**Univerzita Karlova v Praze**

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# Bakalářská práce

## Women in the English drama of the Orient

Ženy v anglickém Orientálním dramatu

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**Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval/a samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval/a všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

**Declaration**

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

V Praze, dne 2. 8. 2016

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Nikol Němcová

**Klíčová slova**

Orientální drama, hrdinky, Restaurační drama, Mary Pix, Delariviere Manley, Elkanah Settle, William Davenant, stereotypy, orientalismus

**Key words**

Drama of the Orient, heroines, Restoration drama, Mary Pix, Delariviere Manley, Elkanah Settle, William Davenant, stereotypes, Orientalism

**Abstract**

The subject of this BA thesis are plays set in the Orient, a new genre that started to gain popularity in the Restoration period. These plays, commonly inspired by the popular travelogues to the Orient and historical accounts, are characterised by their collection of stock characters, repeating topoi and orientalised images that represent the Orient more as a conception created by the West than an actual place. Nevertheless, in analysis of some of the plays I shall argue that these works also offer possible commentaries on the British society of the time and that they can be used as arguments criticizing or reinforcing the contemporary perception of women by dealing with such otherwise rather inaccessible themes as women stepping out of their social boundaries, femininity or female sexuality.

In order to advocate my thesis I plan to use four different tragedies with Middle-Eastern settings, specifically Rhodes, Morocco, Turkey and Colchis (located mostly in present-day Georgia and Turkey). All these plays were written between 1663 and 1696 and might be considered some of the most representative examples of the genre. They include William Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663), Elkanah Settle´s *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696) and Delariviere Manley´s *The Royal Mischief* (1696). My choice of works was influenced by the fact that in all these plays female heroines are central to the text and yet their offer quite a wide range of strategies the playwrights availed in their attempts to transform the Oriental settings into a means of argument in the gender debates of the late seventeenth century.

The introductory chapter gives a quick overview of the historical background, concentrating first on the contemporary position of women, discussions concerning these changes and the reflection of these debates on the English stage. It also offers a summary of the various factors that played a role in the British representation of the Orient, introducing Saidian Orientalism, British relations with the Orient and finally its representation. In the following analytical part of the thesis each of the examined plays will be given a chapter on its own, that is enough space to demonstrate the individual approach each of the plays chooses to represent women both in the Orient as well as to discuss their British foils.

**Abstrakt**

Předmětem této bakalářské práce jsou hry odehrávající se v Orientu, nový žánr, který začal získávat na popularitě v období Restaurace. Pro tyto hry, jež jsou obvykle inspirovány populárními cestopisy do Orientu a historickými záznamy, jsou typické otřepané charaktery, klišé a orientalizovaná zobrazení, která znázorňují Orient více jako Západem vytvořenou představu než skutečné místo. Avšak ve svém rozboru několika těchto her budu argumentovat, že tato díla také poskytují možné komentáře tehdejší britské společnosti a že mohou být použity jako argumenty kritizující nebo podporující soudobý náhled na ženy tím, že se zabývají takovými jinak spíše nedostupnými motivy jako jsou ženy vystupující ze svých sociálních mezí, ženskost nebo ženská sexualita.

Během obhajoby své teze hodlám použít čtyři rozdílné tragédie z prostředí Středního Východu, konkrétně Rhódu, Maroka, Turecka a Kolchidy (nacházející se zejména v současné Gruzii a Turecku). Všechny tyto hry byly napsány mezi lety 1663 a 1696 a mohou být považovány za některé z nejvíce reprezentativních zástupců tohoto žánru. Zahrnují *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663) Williama Davenanta, *The Empress of Morocco* (1673) Elkanaha Settla, *Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696) Mary Pix a *The Royal Mischief* (1696) Delariviere Manley. Můj výběr děl byl ovlivněn tím, že ve všech těchto hrách jsou ženské hrdinky zásadní pro text, ale poskytují i poměrně širokou škálu strategií, které dramatikové využívali ve svých pokusech přeměnit orientální scénu na prostředek argumentu v genderových debatách pozdního sedmnáctého století.

Úvodní kapitola, která poskytuje rychlý přehled historického zázemí, se nejprve soustředí na soudobou pozici žen, diskuze těchto změn a odraz těchto debat na anglické scéně. Zároveň nabízí shrnutí různých faktorů, které hrály roli v britském zobrazování Orientu, představuje Saídův orientalismus, britské vztahy s Orientem a konečně jejich zobrazování. V následující analytické části práce bude každé ze zkoumaných her věnována vlastní kapitola, tedy dost místa na to ukázat individuální přístup, jež každá z těchto her volí, aby zobrazila ženy jak v Orientu, tak i jejich britské protějšky.

