

IBRAHIM PASHA: A CHRISTIAN HERO IN THE OTTOMAN PALACE

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Abstract. The article examines the representation of the Turkish pioneer personage called Ibrahim Pasha (1493–1536) in Elkanah Settle’s “Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa” (1677). He is known as the Westerner born a Christian, and the favourite to Sultan Soliman the Magnificent (1494–1566) who viciously executed him. But in Settle, the conspiracy to slay Ibrahim failed. The Turkish grand vizier Ibrahim is symbolic in Restoration Age for the terrific abuse of friendship by the Ottoman Sultan. Settle envisages Ibrahim Pasha with admiration for his success as well as his dramatic fate to encounter the Turkish tyranny. The author meticulously portrays the Christian born Ibrahim’s fidelity against the Turkish Soliman’s infidelity. However, Settle articulates his allure in the confrontation between Europe and Turkey in the Ottoman palace of Constantinople to amuse the English audience.

Keywords: Ibrahim Pasha, Sultan Soliman, Isabella, Christian, Roxolana, Ottoman

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1. Introduction

Elkanah Settle’s *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* (1677) is based on history. It is introduced to the audience in the English Age of Enlightenment and the emerging trend of Turkish Orientalism with admiration to the Ottoman Empire. The infidelity of the Ottoman Sultan is traditionally a fascinating material for the English audience, and reveals the decay and decline of the Ottoman Kingdom. For many

Englishmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ottoman Realm story is an illustration of the interest in the Turkish Orientalism. The reoccurrence of several Ottoman royal issues in English literature like Settle's *Ibrahim* makes the Turkish Orientalism a perfect material for reading and teaching the Oriental Other. Louis Wann divides that period into four main phases in which the second phase, extending from 1586 to 1611, is clearly the most significant one since thirty-two plays out of forty-seven were written in this period (Wann 1915: 424-426). The historic story of Ibrahim was as a source for the Ottoman Sultan's numerous crimes, great sins and regular breaking of promises (*Ibr.*, Act V. 595-6). Some Western chroniclers have repeated tales of wickedness and cruelty inflicted by the so-called 'scourge of God' that portrays the world of inhuman cruelties practiced by the Turks (Chew 1965: 14). The matter of the Turkish Empire has led even the significant English playwrights of the period such as Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Dekker and Shakespeare to write plays dealing with the Ottoman oppression.

The despotism of Sultan Soliman's ambition to hold the lands and nations of the East and the West was the main source of fear in Europe (Murphey 2001: 201). English dramatists showed Soliman¹ as corrupt for his own religiosity as a result of his ethnic aggression and post colonialism. Settle's Persian prince, Ulama depicts the arrogance of Sultan Soliman as much above the state of human beings:

Be Great, Proud, Glorious, Blest; Live, Love, and Reign
In Happiness above the State of Man.
Consider but how much of Heav'n dwells there,
And call your self our Prophets Son and Heir. (*Ibr.*, Act V. 566)

The Ottoman colonialism was a big nightmare for the Christian European nations. Settle reports evidently in saying: "The Turkish Crescents were Triumphant there" (*Ibr.*, Act II. 484). The Ottoman expansionism reached its peak with the annexation of many Eastern parts of Europe. Therefore, the Ottoman practices and traditions are fundamentally misinterpreted in Europe (Shouket 2020: 1). The news of Sultan Soliman got popularity in the West because of his conquests and the development of civilization (Hendry 2015: 170). Settle also acknowledges his high reputation in the whole world saying:

How faintly Fame does *Solyman* present
In those weak names, *Great* and *Magnificent*.
Those Attributes the Christian World does give,
And those from Fear and Envy you receive. (*Ibr.*, Act II. 257-60)

The audience of the Restoration Age was keen on the story of the European Ibrahim. In early English literature, writers explored the personal life of the Ottoman Soliman in lust and oppression to defuse his growing reputation in England. In

¹ Note: The spelling of *Soliman* in the article is as commonly used, i.e. how it was used in the same period by the Elizabethan dramatist Thomas Kyd in *Soliman and Perseda* (1588).

Soliman's lust for Isabella and heart-break of his wife Roxolana, Settle's *Ibrahim* describes the vehement force and the wicked roles of various cultural and political depictions in the ever-changing discourse of the Ottoman court. In addition, Ibrahim refuses to live in the designation of the Ottoman honour, comfort and safety and explores his Christian justice.

