus, Solyman's logical heroism is in harmony with D'Avenant's concept. In his preface to *Gondibert* (1651), D'Avenant criticizes his predecessors who made it difficult to produce

Heroick Poem that in a perfect glass of Nature gives us a  
familiar and easie view of our selves. (p.2)

In his dedication to *The Siege of Rhodes*, he stresses the same

idea. He argues that he did his best “to render the *ideas* of great-ness and virtue pleasing and familiar.” (p.188)

The other quality Solyman displays during the siege is valour which is the most important element in chivalry. To him, bravery is not only a physical but also a mental state which he deeply understands, possesses and appreciates. Solyman’s philosophical understanding of valour can be perceived through his argument with his general over their failure to capture the town. He rebukes Pyrrhus, his General:

Thy mind was never valiant, if, when old,

Thy courage cools because thy blood is cold. (1:2. 1. 67-68)

Solyman argues that bravery is a state of mind that transcends age and physical strength. Thus, an old man who is no longer physically fit but possesses mental bravery can emerge victorious. The same philosophical concept motivates him to declare, “The valiant man is his own emperor” (1:4.1. 18). As a state of mind, bravery enables those who possess it to enjoy a strong sense of independence that resists submission to power and fear of danger. The Knights of Rhodes are a perfect example of the independence of valiant men. The knights were known not only for bravery but most importantly for their independence. In 1306, the Hospitaller attacked Rhodes which was in the possession of the Byzantine emperor, Andronicus II. After a bloody siege, they annexed the island and made it their home in 1309 (Nicholson, 2001, pp.46-47). To Solyman, bravery is not only a philosophy but also a way of life. His personal bravery can be perceived through his personal leadership of the dangerous expedition against such formidable opponents as the Knights of Rhodes. When, after three months of fierce fighting, Solyman manages to land on Rhodes, the chorus announces the news:

Great Solyman is landed now;

All fate he seems to be;

And brings those tempests in his brow

Which he deserv’d at sea. (1:2. 1. 47-50)

The fact that Solyman succeeds in breaking the defences of the

island and landing is a testimony to his bravery. The chorus connects him to fate in the sense that he is decisive and brave in executing his will.

The Sultan's personal involvement in war goes beyond his leadership to include physical participation in the fight. The instructions he gives to Pyrrhus, his General, reveal this:

Pyrrhus, draw up our army wide!  
Then from the gross two strong reserves divide  
And spread the wings  
Bring thou the rear, we lead the van. (1:3. 1. 1-3, 12)

Solyman's decision to head the van proves his insistence on sharing the dangers his men are facing in the battlefield. Furthermore, it reveals that, due to constant involvement, the Sultan is well practised in the tactics of war. To give further credibility to the Sultan's valour, D'Avenant employs his foe, Villerius, the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes. He describes their experience in fighting Solyman:

The foe three moons tempestuously has spent  
Where we will never yield, nor he relent;  
Still we but raise what must be beaten down. (1:2. 1.7-9)

The Master of the Knights of Rhodes testifies that Solyman is more than their match in bravery. He also confirms that, due to his bravery, his victory is guaranteed.

Being a brave man, Solyman honours those who display it. As a result, he holds in high esteem the bravery of the Knights of Rhodes and Ianthe the Sicilian princess. When his army's assault against the town fails, Solyman recognizes the bravery of the knights who are defending it. He says:

In honor's orb the Christians shine;  
Their light in war does still increase;  
Thus vildly they dare live, and yet dare dye. (1:2. 1.95-96, 103)

To the Sultan, his army's failure is the result of the foe's bravery and readiness to die defending their island. The Sicilian princess, Ianthe,

proves to be no less brave and, thus, deserves the Sultan's respect. The princess, who is the "Bride to Alphonso, who in Rhodes so long/The team has been of each heroic song" (1:2.1.132-133), has been captured while trying to reach her husband in the besieged Rhodes. Desperate Ianthe makes it clear that she is unable to enjoy her liberty while her husband is in Rhodes. She wonders,

When he, in whom my plight heart doth live  
Shall in cruel siege imprison'd be!  
And I, whom love has bound, have liberty? (1:1.89,93-94)

Being unable to have peace away from her distressed husband, she decides to share his fate and joins him in Rhodes.