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## Introduction

The second half of the seventeenth century saw a sudden increase in the British interest in the Orient. According to Bridgett Orr, "between 1660 and 1714, at least forty plays set in Asia or the Levant appeared on the London stage."[1] Though many and often even written by some of the most popular playwrights of this period, these plays belong among some of the least studied works in the history of English drama. The main reason is probably the fact that these "Oriental" plays feature a limited stock of prototypically Eastern characters with repeating features, themes, scenes and images. Nevertheless, a closer inspection reveals that these plays in fact sometimes offer an interesting reflection of the British society of the seventeenth century and serve as convenient grounds for discussions of religious, political or social matters.

Given the changes in the perception of women, sexuality and femininity in the consequence of the Civil War and the discussions produced by the heightened social tension that followed when women started to assume what had traditionally been male roles, it is perhaps no surprise that the gender-related questions became one of the most prominent topics of these plays. In this thesis I will examine four plays set in the Orient from the second half of the seventeenth century – William Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663), Elkanah Settle´s *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696) and Delariviere Manley´s *The Royal Mischief* (1696) in relation to how their represent women and how they avail their Oriental settings and stereotypes in order to challenge or assert the way women were perceived at the time.

## Gender debates in the seventeenth century and their reflection on the stage

In seventeenth-century Britain the perception of women´s social status, their femininity and sexuality started to shift radically. These changes were undoubtedly the product of the series of the turbulent events of the time. English Civil War, The Restoration of the Stuarts and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, all of that led to questioning of the existing political and social system and to growing debates on how British society should look. The issue of women´s place soon became one of the most prominent topics. These discussions, which lasted until the nineteenth century, were reflected in various fields from philosophy to everyday life.

[1] Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1640 – 1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 62.

With the ideas of Locke´s *Two Treatises,* where he dissociates patriarchal from political authority, combined with the growing influence of Baconian and Cartesian philosophies that called for a revaluation of the old values, the idea of women´s inferiority to men started to shatter and from its fragments proto-feminism emerged. English women started to assume more and more active roles in public life, gradually dissolving the idea of the separation of spheres, which claimed that men are fit for the public and women for the private sphere. It was during this period when the first female writers appeared and argued against the claims that kept diminishing their ability to reason, which were often used to keep them away from education,[2] and by associating their works with their parties´ agenda,[3] they elevated the gender issue to political grounds.

However, the opposition these changes had to face was strong and the common assumptions about women proved to be too rooted in the British society to be easily erased and they were mostly preserved till the following centuries. As Patricia Crawford writes in her *Women and Religion in England, 1500 – 1720*, Christianity itself played an important part in promoting female subordination,[4] as also shows the statement of British writer and Baptist preacher John Bunyan from the later part of the seventeenth century: “Women, therefore, whenever they would perk it and lord it to their husbands, ought to remember that both by creation and transgression they are made to be in subjection to their husbands.”[5] In practice these beliefs were reflected especially in the right of coverture that was stripping married women of their property rights or in the harsh treatment of rape victims. Conduct literature of the time kept repeating the ideas of the importance of women´s chastity, but they also reacted to women´s growing access into the traditionally male domains of public life by even more emphasizing the dangers of female sexual behaviour as potentially disruptive of social order.[6]

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[2] Ros Ballaster, *The History of British Women´s Writing, 1690 – 1750,* vol. 4 (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) 8.
[3] Female writers could be found in both Whig and Tory parties. Ros Ballaster writes on this subject: “Feminism in this period is not necessarily associated with reform and progressive ideologies as it is in our own time. Women on both sides of the party divide, Whig and Tory, make similar cases about the need to challenge custom and to allow women the advantage of literate (if not classical) education.” (*The History of British Women´s Writing, 1690 – 1750,* 10.) More information on the rise of feminism in this and the subsequent period can be found in Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[4] Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England: 1500 – 1720* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 9.
[5] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan,* Ed. George Offor, 2. Vol. (Glasgow, Edinburgh and London: Blackie and Son, 1861) 438. Quoted in *Women and Religion in England: 1500 – 1720,* 9.
[6] Mary Fissel, “Gender and Generation: Representing Reproduction in Early Modern England” *Gender and History* 7. 3 (1995): 442. *Wiley Online Library.* Web. 19 July 2016.

This lack of appropriate response to the increasing awareness of the fact that women´s inferiority is based more on the custom than on any natural truth, originating from the possibilities of empirical philosophy, was often criticised by women, whose most effective tool of defence and means for augmenting their rights became literature. In words of Ballaster, "this period sees the emergence of a discourse by women which is recognizably feminist in the works of writers such as Mary Astell, Mary Lady Chudleigh and Elizabeth Thomas.[7] Yet it was on the English stage where the debates were perhaps best reflected, not only because of the natural ability of theatre to mirror life, but also because of the growing influence of the first female playwrights, the introduction of actresses on the public stage and finally in the new characterization of heroines.