England was influenced, as part of the Western World, by Turkish military and trade. The Anglo-Ottoman partnership made changes in the English public life. Therefore, the English interest in the Ottoman material was of curiosity. The imperial and domestic life was exciting to the English audience. Sultan Soliman (1520–1566) became a figure of Oriental antagonism. Thus, the Vizier Pasha in Settle's *Ibrahim* is a portrait of the corruption of fear from Turkey that made Europeans away from understanding the Orient and its people. Settle's play offered the English distorted images of the Turks and the Orient. The deposition of the Christian Ibrahim depicts the Ottoman stereotypes as Muslim oppressors. It shows how horrible is Sultans' regime in using Islamic instruments of ill doctrines for Soliman's personal lust and greed. The disloyalty of Sultan Soliman to the faithful friendship of Ibrahim Pasha recounts horrors and ills of his own nation. Settle's representation to Soliman's infidelity, errors and prejudice serves as a reflection of the popular notion about the Ottoman typecasts in England.

Elkanah Settle (1648–1724) was a pioneer English poet and dramatist. He produced *Cambyzes, King of Persia* (1667), *Empress of Morocco* (1673) and *Ibrahim the illustrious Bassa* (1677). Settle was a rival author to John Dryden. He achieved great success in 1691, once he was honourably entitled as a London poet. Settle has frankly admitted in the prelude of *Ibrahim* that he is not an aristocratic wit, but he is considered an excellent playwright in the Age of Dryden. Although Dryden seemed jealous of Settle, he appreciated his work. Settle's *Ibrahim the illustrious Bassa* (1677) is a tragedy staged in winter 1676 at the Duke's Theatre. The play is a cultural portrait from the Restoration Drama. In history, the converted Muslim Ibrahim Pasha (1493–1536) was a popular character in Europe (Atıl, 1998: 147). His tragedy was retrospectively reflected to the young European immigrants to the Ottoman Empire – starting from a boy slave to a very important person. Settle's *Ibrahim* is highly influential in establishing the destructive life of Christians dreaming of a better future in Turkey. The devastating tragedy of the faithful Christian commander of Soliman attributes to several information and factual stories about the Ottoman bad reputation. Settle proudly states that 'the Great and Faithful *Ibrahim*, (To whose success the Sultans glory's due) /.../ Ibrahim is everywhere a Conqueror' (*Ibr.*, Act I. 43, 45). Settle's *Ibrahim* represents Christian values and characteristics to the Turkish Sultan (*Ibr.*, Act I. 193–4).

The Christian image of Ibrahim Pasha is portrayed along with Sultan Soliman in Renaissance Drama. Besides Settle, an image of Ibrahim appears in Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (1594) and *Alaham* (c. 1600), Kyd's *The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda* (1588), Roger Boyle's *Mustapha, the Son of Solyman the Magnificent* (1668), William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), and the Early of Orrery's *Mustapha* (1664). A splendid depiction of Ibrahim Pasha is associated with an evil

portrayal of Sultan Soliman in these plays. The tragic story of Ibrahim Pasha echoed in Europe literature. The French epic, "Ibrahim Or The illustrious bassa: An excellent new romance" (in four parts), was written in French by Monsieur de Scudery, and translated into English by Henry Cogan in 1652. In Settle, the presentation of Soliman-Ibrahim execution story is to praise the myth of a Christian. Kyd's Erastus is introduced on the historical character Ibrahim Pasha, subsequently Ibrahim Pasha is considered as one of the prominent consultants of Sultan Soliman's sovereignty (Gulter 2019: 29-38). Settle did not value such favourable, authentic views about the Ottoman Empire and the Turks. However, the false and distorted information about the Ottoman continued to be circulated widely and were reflected in various plays. These plays contain the same story of Ibrahim Pasha with much attention to the violent policy of the Ottoman Empire. As far as to the Turkish commander Ibrahim, he was one of European converted children brought up in the Ottoman's palace with professional and multiple skills. Settle's Ibrahim identifies his ill-fated life as he has lost hope since '[his] Family destroy'd, my hopes undone' (*Ibr.*, Act II. 32). Settle's use of the bloody Turkish material is superficial and decorative since his play contains popular and genuine Turkish episodes or themes.