Away! Let's leave our flourishing abodes  
In Sicily, and fly to with'ring Rhodes. (1:1.1. 95-96)

Mustapha explains that the princess, "for [her husband] relief those gallies fraught;/Both stow'd with what her dow'r and jewels brought" (1:2.1.134-135). In order to reach her husband with the loaded ships, the princess and her companions "maintain'd a bloody fight" (1:2.1. 118-120, 122). When captured by the Turks, the princess displays bravery by refusing the Sultan's orders to unveil. She informs the Sultan, "This curtain only opens to [her lord's] eyes" (1:2.1.145). She also demands to be conducted to her husband in order "To take... share of all his destiny" (1:2.1 153). She assures the Sultan that she will commit suicide if he refuses her request. The princess argues that "in death cold arms/ My honour instant safety give" (2. 1.156-157). Ianthe's brave act and reaction to her subsequent captivity, is unusual. She differs from the heroines of the Jacobean and heroic drama not in the sense of exemplary virtue but in the sense of dynamism. They are virtuous but tearful and passive characters who allow themselves to be carried away by the events only to wait for the protagonist to save them (Marsden, 2000, pp.181-189). Ianthe refuses to wait for the events to unfold her husband's fate while watching. Birchwood (2007) points out that Ianthe's "portrait of

the paradigmatic ‘Christian wife’ may well have called to mind the exploits of Henrietta-Maria and her active participation in the Civil War” (p.111).According to the dictates of chivalry, a knight is expected to be gallant and “women of noble birth should enjoy his special care”(Prestage, p.15).In accordance with the chivalric norms, the Sultan proves that he is not only gallant but beneficent as well. He informs Ianthe:

Thou great example of Christian wife,  
Thy gallies with their freight,  
For which the hungry wait,  
Shall strait to Rhodes conducted be.(1:2. 1.174-178)

As a reward for her bravery and virtue, Ianthe is allowed to land in Rhodes with all the supplies she has brought. Furthermore, the Sultan gives his permission that the princess and her husband can depart from the besieged Rhodes to safe Sicily. He informs her “... as thy passage to him shall be free,/So both may safe return to Sicilie.” (1:2. 2. 179-180).

As a victor, Solyman maintains his ideal chivalric conduct. In dealing with the defeated Rhodes, he displays generosity and mercy. Solyman’s generosity can be perceived through his positive response to the Rhodians’ desire for peace. Conventionally, victorious leaders are particularly vindictive towards the foe who displays lengthy and brave resistance. The Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, Villerius, advises his warriors, “All those attempts of valor we must shun/which may the Sultan vex...” (1:1.1.146-147). Throughout the siege, the Knights of Rhodes display outstanding bravery and determination, which delays Solyman’s capture of the island. Consequently, the Grand Master is concerned that his knights might suffer as a result of their bravery. However, the victorious Solyman proves that the Grand Master’s fear is groundless. When his General informs him that “Rhodes has hung a flag of treaty out,” (2: 2. 1.1) Solyman responds:

Thy courage, haughty Rhodes,  
Is but a braver kind of impudence.

Thou knew'st my strength, but thou didst better  
Know

How much I priz'd the bravery of a foe. (2: 2.1. 3-8)

Solyman's response is void of any sense of elation or pride. The Sultan is humbled by his victory and the bravery of his foe. Once again, D'Avenant detaches his hero from the exaggerated heroism of the Jacobean and Restoration heroes. Heroes, as explained by Derek Hughes (1996), suffer from the limitations of their heroic codes. He argues:

the intricacy of life, and irrationality of human character forbid the exemplary deeds...passion...infiltrate the motivation of the most principled, and the unpredictable arbitrariness of life means that honourable and villainous actions can be strangely parallel in their outcomes. (p.46)

Solyman defies the dramatic norms of heroic ancestors and, instead of threatening his defeated enemies with bloody annihilation, the Sultan is full of praise for their bravery.

The knights are not the only ones who deserve the Sultan's respect. Ianthe who returns to the Turkish camp "to kneel and treat" (2: 2.2.24) is treated with generosity. The emperor finds the news of Rhodes' desire to end the war encouraging. He orders Mustapha to arrange a grand reception for Ianthe:

...let her reception be

As great as is the faith she has in me. (2:2, 2, 41-42)

To understand the significance of such instructions, we need to be aware of Ianthe's place in the strategy of this war. Ianthe has been captured trying to give aid to the besieged island and her husband, Alphonso, the Duke of Sicily. She has been freed since, allowed to join her husband and given the chance to depart from the island along with him. However, the offer is rejected and Ianthe joins the side of the emperor's foes. As a result of the princess' past conduct, the Sultan is surprised by her presence:

What wandering star does lead her forth? Can she  
Who scorn'd a passport for her liberty,  
Vouchsafe to come, and treat without it now? (2:.2.2. 27-29)

The fact that Ianthe feels safe enough to meet the Sultan again and asks for what she has previously rejected is an undeniable sign of her faith in him as a reliable and honourable man. Solyman judges that Ianthe's trust in him qualifies her for his extravagant show of respect.