The first female playwrights started to gain popularity in the 1670s and the 1680s, most notable of which was Aphra Behn who, as one of the first women earning her living by writing, set the example for later generations of female playwrights.[8] But it was in the 1690s when the new generation of women could be said to take the Restoration stage by assault. Especially remarkable was the trio constituting of Delaviere Manley, Mary Pix and Catherine Trotter, all of which made their successful debut in 1696. Their success is even more outstanding when understood in relation to the difficult position they had in comparison with the male dramatists. Jane Spencer in her interesting account of the position of the first female playwrights points out that female authors not only received for their plays less money than their male counterparts, but also the frequent comparison of commercial writing with prostitution was much more looked upon in their cases.[9] In addition, women´s writing had to face strong criticism and ridicule by misogynist audience which claimed that art is a traditionally male domain where women have no place[10] and that they lack the learning necessary to be good at it. An example of such argument is the anonymous satirical play *The Female Wits* (1696), which parodied the works of the 1696 trio. Paradoxically, the term 'The Female Wits' is still used to term the Manley, Pix, Trotter group.

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[7] *The History of British Women´s Writing, 1690 – 1750,* 8.
[8] Derek Hughes, "Aphra Behn and the Restoration Theatre," *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. Derek Hughes, and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 29.
[9] Jane Spencer, "Drama", *The History of British Women´s Writing, 1690 – 1750,* ed. Ros Ballaster (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 146.
[10] A good example of such criticism in text is 1702 *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, whose anonymous author did not hesitate to write: "What a Pox have Women to do with Muses? I grant you the Poets call the Nine Muses by the names of Women, but why so? Not because the Sex has anything to do with Poetry, but because in that Sex they´re much fitter for prostitution." *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (1702; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942) 17. Quoted in Janet Todd, *Gender, Art and Death* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) page unnumbered.

The opposition that the first actresses had to face was almost equally substantial. In fact, the introduction of actresses has been only a small part of the vast amount of changes that took place in 1660 when William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew were presented a warrant by Charles II allowing them to have shared control of London public theatre and to re-establish it. The majority of the innovations were already common on the Continent and both courtiers became familiar with them in exile during the Civil War. The range of these innovations was indeed enormous.[11] New genres and scenic practices were put into practice but the most prominent innovation was probably the introduction of actresses who finally assumed the roles of female characters that had previously been represented by young boys. Yet although it did not take long before some of the actresses managed to gain the status of the first celebrities, their social status remained very low and accusations claiming that actresses are all "notorious impudent, prostituted Strumpets"[12] were not uncommon.

Consequently, even though the introduction of actresses made the plays more realistic it also inevitably led to the sexualisation of their performance, which was reflected in the relative increase of discussions concerning female sexuality in these plays.[13] The rise of actresses caused much greater focus on the female characters both in comedies and tragedies and, as McGirr points out, gave rise to "strong, sexy, spectacular characters would be systematically revised over the next hundred years."[14] However, there are numerous points in which female heroines in tragedies and comedies significantly differed. Whereas Restoration comedies concentrated on female wits, discussion of "natural" female vice or ideal feminine virtue,[15] Restoration tragedies specialized in the depiction of idealized women (chiefly in the heroic drama) and in female suffering, even to that extent that pathos and its ability to move the audience was marked as "the true End of Tragedy." [16]

[11] For a fuller account of these innovations refer to *The Cambridge Companion to Restoration Theatre,* ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[12] William Prynne, *Histrio-Mastix: The Player´s Scourge or, Actor´s Tragedy,* Vol. 1 and 2, 1633 ed. (New York; London: Johnson Reprint Comp. Ltd., 1972) 214. Quoted in David Wootton, "*The Tamer Tamed,* or None Shall Have Prizes: 'Equality' in Shakespeare´s England," *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500 – 1700,* eds. David Wootton and Graham Holderness (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) 164.
[13] This tendency was reflected especially in the rise of two new genres that appeared in the Restoration – the so-called 'sex-comedies' and 'she-tragedies.'
[14] Elaine M. McGirr, *Eighteenth Century Characters: A Guide to the Literature of the Age* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) *78.*
[15] *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre,* 194.
[16] Charles Gildon, *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (N. Cox and W. Turner, 1699) 111. Quoted in Jean I. Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality and the English Stage, 1660 – 1720* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006) 64.