The dreadful image of the imperial Ottoman family is a prototype example of the whole Turkish Empire. It is an output of some European suffering from the Ottoman Empire subjugation. English hostility is behind the horrible criminal theme of Ibrahim on London stage. Historically, this first Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire was a close friend of Soliman from their youth. Ibrahim Pasha was appointed by Soliman as Grand Vizier in 1523. At the highest level, he accomplished a level of power and effect in the Empire, but in 1536, he was cruelly executed on Soliman's orders and his property was confiscated by the Turkish state. Consequently, this tragic story interpreted in the English views as an immoral reward from Soliman to Ibrahim Pasha's support and love. However, Settle appreciated Ibrahim Pasha for his wisdom and services. Although Soliman married him to his sister Hatice in a grand marriage ceremony in 1524 (Rogers and Ward 1988: 10), Settle's *Ibrahim* explores this in the context of Soliman's bias and prejudice. Ibrahim is recognised as the most talented of all aides (*Ibr.*, Act I. 74-76). He is supremely educated and prudent. He may have been Soliman's favourite, but the situation mysteriously changed because of Isabella's fondness of him. Therefore, Seattle exploits the horrible act and wicked offences of Sultan Soliman trying to get rid of Ibrahim which depicts Soliman as a terrific schemer. Settle labels him as the 'false, unkind, ungrateful Solyman' (*Ibr.*, Act III. 572). It is a glimpse into how the English Enlightenment may have apparently recognised the Turkish Empire. Nevertheless, Ottoman emperors were savagely very hostile to the Christian nations. They terrified European states and inhumanly enslaved their peoples. The European Christians suffered a lot from the domination of the Ottoman Kingdom. Since Sultan Soliman (1494–1566) ascended the monarch of Ottoman Empire, which was the robust and the utmost prestigious supremacy in the world, he attacked all parts of Europe such as Belgrade, Rhodes, Hungary, and Vienna. Christian kingdoms filled with terror and anxiety for their nations (Agoston 2005: 69).

Settle's interest in *Ibrahim* reflects the West's general fear of and fascination with the Turks. Settle's play really symbolizes a Renaissance humanist who rejects the brutality of the Turkish power. Therefore, Settle's Ibrahim ends with justice to symbolize the victory of the Christian values against the Turkish oppression. By an irony of fate, Isabella and Ibrahim managed to avoid Soliman's plot of assassination. Ibrahim is not the expected submitted soul or being a Turkish victim himself but a renovated one. Ibrahim represents the victim of the monarchical brutal state, which violates truces with alliances and carries out plots against the friend or the foe. Settle shows the corruption of the Eastern imperial systems in sacrificing the innocent souls of its people to save their sovereignty. For the early modern Renaissance, stereotypical features of the Turks include "aggression, lust, suspicion, murderous conspiracy, sudden cruelty masquerading as justice, and merciless violence signified apparently rather than 'Christian charity', wrathful vengeance instead of turning the other cheek" (Vitkus 2000: 2). Therefore, Soliman's cold-hearted crimes caused by his arrogant behaviour and extravagant lifestyle were a material for the Turkish barbarity. The dominant discourse, thus, 'demonized' the Turks, with whom Islam was identified, not only by teaching and preaching but also through representations (or rather misrepresentations) in history books and public/private stages, as well as by social practices. This kind of "rigorous Christian picture of Islam was intensified in innumerable ways, including – during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance – a large variety of poetry and popular superstition" as well as stage representations (Said 2003: 61). For the Elizabethan theatre-goers, then, the Muslim Turk was not simply an imaginary 'evil', but an unchristian power threatening both their European existence and religion.

2. Ibrahim Pasha

The legend of Ibrahim Pasha in Renaissance drama is iconic for being a Christian serving in the top imperial office of the Ottoman Empire. Ibrahim is entitled with 'the Illustrious Bassa' for his brilliant history as an elite leader (Atci 2015: 145). Settle's depiction of Ibrahim as the Illustrious Pasha refers to the great reputation in both the Ottoman and the European world. In Turkey, he is intellectual and professional janissary and in Europe he is a European hero. Settle admires the achievement of Ibrahim but describes his fortune to serve Sultan Soliman as 'an ill fate' (*Ibr.*, Act II. 46). This famous Pasha draws the attention to those Christian workers, slaves and captives in the Ottoman Constantinople whose spirits and ethics are still the same. Ibrahim Pasha conceals his sympathetic feelings to Christians and refers to his internal suffering not serving the Christendom; Ibrahim agonizingly speaks out that 'Love pardon dutys sin, when I reveal / My lesser sorrows, but the great conceal!' (*Ibr.*, Act I. 193-4). Settle wishes to see this Christian hero working for Europe instead of Turkey. Moreover, Ibrahim is portrayed normally through his 'kind acceptance of some Christian Slaves' (*Ibr.*, Act II. 64). He is divinely depicted to fight for the Christian rights in Turkey and to be the Champion-Friend of the Christendom:

Ibrah. I fear'd that He
 Might for my sake have been deny'd like me.
 Too well I knew that would provoke his rage,
 And in revenge my angry King engage.
 But false to th'Christians cause I ne're could prove,
 Nor take such Vengeance, though for injur'd Love.
 Far be't from me to shake her Fathers Throne,
 Or touch his Life, whence she derives her own.
 More I could bear, and greater wrongs o'recome,
 To be the Champion-Friend of Christendom. (*Ibr.*, Act II. 58)

The historical zenith of Ibrahim's intelligence and skills made him an illustrious and powerful political figure in 1535. The converted Muslim Ibrahim's story is revised and rewritten on the basis of established historical accounts in England (Jenkins 2018: 15). The top Vizier Ibrahim Pasha was an intimate friend and beloved flatterer to Sultan Soliman. For that reason, Soliman promises to save his life forever:

I swear by Alla (and to bind my Vow,
 Heav'n make me happy as I'm just to you)
 Whilst Solyman Lives, his Ibrahim shall not dye
 By any violent death. (*Ibr.*, Act I. 218-20)

Soliman's support and love for Ibrahim Pasha is a result of Ibrahim wisdom and services. In peace or war, he serves Soliman. As a faithful associate, Soliman honours the janissary Ibrahim to be the prime vizier in 1520. Thus, he quickly became an illustrious statesman. He is a confidant of Soliman. Such adjacent proximity to the sovereign empowered him to exert huge impact both on Soliman and the Turkish affairs. Although Ibrahim has reached a chief rank and got numerous privileges in the Ottoman Empire, he is charged with disloyalty and murdered. He was unexpectedly murdered in the imperial Ottoman fort in a humiliating way on March 15 1536 (Rogers and Ward 1988: 11). Historians and critics think that command, fortune, and prejudice corrupted him up to the point that was a threat to Sultan Soliman's rule (Spandounes 1997: 115). Although Ibrahim had reached a chief rank and got numerous privileges in the Ottoman Empire, he was charged with disloyalty and murdered. This was an act that exemplified 'Turkish cruelty' (Knolles 1701: 760). In Settle's play, Ibrahim enjoys the Ottoman aristocratic privileges and has a fairly personal liaison with Sultan Soliman established on loyalty and reciprocal confidence but this position emerges him as an honourably tragic hero.

Unlike other royal aides, who never rose above the level of power rivalry, Ibrahim magnificently shows his humble life in the hand of Soliman. He has no political ambitions and enthusiastically discloses power and sovereignty. The story of this prominent figure offers Renaissance writers a chance to concentrate on the representation of the Ottoman Sultan's tyranny and invasions in Europe (Al-Olaqi 2013: 64). Settle portrays Ibrahim's real status as infidel in the eyes of the Turkish

system: 'I Criminal! Oh none so much as I. \ I am below the state of Infidels' (Act I. 277). Besides, the European girl slave Roxolana was purchased for Soliman as a wife by Ibrahim Pasha before 1520 (Spandounes 1997: 70). Then, Ibrahim and Roxolana became the only powerful persons after the Sultan. They seized a unique place in Soliman's life without being his blood relatives although most of the Turkish Sultans traditionally give their daughters as wives to their elite Janissary leaders like Ibrahim to stabilize their power over the whole colossal empire. Similarly, Settle depicts Soliman's daughter Asteria's love for Ibrahim but she fails to catch his attention. On the other hand, she has been very kind and helped him and Isabella to escape Turkey though she knows she will be killed by her father, but Asteria fairly feels proud of Ibrahim and wishes him a happy life:

Nay, then I'm destin'd to dye wretched; all
I beg'd of Heaven, was to divert your fall.
My saving Ibrahim's Life was all my pride. (*Ibr.*, Act V. 215)

In exploring the allure and popularity of the Ibrahim character, Settle examines some concerns of early English thinkers about the Self and the Other. The man's intelligence and skills are gained through a long past experience of a prior Christian slavery, a Muslim conversion, and a powerful leadership in the Ottoman state which establishes how Ibrahim is figured as a Christian hero. He is a cross-cultural and multinational personality. He significantly portrays his mysterious Christian Self. Ibrahim wishes affectionately to go home in peace:

For when as my long Services reward,
Quitting my tiresome Honours I prepar'd
To beg my Freedom, and returning home,
To meet my only Joys in Christendom. (*Ibr.*, Act III. 4)

Settle is successfully representing the confrontation between Europe and Turkey in the Ottoman palace of Constantinople on the English stage. The love triangle story of Soliman for Isabella and her love for Ibrahim is a complicated love story. Ibrahim stands by his love and honour to save Isabella from Soliman. In this instance, Soliman mischievously employed his political ambition and power to get rid of Ibrahim after he saw Ibrahim a challenging rival in loving the Christian Princess Isabella (*Ibr.*, Act I. 331). Regarding her love for Ibrahim, Soliman calls Ibrahim 'a Thief! / A Traytor! for a mean and base relieve, / Against my dang'rous Love, he stole you hence. (*Ibr.*, Act V. 68). Soliman practiced witchcraft to entice the Christian Isabella for his erotic love. He appears as a schemer and occultist ensued from his ambiguous status as a king and his machismo. Alternatively to his lust dominion, Soliman tries to hide his lecherousness in being a positive character but he quickly violates good manners to be a bully and lustful Turk. His hidden insensitivity is revealed in the encounter between love and duty in a mannish monarch. He is totally infatuated with Isabella. Isabella figure has earlier served as a prototype for Perseda in Kyd's

Soliman and Perseda (1597) (Al-Olaqi 2013: 35). Kyd's play thoroughly represents European denial of the nature of Ottoman society. The lust of Soliman for Isabella's beauty is amazing in its scale and significance. Settle shows how the sultan's desires lead to politically questionable results and change the balance of laws within the Ottoman Kingdom, having enticed by women, or a pattern of strong female slaves and sultanas. In the breakup of love, Soliman decides to have Isabella though it violates universal law and religion:

Is Religion then my Foe?
 And does my Marry'd state my hopes o'rethrow?
 That shall not cloud the glories of your life.
 You shall be mine, a Christian, and a Wife. (*Ibr.*, Act V. 138)

Settle has dramatized the story of Roxolana's death when Soliman ruses Isabella in getting her to marry him. He tricks Isabella into marriage by plotting to kill Ibrahim and save his vow to eschew her friendly or compassionate contact with Ibrahim. In violation to Islamic law, the destructive decree of the religious Islamic chief or mufti to kill Ibrahim facilitates the conspiracy and puts an end to peace in the entire Empire. At the same time, Soliman has destroyed his wife Roxolana. Roxolana's jealousy of Soliman's new love is illusory. For some time, she lived in dire unhappiness. Although Sultana Roxolana employs enormous influence both on Sultan Soliman and the Ottoman Sultanate, she is rather troubled by Soliman's drastic and unprecedented changes towards her. In the historical Ottoman dynasty, Soliman is an almost perfect and uxorious husband and leader (Sahin 2013: 11). This popular Turkish image is transmitted to the early modern drama. In *Ibrahim*, Soliman does not turn out to be practically monogamous to Roxolana. In fact, Settle wants to show that in Soliman's far-reaching change in temper is the absolutism of Ottoman Sultan.

Soliman feels confused due to his uncontrolled caprice. Soliman's lust of the Christian princess Isabella destroys his wife Roxolana who lost hope to live in honour. She is devastated and left with no choice. Out of his ego and repression, Soliman claims his warm love for Roxolana but his hidden lustful treatment of Isabella is exceptional by all norms which make him appear ill-minded and psychopathic. He senselessly becomes mean and unqualified to lead a vast state like Turkey. Indeed, Settle is keen to see a Christian revenge to the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the death of the Sultan is a big dream to achieve. Accordingly, Settle's Isabella plays to save Ibrahim and live to defend Christendom. She says:

In me, he can but *Isabella* Doom;
 In you he takes a prop from Christendom.
 Live Ibrahim then, Religion to defend:
 His Favourit live, to be the Christians Friend. (*Ibr.*, Act V. 40)