The other chivalrous quality Solyman reveals as a victor is mercy. The Sultan preserves the lives and honour of the defeated and treacherous knights along with the Duke of Sicily. The mercy he displays is of particular note as it targets his defeated foes who dishonour their pledge to end the war. They are bound to honour their peace deal with the Turks while Ianthe is negotiating the treaty terms. However, they launch a bloody assault against the Turkish camp. Pyrrhus informs the Sultan that the Rhodes' "flag of treaty... have taken in." The assault against the Turks with two thousand knights fails and the Grand Master Villerius laments:

E're morning does advance we must retire;  
Justly asham'd to let the days great light  
Shew what a little we have done to night.(2:5.4. 2-4)

The Grand Master makes it clear that they have failed to achieve their objectives. Despite the knights' apparent military and moral defeat, the Sultan refuses to kill them. He orders Pyrrhus:

Let us no more the Rhodians flight  
Pursue;  
Who since below our anger, need our care.  
Compassion is to vanquisht valourdue  
Which was not cruel in Successful warr. (2:5.5.1-4)

To the victorious Sultan, the defeated knights need compassion and not punishment. To him, compassion towards the enemy is a testimony of one's "valour". The furious Pyrrhus disagrees with the Sultan and argues:

The world is wicked grown, and wicked men  
Are but enabled to offend agen,  
When they are pardon'd and left arm'd. (2:5.5. 9-11)

Pyrrhus' argument is meant to remind the Sultan of the knights' treachery and their inability to honour the terms they proposed. Considering their behaviour, Pyrrhus judges that they are likely to launch another assault if they are not punished effectively. However, he explains that the Sultan's exceptional moral attitude towards his treacherous foes is rooted in divinity. He explains:

Our Sultan does his pow'r from  
Heav'n derive,  
'Tis rais'd above the reach of human force:  
It could not else with soft compassion thrive. (2:5.5.5-7)

To Pyrrhus, Sultan's honourable dealing with his foes is beyond normal human behaviour. As such, it is located within the scope of divine norms. The divine-like mercy of the Sultan is designed to highlight the non-chivalrous behaviour of the knights. It also reminds the Restoration audience that chivalry as practised by Solyman is not only a noble behaviour but a remedy to make the world less hostile and violent. England has just emerged from a bloody civil war that damaged the political and social fabric of the country. As a result, the restored Monarchy found itself in a dangerous environment that threatened the entire political process. To recall their past moral system, which witnessed the unifying power of chivalry and kingship, is a way of regaining the source of their power and stability.

Significantly, the Knights of Rhodes are not the only ones whose lives the Sultan preserves. The Duke of Sicily, Alphonso, who has played a central role in the assault against the Turks, has been captured but freed by orders from the Sultan. Mustapha confirms the identity of the prisoner:

The pris'ner whom in doubtful fight  
We took,

Is young Alphonso, the Sicilian Duke. (2:5.5.17-20)

He also informs the Sultan of Alphonso's heroism in defending Rhodes against their attacks. He also confirms that Alphonso "in Rhodes so long / The them has been of each heroic song" (2:2.1.132-133). The Sultan proves merciful and informs his prisoner:

You may imbark for the Sicilian coast,  
And there possess your wife when Rhodes is lost.  
(2:5.6.184-185)

The Sultan saves the Duke's life, restores his freedom and love. Furthermore, he exempts him, along with his wife, Ianthe, from sharing the tragic fate of Rhodes, as they are allowed to depart for Sicily.

Besides preserving the lives of his foes, the Sultan enables them to maintain their honour. When Solyman informs Alphonso that he can depart to Sicily, the Duke responds:

I cannot doubt your bounty when I crave  
That, granting freedom, you will honour save.  
My honour I shall lose, unless I share  
In Rhodes, the Rhodians worst effects of war.  
(2:5.6.186-191)

The Duke asks the Sultan to save his honour by allowing him to go back to Rhodes and share its fate with the people. The Sultan grants him the wish and allows him to depart to Rhodes along with his wife, Ianthe. He states that "Both may to Rhodes return." Alphonso is not the only one whose honour has been saved by the Sultan. The Knights of Rhodes receive similar generous treatment. He allows Ianthe, "who nobly did [his] honor trust," to decide the terms of the treaty for Rhodes. He says:

Go back, Ianthe; make your own  
Conditions boldly for the town. (2:5. 4.208-209)

By allowing Ianthe to go back to Rhodes and decides the terms of the treaty the Sultan gives the Knights of Rhodes the chance to dictate

their own terms and enjoy an honourable end to the long and bloody conflict.