**Representations of the Orient**

For the Restoration playwright the Orient became not only an enticing setting but also a means of making an argument. This was done especially by the method of what might be described as 'displacement.' In this method the author avails the exotic settings and stereotypes connected with them in order to avoid direct criticism and instead allows the spectator to re-project the issue in question from outside and to reassert in this way his or hers values not only from the view of a British citizen, but also from that of a representative of the Western civilization. The drive of this strategy thus lies in the cultural difference between the East and the West, when the Western audience, paradoxically, builds its own identity by detaching itself from the supposedly "barbaric" East. Since in the result it is the negative image of the East that helps the Western audience to reassess its superiority, this method could be to some extent understood in the terms of Saidian Orientalism.

Edward Said, whose 1979 work O*rientalism* dramatically changed the way of understanding Western representations of the Orient, defines Orientalism as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient"[17] and goes on to point out that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[18] Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to read seventeenth century texts in completely Saidian terms since for Said it is the unquestioned supremacy of the West over the East that he sees as the ground from which the roots of Orientalism could emerge.[19] This is, after all, one of the reasons why Said himself defined the eighteenth century as the starting point of Orientalism.[20] As Matthew Birchwood argues, these seventeenth-century representations of the East should not be read, in the fashion of some literary scholars, as the precursors of the Orientalist discourse precisely because "English fascination with the Orient may be indexed not to perceived

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[17] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 3.

[18] *Orientalism,* 3.

[19] Said describes orientalism as primarily a discourse corresponding with power, not necessarily "political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange if various kinds of power, shaped to a degree with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences) power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, text values), power moral (as with idea of what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do)." (O*rientalism,* 12) The dependence of the possibility of the application of the term 'orientalism' on Western superiority is discussed in *Orientalism* in various places. Said states: "In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand." (*Orientalism, 7).*

[20] *Orientalism, 3*

weaknesses there, but to religious and political anxieties at home."[21] So, although these images of the East were mostly negative and highly stereotypical, the fact that they could be used for analogical purposes shows that the British were to some level able to relate with their Eastern counterparts and that the relations between the East and West at this time were far more complicated than that between the 'Self' and the 'Other.'

Birchwood´s statement also shows the broad scale of the possible applications of these analogies, of which the issue of women´s status comprised only a small part. In the recent scholarship these analogies did not go unnoticed; there are several critics and scholars that have tried to point them out, most notable of which are probably the works of the already mentioned Matthew Birchwood who focuses especially on the political and religious analogies between the Orient, Islam and Britain, and of Bridget Orr that in her work *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1714* shows that it was not only the Orient but also many other more or less exotic locations that served in drama as a way of bolstering British national identity and for addressing domestic issues.[22]

When it comes to the Orient, there were several Oriental states that were used to mirror the situation in Britain, but the one that got most attention was certainly the Ottoman Empire which at the time was encompassing not only Anatolia and a greater part of the Balkans, but also most of the Arabic peninsula and Northern Africa and was thus most suitable to mirror the situation of the ambitious British Empire. In addition, the seventeenth century saw a big increase in the intensity of British-Ottoman relations. The diplomatic intercourse between the two states dates back to 1580 to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, when both states shared a common enemy in Catholic Europe. Elizabeth I not only started diplomatic correspondence with Ottoman sovereigns, including the mother of sultan Mehmed III., Safiye[23] but also brokered the first Anglo-Ottoman trade agreement. Trade between the two states became even more important in the seventeenth century when the English ambassador in Istanbul, Sir Thomas Roe managed to strike an even more favourable deal for Britain, and the Levant Company became increasingly significant for the British import and export.[24] All of this inevitably led to greater awareness of the Ottoman affairs and to increased interest in the Orient and Islam. In 1649 *The Alcoran*

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[21] Matthew Birchwood, *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640 – 1685* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007) 8.

[22] See *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1714.*

[23] For analysis of this correspondence and more information about the topic read Bernardette Andrea, *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[24] For more information see Alfred C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Oxford: Frank Cass & Co Ltd., 1935).

*of Mahomet,* the first translation of Qur´an, appeared as one of the first products of the establishment of the Arabic studies at Oxford.