The legend of the Christian Ibrahim Pasha in Renaissance and Restoration drama is iconic for being a Christian servant in the top office of the Ottoman Empire. This prominent figure enables the early modern playwrights to concentrate on the representation of the Ottoman Sultan's corruption. Ibrahim is a bold man and a good friend to Christians. He hides secret sympathies for Isabella as a Christian fellow person and naturally performs as a clandestine Christian. To beat the murderer he musters all his rage, despair, and revenge. Settle avoids the episode of Ibrahim's murder and replaces it with the story of the death of Roxolana. Settle has freed Ibrahim and Isabella (*Ibr.*, Act V. 585). Definitely, Ibrahim's historical execution story was a shock and established an example of the archetypal Ottoman sultan in English drama. It became evidence of the events in the wake of Ibrahim's historical murder. It persevered in English drama on the Ottoman Empire for several centuries. The public stock of violent characteristics conventionally associated with the Ottoman sultans and Turks is the main source of European misrepresentation and misinformation. The oppression of the Ottoman Empire marks the systematic oppression of the regime and the tyranny of the Sultan. The Ottoman despotism in the Christian Europe grants the Europeans in general and the English in particular, the patriotic enthusiasm to intellectually secure their nations from the Ottoman Empire.

3. Corruption of the Ottoman Harem House

The life of the Ottoman royal household portrayed in the play revolves around Sultan Soliman and his house of women. As an alternative, dramatists represented the Ottoman sultans indulging in a scheming and immoral sexuality. The sultan is known for his women, in terms of purchasing of treasure and sexual exploits (Madar 2011: 3). Settle's Soliman says sensually that "For Love o'recomes, and I must kill or dye" (*Ibr.*, Act V. 180). Many details of his personal life were represented particularly in Renaissance period. Soliman frankly exposes his preference for the Christian women saying: "What if t'a Throne the Christian I prefer" (*Ibr.*, Act V. 435). Consequently, Christian young women had involved in an extremely significant role in the imperial Ottoman court, and sometimes their involvement determined the judgments of the sultans particularly in Soliman's time (Schick 2004: 82). Settle draws attention on the negative and private life of the Sultan Soliman, particularly on the portrayal of his lust for European women where Roxolana fights for her dignity and respect. Soliman expresses his love violation to his wife Roxolana as it was for lust.

When to those eyes I swore I would be true,
 'Twas to the Worlds Variety in you.
 All your whole Sex for you I did forsake,
 Who, had all that Beauty which they joyn'd could make.
 And as I constantly perform'd that Vow,
 For the same reason I am alter'd now. (*Ibr.*, Act III. 500)

The English perception of Turkish women is that they are popular for being deficient in intellect. The Turkish woman is depicted as a personal property of the Sultan. Therefore, English dramatists introduce most Ottoman Sultans in general and Sultan Soliman as an image of the barbarian pagan. Sultan Soliman describes his appetite to Isabella as a crime:

I may my Love without a Crime pursue;
Sooth me, and flatter me, deceive me, do:
Hide all those stains that make it an offence,
And cheat me with a glimpse of Innocence. (*Ibr.*, Act II. 330-3)

For the Turks, Sultan Soliman was known as the magnificent lawgiver as he had made the imperial image of the Ottoman colonialism but he was as a nightmare for Europe in the English literary works (Fleischer 2007: 51). Therefore, some writers had explored the political vagueness of Soliman's imperial prominence as a symptom of a higher political confusion that had threatened the stability of the empire and poisonously degraded Sultan's image in Europe (Al-Olaqi 2017: 64). The representation of Sultan Soliman playfully indulging in fortunes and enjoying the company of beautiful European young girls was a corrupt portrayal of the Ottoman colonialism in Renaissance literature. Indeed, the horrendous stories of women's sexual slavery in Turkey are like Pandora's Box. Sultan Soliman's rule (1520–1566) historically explores fanciful stories of the Ottoman sexuality (Schick, 2004: 81). For instance, in *Seattle Roxolana* describes herself as a sexual victim 'sacrific'd to please a Tyrants Lust' (*Ibr.*, Act V. 527). Sultan Soliman claims that he has got the religious power to violate the Islamic teachings:

Solym. No, kind Morat; our Prophet does ordain,
Monarchs with Honour should their Joys obtain:
And when that Rock stops our forbidden way,
Pow'r must not climb where Vertue bids us stay. (*Ibr.*, Act II. 348-51)