To further stress Solyman's chivalric character, D'Avenant allows him to be judged by his Christian foes, Ianthe and her husband, Duke Alphonso. Throughout the play, Ianthe displays fierce and firm belief in the Sultan's chivalric conduct. On the other hand, Alphonso holds a hostile attitude towards the Sultan only to appreciate him at the end of the play. In reading *The Siege of Rhodes*, Derek Hughes overlooks the initial difference between Ianthe and Alphonso's perception of the Turkish Sultan. He also refrains from explaining Ianthe's defence of the Sultan. He argues:

the hero and heroine seem to represent Charles I and Henrietta Maria. (Hughes, p.1)

Hughes' argument regarding the allusion to Charles I and his queen does not explain the ideological and dramatic factors behind Alphonso and Ianthe's different attitude from the Turkish foe. Their particular attitude allows D'Avenant to create an objective dramatic space between the Sultan, his foes and the audience. This space gives the Sultana suitable platform to receive objective assessment through his own actions and not through preconceived ideas. Conventionally, Turkish Sultans are staged as controversial moral and political characters. In dramatizing the Turkish Sultans on the English stage

the dramatists generally combined stereotypical images traditionally associated with the Turks such as their 'evilness', 'lust', 'treachery' and capability of 'double-dealing' with the information their spectators knew about the subject based on the numerous publications on the life and military actions of Ottoman rulers. (Şenlen, 2008, p. 400)

By choosing a beautiful Christian princess to defend Solyman's honour, D'Avenant was not only negating the negative conventional

presentation of the Turks as sexual transgressors, but also giving a positive dramatization. In such an environment, Ianthe's mission to give a positive picture of the Sultan proves to be far from being easy. ( Fuchs, 2000, pp.45-69) She tells her husband that there is no ground for "All that of Turks and Tyrants I had heard" (1:3.2.163). She gives a more elaborate picture of the Sultan's virtuous and generous treatment. She states:

He seem'd in civil France, and monarch there:  
For soon my person, gallies, freight, were free  
By his command. (1:3.2.168-169)

By using French chivalry to judge Solyman's conduct, Ianthe is employing the highest standard in chivalric orders. The very word chivalry is derived from the eleventh century Old French word *chevalier* which means horseman(Gautier, 1891, p.2; Hoad, 1993, p. 74).Regarding the origin of chivalry, Prestage argues:

France was, indeed, its home, and the region wherein it attained to its fullest perfection. [The] ideals reached perfection in France during the eleventh and twelve centuries. Young nobles proceeded to France "the flower of courtesy, honour and valour,"to learn the code of chivalry.(p.2; 57)

With such comparison, Ianthe makes the Sultan equal to the French in matters of chivalry. Thus, she virtually closes the moral gap that Europeans conventionally construct to distinguish themselves from their enemies, the Turks. It is of significance that D'Avenant refrains from alluding to English Chivalry. This can be explained through the fact that King Charles II's personal taste and that of his court were influenced by the French during his years of exile in Paris. Christopher Wheatley argues:

The years that Charles II and his court had spent in France during the Interregnum (1642-1660) made them

acquainted with French playwrights and theorists who exercised an important critical authority. (p.70)

Another possible reason is the fact that the English chivalric system was no match to that of the French (Prestage, p.59). Thus, by invoking French chivalry in connection with the Turkish Sultan, Ianthe opposes not only the dominant views of the Turks, but most importantly those of her husband. Alphonso calls the Muslim Sultan “faithless Solyman” (1;4.1.70). By considering Solyman faithless, Alphonso is being true to a long tradition on the English stage. Nabil Matar (1998) traces the negative dramatization of Muslim Turks back to the early part of the seventeenth century when

A transition had taken place from evil as embodied in the devil and his necromancing followers to evil represented by the formidable Turk. both the devil and [Marlowe’s Dr.] Faustus were models of evil in English eyes: by the Jacobean period, however, the “bloody” Turk was more fearsome than witty Mephistopholis, and the Muslim became the embodiment of the anti-Christ ... The Devil was no longer a willy creature dressed like a friar, as he had appeared in Dr. Faustus, but the Satanic Turk. (Matar, p.55)

Ianthe is given the difficult task of defending the Sultan against centuries of hostility. She responds to her husband’s attack:

O say not so!  
To strike and wound the virtue of your foe  
Is cruelty, which war does not allow:  
Sure he has better words deserv’d from you. (1:4.1.69-72)

The warm defence fails to alleviate her husband’s hostility towards the Sultan. However, she remains firm in her opinion and tells her husband that the Sultan “... though a foe, is generous and true” (1:4.1.79).