The seventeenth century also saw continuous interest in history of the Oriental states. Richard Knolles´ 1603 influential work *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* was continued by Paul Rycaut in 1678 to become *The History of the Turkish Empire,* an addition to Rycaut´s 1668 work *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire.* It was on the basis of these accounts that the commonly repeated analogies between Britain and the Ottoman Empire were firmly established and many playwrights started to emphasize the similarities in the histories of the two states. Indeed, some of the parallels almost suggested themselves. Rycaut himself compared the dethronement of the tyrannical sultan Ibrahim I to that of Charles I and thus it became a useful tool for Whigs arguing for the rights of the society to remove rulers abusing their power. Similarly, the scandals connected with the reigns of Charles II and George II easily found their counterparts in the way Oriental courts were portrayed, an analogy which, as Ros Ballaster points out,

> proved a particularly fruitful one for English writers seeking to score points against a rival court faction: the covert pursuit of absolutism, effeminacy, and decadence in a court, the decline of empire as a result of luxury, were trends that could be located in Turkish contexts to suggest the imperilled nature of English limited monarchy.[25]

The Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century, commonly assigned to uncontrollable statesmen and what we nowadays know as the 'Sultanate of Women,' that is a continuous influence of the mothers and wives to Ottoman sultans over state´s politics, was in this fashion used as a deterrent against similar practices in Britain. On the other hand, there were also voices that would avail these similarities as means of defending the position of the British women, most notable example of which is the rise of the so-called 'feminist Orientalism' a literary strategy first termed by Joyce Zonana, which describes the process when authors avail the stereotypical image of subjugated Muslim women and tyrannical patriarchal society of the East in order to appeal to Western society to reassess its sense of sovereignty by differencing itself from the 'backward' Eastern values.[26] In short, the embedding of these analogies in the British cultural consciousness allowed their

[25] Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England, 1662 – 1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 171.

[26] For full definition and the examples of the use of the technique in the fiction of Jane Eyre read Zonana, Joyce. "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of *Jane Eyre.*" *Signs* 18. 3 (1993): 592 – 617. JSTOR. Web. 19 July 2016.

extension to the discussions of women´s status, resulting in works where the analogies can be found in numerous levels, one reinforcing the understanding of the others.

But although the works about the Orient originated mostly in this growing inter-cultural communication and were often based on actual historical events, their representation of the Orient and its inhabitants was greatly influenced by the numerous cultural stereotypes and fantasies that accumulated around the idea of the Orient during the previous centuries. Consequently, it can be said that the Orient as depicted in the drama of the time was almost utterly a product of the Western imagination. Indeed, as Said pointed out, "the Orient is less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics."[27] In reality, all inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire with no regard to their ethnicity or religion were commonly called 'Turks,'[28] and generally, the representations noted little difference between the various nationalities of the Orient. In addition, despite the fact that Islam started to be studied in Britain more than ever before, its description in the English plays of the period was usually limited to the representation of just few criticized practices such as polygamy or the idea of the harem/ seraglio where most of the plays were taking place.

Many contemporary critics tried to discuss the reasons behind the Western fascination with the Oriental harem. Critics reading the works in Saidian terms see English representation of the harem, the intimately feminine place, as a metaphor for the Western political desire for the control over the Muslim territories. Birchwood stresses out that "the seraglio functions as the locus for an entire range of preconceived notions about the decadence and deviance of the Turkish court."[29] Nevertheless, most of the contemporary critics agree on the fact that the popularity of the setting was to some level a product of the erotic fascination of the Westerners with the forbidden strictly female territory and that harem, in the words of Ruth Bernard Yeazell, "owed more to the lure of the unknown and the forbidden than to the desire for political conquest."[30] Either way, the idea of the harem as it was established during the seventeenth century became associated with numerous topoi such as unrestricted sexuality, sensuality or excess of luxury.

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[27] *Orientalism,* 177.
[28] *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640 – 1680,* 14.
[29] *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640 – 1680,* 122.
[30] Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000) 8.

Yet more often than not the harem was understood in the terms of power, both feminine and masculine. Feminine power was based on the understanding of the harem as a place of female sovereignty and manifested itself in women´s control over harem eunuchs and other servants, and in the understanding of harem as the starting place of female intrigues supposedly aimed at gaining political power. All of this was, however, opposed by the perhaps even stronger association of the harem with patriarchy and the degradation of women.[31] After all, the Western understanding of the harem as a place designated chiefly to control women can already be seen in the use of the term 'seraglio,' that mixes Turkish word for palace - 'saray' with Italian word 'serrare,' meaning 'enclosure'[32] in place of the original term 'harem' from Arabic 'haram,' meaning 'forbidden or unlawful' or 'sacred, inviolable.'[33]

This problematic nature of the distribution of power in the harem is also mirrored in the tendency of playwrights writing about the Orient to divide their female characters almost unconditionally into two different groups. Perhaps the most common feminine character is the prototype of virtuous woman that is usually put into martyr roles, where she is forced to prove her virtue and to defend her chastity against a lustful Muslim bewitched by her beauty. In this period, this role was usually related to Christian captives or to Eastern princesses advocating very similar Western values. These heroines are often rivalled by an Eastern courtesan which is in most cases a sensuous, jealous and power-seeking woman. This image of the Eastern sultana has probably its origin in the historical figure of Sultan Suleyman´s wife Roxolana, or Hürrem, a character that kept re-appearing in various presentations on the English stage not only in the Restoration period but during the entire eighteenth century as well.[34]