The sultan's women or harem, as it was known at that time, have been generally perceived as in-house objects of sexual desires of the Ottoman sultan. The word Harem is 'applied to those parts of a house to which access is forbidden and hence, more particularly to women's quarters' (Bosworth 1998: 89). The Oriental harem system still survives today in many Muslim communities to conserve the lifestyle where female family members are saved from external impacts. In the same way, the Harem system earlier existed in the Empire of China (Mote 2003: 157). Arabic Haram or English harem means 'to live isolated from the outside world and illustrates the oxymoronic shelter for women who are also imprisoned inside impenetrable walls' (Hendry 2015: 53). It is not a form of discrimination rather than the spirit of guardianship to the family and honour. The awful tales of Soliman unveil a more sexual indulging of the ruler in his women than involvement in governing the giant state. It is generally assumed that the women's life in harem concentrated on their

girlishness appeal (Lai 1988: 80). However, Leslie Pierce found that not true. Pierce states that the life in the harem tied up a complex set of interactions that did not just constitute a sex role (Pierce 1993: 154). Settle's Asteria the daughter of Soliman speaks about the Turkish tradition of veiling among ladies of the imperial palace:

Aster. You know what Turkish custom
Has with th'Imperial Daughters long prevail'd;
A Sultanness ne're walks abroad Unveil'd. (*Ibr.*, Act III. 246-8)

The Turkish Soliman is known for his physical, social and cultural accomplishment. His conduct regarding his women is not confined by any Ottoman rank of courtesy or seniority. The Ottoman traditional seclusion of harem did not prevent Roxolana from exercising political control. She is considered the most powerful Sultana ever known in the Ottoman Empire. Settle's Persian prince Ulma describes her glory saying, 'The World at your Command, and Monarchs at your Feet' (*Ibr.*, Act III. 563). It is acknowledged that she had a major advantage in terms of involvement in the outside world, though many people thought the Ottoman women inside were usually submissive. Roxolana is mainly the foremost example of a female who directly administrated the Ottoman Sultanate (Sancar 2007: 79). She was of a European birth but an evaluation of her accomplishments in numerous arenas proves that her origin produced no problem for her in the Ottoman House (Yermolenko 2013: 275). Beside pleasure, Sultan Soliman allowed Roxolana appropriate political rights and accordingly supported her to play an active part in Ottoman politics. Next to Sultan Soliman, the superiority of Roxolana was appreciated by the Ottoman imperial clan which comprised seniors, associates, commanders, princes and princess (Ibid). Roxolana enjoyed a substantial reputation and an extraordinary control over the principal government body. In fact, she commanded total control over the nature of Soliman. She was the senior wife whose influence covered a great political arena. In Settle, she proudly says: 'I Lived so glorious, and I Lov'd so well, / That all beneath my Paradiſe' (*Ibr.*, Act V. 457). Her talents exploited the patriarchy to achieve her needs. However, she had a power over various matters and had political ambitions. Historically, Soliman loved Roxolana so much that when she died in 1558, he buried her in the yard of the mosque of Sulaiman, next to the Tomb of the Sultan (Imber 2009: 122).

Roxolana was the first and only lady in Ottoman dynasty to have been represented in English literature. Roxolana as a historic person persists in a dramatic characterization. The impact of the Roxolana character on English drama is apparent. In Settle, Roxolana is not merely a body of sexual pleasure. She is remarkably a talented lady fighting for her values in her own stake (*Ibr.*, Act I. 14-16). Roxolana is the sultan's favorite wife and greatly reverend in the Ottoman House. Although, she is represented as competent lady exploiting her aptitudes, she is shocked with Soliman's bad temper and blood. However, Soliman behaves corruptly and immorally as a sexual predator. He gives up his love to his wife for a lustful appetite.

Solym. There! Oh 'tis there I'm lost! that only Name,
 Brands my inconstancy with guilt and shame.
 Her right I, irreligious I, have stole;
 She, who so long has singly sway'd my soul;
 To whom I've sworn that Faith should ne're remove,
 And dedicated an immortal Love;
 A Love so sacred, as should neither have
 An end of this side, nor beyond the Grave:
 Down go her Altars, and her pow'r decays;
 To a new Saint I a new Temple raise. (*Ibr.*, Act II. 386)

Roxolana's autonomy and authority had a marked presence of woman in the public Turkish sphere. Settle calls her 'Empress of the World' (*Ibr.*, Act V. 636). Roxolana is influential. She states that 'whilst to my Throne I mounted like a God' (*Ibr.*, Act V. 644). Roxolana fights for her values. She forms an alternative paradigm of womanhood. She defies Soliman's mean norms. Ulama, the Sophies Son and Heir of Persia, describes her as a Christian captive and the rise of her furious power signifies revenge of Christendom:

There's a storm rise in Roxolana's Sphear.
 There is a Christian Beauty hither come,
 That has out-done the Arms of Christendom.
 The Turkish Crescents were Triumphant there;
 But their great Leader is a Captive here. (*Ibr.*, Act II. 484)

In fact, the image of Roxolana had changed from being a slave Christian girl in Turkey to a Sultana of Europe which made her a particularly fascinating figure in the seventeenth century (Yermolenko 2005: 231). Galina Yermolenko states that Roxolana exercised enormous influence over Ottoman royal affairs and 'left an indelible mark on both Ottoman history and European imagination' (Yermolenko 2005: 231). The fear of female sovereignty and power is depicted in Restoration drama. She was the most beloved lady to Sultan Soliman. Then, she turned out to be a powerful lady whose authority could overthrow or destabilize the regime. Her image became a popular figure on the modern stage of London. Elizabethan and Restoration playwrights were fascinated by her stand in a unique ascent in the pyramid of the imperial harem. Her appearance emerged in Elizabethan drama after the assassination of Prince Mustapha in 1553, an episode that stunned mutually the European and Turkish public alike (McJannet 2006: 141-168). The blame on her for conspiracy was not considered as a ploy for authority but it was an act of maternal affection, in order to defend her descendants from the factual villains of Ottoman sultans.

Roxolana was not a slave woman or a concubine, but a queen and a mother of the heir. The story of Roxolana securing power to her son established many stories. In Settle's *Ibrahim*, the theme of divine revenge on Soliman shares enough common

characteristics with the writings of the Elizabethan drama in presenting the Turkish tragedies. In Settle's *Ibrahim* the inhumanity of the Turks was emphasized above all else, and the stereotyped Turk, villainous, savage and bloodthirsty, swooping down upon innocent Christians, and massacring them indiscriminately, was firmly established in the historical traditions of the West. The scenario blending the familiar and the exotic – a European in the court of the Turk; a slave woman dominating the conqueror; fratricidal princes and the alluring seraglio – all set in the heart of the feared Muslim state proved irresistible to literary interlocutors. These made of Soliman, Ibrahim, and Roxolana moral fables on theatre.

4. Conclusion

The ugly representation of the Turkish Empire in English literature is illustrative of the constant Ottoman aggression to Christendom. It is not the English religious propaganda and prejudice that created Turkophobia among the citizens, but deadly stories attributed to the Turkish Sultans' lustfulness, treachery and tyranny. Early English writers considered the Turks as unbelievers, Saracens and heathens because of their lack of ethics and values. Shocking episodes of victims such as Ibrahim, Roxanna, Mustapha and other girl slaves became popular marks of the Ottoman oppression. Therefore, the fall of the Ottoman Empire was a big dream in Europe.

The Christian image of Ibrahim Pasha is portrayed along with Sultan Soliman in Renaissance drama. The tragic story of Ibrahim Pasha's fall draws attention to the violence of the Ottoman infidel's temperament. Settle's presentation of Ibrahim hiding his Christianity from the Turks is to dramatize his European moral insights. He behaves like a human being under a moral stress to help Christian captives. At the end, the Ottoman Soliman has caused his own failure for his arrogant behaviour and corrupt lifestyle. Many early Englishmen had a kind of fascination through diplomatic correspondents of that time between England and Turkey, but the dramatic depiction of the Ottoman corruption on London stages presented clear information to the public. However, the recycling and proliferation of the destructive image of Soliman was a Christian tradition to defuse the political interests with the Ottoman capital, Constantinople. In other words, it demonstrated the evolution of Western images to refute the growing interest in the Ottoman material.

Settle's Christian propaganda does not differ from the common Renaissance opinion. He portrays Soliman and other Turks as pagans, anti-Christian and infidels. The victimized harem has been generally perceived as objects of sexual desires of the Ottoman sultan involving corruption and bloodthirstiness. The European knowledge of Ottoman practices and traditions represented the image of the Other 'Turk'. In Settle, the recreation of the Soliman-Ibrahim story is to praise the myth of a Christian. Settle's *Ibrahim* shows the English representation of the villainous character of Sultan Soliman who shaped his own Ottoman House for his selfish desires. The Ottoman sultans were constantly vilified as Oriental savages in the Christian mainland.

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