Like Ianthe, Alphonso plays a crucial role in stressing Solyman's chivalric merits. For a stronger moral impact, D'Avenant presents Alphonso as Solyman's fierce foe only to turn him into his devoted friend. When Solyman attacks Rhodes, Alphonso, who has been visiting, insists on dying fighting the Turks:

Here for my tomb or triumph I will stay.  
My sword against proud Solyman I draw,  
His cursed prophet, and his sensual law. (1:1.1.82-84)

Alphonso makes it clear that his fight against Solyman is for religious reasons. By cursing Solyman's prophet and his laws, Alphonso denies Islam any validity and makes himself the enemy of the Muslim Sultan. With such attitude, Alphonso emerges as a crusader with the sacred mission of fighting the Muslims. Consequently, he is in harmony with the Knights of Rhodes whose initial mission as the Hospitallers was to fight the Muslims in the Holy Land. Since their occupation of Rhodes the knights made it their business to fight the Turks in the Mediterranean. Since Alphonso considers Islam as an invalid religion, he refuses to connect it to Providence. Ianthe explains to him that Providence sends Solyman to deliver them to the safety of Sicily from the war-weary Rhodes. To that he responds:

Had Heav'n that pass-port for our free-  
Dom sent,  
It would have chose some better instrument  
Than faithless Solyman. (1:4.1.67-69).

To him, the "faithless Solyman" can never be a divine instrument to restore their freedom. When he finds himself forced to acknowledge the Sultan's generous behaviour towards his wife, he comments, "This Christian Turk amazes me" (1:3.3.178). The fact that he calls him "Christian Turk" reflects Alphonso's inability to connect Islam with any honourable behaviour. This attitude becomes more explicit when he suspects that his wife must have compromised her virtue to receive chivalrous treatment from the Sultan. In response to Ianthe's

acknowledgement of the Sultan's honourable dealings with her, he responds:

He in two days your high esteem has

Won:

What he would do I know; who knows what

He has done? (1:4. 1.81-83)

In spite of the fact that Ianthe is well known for her virtue, Alphonso's inability to expect honourable actions from the Sultan motivates him to question his wife's virtue (Mcjannet, 2009, pp. 183-193). Significantly, Alphonso's hostility towards Solyman ends when, like Ianthe, he experiences the Sultan's generosity. As a prisoner in the Turkish camp, "Alphonso is pardoned and freed." The Sultan informs him:

You may embark for the Sicilian coast,

And there possess your wife when Rhodes is lost. (2:5.4.184-185)

Touched by Solyman's behaviour, the friendship that Alphonso had rejected for so long becomes a fitting end for their encounter. He assures the Sultan:

To Rhodes I go,

To be in Rhodes your suppliant, not your foe. (2:5.4.194-195)

Indeed, Solyman's honourable deeds, which Alphonso once believed to be "strange above miracle," prove to be a reality.

Solyman's miraculous chivalric conduct is at the dramatic and moral heart of the play. The Muslim Sultan displays chivalric qualities that can be recognized and appreciated by friends and foes. It is this recognition that provides the Sultan with the moral power to dictate the dramatic actions of the play. His foes have no choice but to follow him and react to his own actions. The Knights of Rhodes, the Duke of Sicily and his beautiful wife, Ianthe, move into the Sultan's moral and consequently dramatic orbit. They recognize and appreciate the Sultan's unique qualities, thus, balancing the moral stand between the two camps, Muslims and Christians. Such a picture is made more significant through

the fact that it has been shaped during a time of war and not peace. During war, contenders do not have either the time or the inclination to search for positive qualities in each other. However, the chivalric conduct that has been displayed by each side forces them to appreciate each other. D'Avenant desires Restoration England to recall, appreciate and eventually emulate their chivalric values with their aristocratic roots. After twenty years under the rule of the Puritans and the bloody conflicts that abolished the monarchy, the English experienced an identity problem. D'Avenant wants to restore his audience's faith in their own values which had always been associated with the glorious achievements of the royal power. In such a context of disorientation, the chivalric Solyman proves to be the most suitable agent to reintroduce and restore the English faith in their aristocratic heritage as a medium to regain prominence. D'Avenant needs Solyman, who is supposed to be an outsider, to hold up the chivalric mirror, so the audience can recognize its real value as a moral and consequently political restoring system.

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