### Thesis Structure

As I would like to show in this thesis, despite the fact that the representations of the female characters might seem to offer little varieties (certainly less than those of the male characters), the reading of their individual depictions can differ tremendously in accordance

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[31] Joyce Zonana, "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of 'Jane Eyre'" The University of Chicago Press 18. 3 (1993): 602, JSTOR. Web. 19 July 2016.
[32] *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662 – 1785,* 10.
[33] Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 3 - 4.
[34] The long history of Roxolana´s image in Europe is examined in detail in Galina I. Yermolenko´s book *Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture.*

with the author´s stance on the question of how should women´s status in the society look like. All of the works I am going to discuss were chosen in accordance with three different criteria. First, they all make use of the Oriental settings with similarly depicted, unconditionally Muslim culture. Secondly, they were all written by noted dramatists, both male and female, between 1663 (the extended version of *The Siege of Rhodes)* and 1696 (*Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* and *The Royal Mischief),* that is before the advent of the Empire at a time when the Ottoman Empire was still considered a threat to Europe.[35] And, most importantly, they all show a different strategy for using the Oriental setting to address the question of women´s role in Britain. As the strategy seems to differ from author to author, I have divided my thesis accordingly into four chapters, each of which deals with a specific author and one or two of his or her specific works. There are certainly many other plays that would meet the criteria I set for this thesis and many other strategies that could be discussed. However, the aim of this work is not to map them all, but rather to show the variety of these strategies and to bring attention to this phenomenon.

In the first chapter, I will discuss William Davenant´s revolutionary play *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663), the play which not only symbolized the emergence of female actresses on the English public stage but also the arrival of the heroic drama. In this play Davenant uses the exotic setting and the mutual prejudices of the West and East to highlight the superiority of the Western values and Western idea of woman and wife represented in the play by the virtuous Ianthe. Though heroic in its essence, I shall argue that Davenant´s ideal can also be read as a defence of Queen Henrietta Maria´s active participation in the war and politics, celebration of women´s help in defence of their country (such as the one during the Civil War) or as Davenant´s attempt to show that the greatest strength of the Christian women lies not only in their loyalty and obedience to their husbands, but also in their courage, honour and wisdom, which are in the play represented as equal to that of men. This idea is also strengthened by the character of sultana Roxolana which in *The Siege of Rhodes* serves not only to acknowledge the superiority of the Western ideal but also to offer a mirror image to Alphonso´s jealousy or to further challenge the supposed weaknesses of female rulership.

The subject of the second chapter will be perhaps the most famous of Elkanah Settle´s many plays set in the Orient – *The Empress of Morocco* (1673) and especially its main protagonist, the Queen Mother Laula who can without doubts be included among the greatest

[35] Historians usually give the year 1699, when the Treaty of Carlovitz was signed, as the beginning of the end of Ottoman expansion in the West.

villainesses of the English Restoration drama. Laula´s malevolent influence on her son Muly Labas together with Settle´s well-known anti-Catholicism has led several critics to view her as a possible warning against the growing female Catholic influence on the English court. However, most of my attention will be in this chapter paid to the way Settle avails the idea of the ambitious and evil Oriental sultana to show the dangers of feminine transgressive behaviour, especially the female expression of sexuality, which is in the play presented as producing violence and incompatible with femininity.

The third chapter of this thesis will explore one of the 'Female Wits' – Mary Pix and her she-tragedy *Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696). Pix is in recent criticism portrayed either as a misogynist playwright, reinforcing stereotypical understanding of women or, on the contrary, as a feminist one. On one hand, I shall argue that like Settle, Pix too advocates some of the stereotypes connected with female sexuality and might seem to promote the idea of the frail female gender, emphasizing women´s vulnerability and at least seeming defencelessness. Yet, on the other hand, she emphasizes the power of female wits and poses her heroine Morena in the symbolical role of the instigator of action. In addition, by making the rape of the main heroine by the lustful sultan central to her play, Pix not makes her way to assert the Whiggish theory of men´s right to get rid of a tyrannical ruler but also condemns polygamy, and most importantly, teaches the audience to sympathise with rape victims, an aspect that was lacking in the seventeenth-century reality.

The fourth and last chapter will be devoted to, another of the 1696 female playwrights, Delariviere Manley and her *The Royal Mischief.* Manley´s works have in recent years started to gain more critical attention because of their use of subversive strategies aimed at revealing the double-standards of the society towards men and women and at deconstructing the ways the patriarchal system forces its own definition of femininity on women. All these themes are also central to *The Royal Mischief*, where Manley´s chief tool in their argument becomes the play´s protagonist Homais whose revolt against her elderly husband is also a rebellion against the society that gives her only limited possibilities to choose her own life and behaviour as a woman. The second part of the chapter shall also deal with Homais´s rival, Princess Bassima whose unfaltering loyalty to her husband shows how the male characters of the play rather than to admit their own mistakes hypocritically transfer the fault to their female counter-parts. Dealing with such problems as female sexuality, objectification of women or the hypocrisy of the male characters I shall argue that

the Oriental setting is used in the play as a means of arguing that the position of British women is far more similar to that of the Orient than the audience would like to admit.

**William Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes***

Although William Davenant is nowadays rarely mentioned among the names of the great playwrights of the seventeenth century, the importance of his role in the restoration of British theatre and of his revisions and reintroduction of Shakespeare[36] can hardly be overlooked. His plays, however, are more studied for their innovative nature than for their contents, as is also the case of *The Siege of Rhodes,* Davenant´s first performed play after the beginning of the Restoration. The play brought on stage numerous innovations, giving the British drama a completely new course. It was in *The Siege of Rhodes* when changeable scenery, common in masques, was for the first time used in public theatre. This first British opera (even though critics´ opinions to what extent the play can be considered one differ[37]) has been ascribed the role of the first ancestor of the heroic drama in Britain[38] and, even more importantly, it became known as the first play to employ female actresses on British public stage.[39] The innovations were indeed numerous but more as mere products of Davenant´s need for novelties they should be seen as indicators of England´s readiness for change not only on the dramatic grounds but social ones as well. The problem of shifting perception of women´s social roles, femininity and the new determination of the paradigmatic woman and wife, all of that reflected not only in the novelties in performance but also in the play itself and thus enabled reading of the play as a commentary on the situation of the perception of women in early Restoration England.

The plot and the image of women in *The Siege of Rhodes* considerably differ between

[36] Davenant was in fact considered to be Shakespeare´s illegitimate son. For more information on this topic see "Davenant, Sir William," *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare,* eds. Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[37] The usability of the term 'opera' in this case depends mostly on the definition of the term itself. Interesting is the possibility suggested in *The Readers´ Encyclopaedia of the World Drama* that Davenant originally availed the operatic nature of his text to avoid the ban during the play´s premiere in 1656. ("Davenant, Sir William," *The Readers´ Encyclopaedia of the World Drama*, ed. John Gassner and Edward Quinn (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969).

[38] Except for the fact that the play (unlike most of its successors) does not fully employ heroic couplets, *The Siege of Rhodes* is almost completely coincident with the definition of heroic plays in *Merriam-Webster´s Encyclopedia of Literature:* "Heroic Drama portrayed epic characters and themes of love and honour and was for the most part written in the heroic couplets with overblown dialogue and exotic settings. The plays were staged with spectacular scenery and were influenced by the development of the opera at that time in England and by French classical drama." ("Heroic Drama," *Merriam-Webster´s Encyclopedia of Literature* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc. 1995). Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes* was also acknowledged as the first example of the heroic drama by John Dryden in his essay "Of Heroic Plays", where he writes: "For heroic plays, in which only I have used it without the mixture of prose, the first light we had of them, on the English theatre, was from late Sir William D´Avenant." John Dryden, "On Heroic Plays," *The Works of John Dryden, Illustrated with Notes, Historical, Critical, and Explanatory, and A Life of the Author,* ed. Walter Scott, vol. 4 (London: James Ballantyne and Co. Edinburgh, 1808) 16.

[39] *Staging Islam in English Drama,* 104.

the original version of the first part (performed perhaps as soon as 1656) and of the second part (first staged in 1661) and their extensively revised versions from 1663.[40] The difference between the two versions consists mainly in the substantive additions in the employment of the two women in the play. The most important change concerning the character of Ianthe lies in the addition of a scene emphasizing her valour and lack of vanity where Ianthe sells her jewels for gunpowder. But even more important is the change concerning Roxolana as she was actually completely absent in the original first part.[41] The fact that most of Davenant´s revisions concern the space women get in the play suggests that the intention of these revisions might not be only Davenant´s efforts to avoid censure but that what might have changed as well was the importance he wanted to give women in the play and how daringly he eventually decided to describe them.

The resulting revised version of *The Siege of Rhodes* consists of five acts. The plot itself is taking place in two more or less evenly distributed settings, one describing the events in the besieged Rhodes and one in the camp of the besiegers. The main male protagonist is Alphonso, a Sicilian famous for his bravery in the defence of Rhodes. When his newly-wed wife, Ianthe, hears about the siege she decides to sell all of her jewellery for weapons and sets sail to Rhodes. Nonetheless, when approaching Rhodes her ships are seized by the Ottomans and Ianthe, veiled, is brought before the sultan. Solyman finds her courage and loyalty to her husband so admirable that he lets her and her ships continue in the journey and gives her and Alphonso free pass to leave the island, which both refuse. Even as Ianthe soon gains many admirers among the Rhodians, Alphonso is overpowered by his own jealousy and distrust towards Solyman and accuses her of being unfaithful. Devastated Ianthe seeks death in battle, dressed as a man and fighting fiercely among the English division. Solyman who cannot stop thinking about her forbids anyone from wounding her or her husband, but because of her disguise she ends up injured in the battle and finally saved by Alphonso.

In the second part Ianthe is already healed but the siege continues and Rhodes is nearly famished. Alphonso is still jealous, but in spite of it, Ianthe decides to submit to the pleas of angered civilians and sets off to meet with Solyman, determined to persuade him to let the civilians leave the island. Solyman decides to avail the occasion to test his tempestuous wife Roxolana, whose jealousy made her join him for the siege. He orders that Ianthe should stay for the night and sends her directly to Roxolana´s harem. Despairing

[40] Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 151 – 152.
[41] *Staging Islam in England,* 120.

Roxolana writes a letter to Alphonso, suggesting a possibility of an amorous relationship between Ianthe and Solyman, in answer to which Alphonso and the Rhodians attack the Ottoman camp. Alphonso is captured but Solyman decides to test Roxolana again by giving him up to her power. Roxolana first asserts that her intention is to have him executed, but in the end Ianthe´s innocence and loyalty make her change her mind and the couple is offered either to sail off to Sicily or to return to Rhodes. Ianthe and Alphonso, united, as are Solyman and Roxolana, decide to return to Rhodes and to make terms for the town with Solyman´s authorization.

While Ianthe´s heroic and selfless actions undoubtedly dominate the play´s plot and thus emphasize the role of women in the play, on the stage itself the importance of women was perhaps most clearly seen in its revolutionary employment of actresses. This novelty was widely opposed in Britain and not even the moral reasons for the permission of this innovation (that is to avoid the morally corrupted employment of men dressing as women) was found to be a sufficient justification.[42] The fact that Davenant´s bold decision to challenge this prejudice and to employ Mrs Coleman as the main heroine Ianthe was in the end successful might to a certain level be caused not only by the growing tolerance of the society towards women´s acquiring new social roles but also by Davenant´s own portrayal of Ianthe. She, like the actresses has to stand against accusations attacking her good name and what protects her as both the character as well as actress is her similarity to the untouchable figure of Queen Henrietta Maria, who extensively performed in the English court theatre already in the first half of the seventeenth century[43] and who is often argued to be the inspiration for the character of Ianthe.

There exists no clear proof that Davenant in his description of Ianthe wanted to make allusion to Henrietta Maria, but the possibility has been suggested as highly probable by several critics. Susan Wiseman emphasizes that Davenant "had been a court dramatist and designed 'her Majesties servant' by Henrietta Maria" and that "female figures in his plays – such as Ianthe – may perhaps bear traces of his admiration of her"[44] and Ann-Mari Hedbäck points out that "her activities during the first years of the Civil War parallel strikingly those of Davenant´s Ianthe."[45] But perhaps most attention is devoted to this problem in *Staging*

[42] *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, 31.
[43] Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama, 1660 – 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 1.
[44] *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War*, 140.
[45] Ann-Mari Hedbäck, *The Siege of Rhodes: A Critical Edition* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia 14, 1973) li. Quoted in *Staging Islam in English Drama,* 111.

*the Revolution: Drama, Reinvention and History: 1647 – 72,* where Rachel Willie examines the various ways Henrietta Maria might have influenced Ianthe.[46] And even though such claims are hard to prove, just the fact that paradigmatic Ianthe shared common characteristics with this famously strong-willed woman, shows how much Davenant´s play reflects the changes in the perception of the laudatory characteristics women should represent.

To a degree, this change could also be caused by the heroic features of the play that similarly as the future heroic drama underlined characters´ strong moral code based mainly on the terms of honour, valour and love. To quote Yermonlenko: "According to some scholars, English historic plays, in general, tended to portray female characters as active subjects, exercising virtue, exploring their passions, and acting upon male heroes."[47] The new image of ideal woman that emerged in the heroic drama, of which *The Siege of* Rhodes can be considered to be the first example, reflected the changes in the society during and after the Civil War, while the exotic settings connected with them provided a neutral, yet fertile soil for the discussion of the changes.

Nevertheless, characters that emerged from this new genre were perhaps even more idealized than ever before. This tendency probably originated from authors´ inclination towards plays that would above all present a clear moral and offer strong and paradigmatic characters that would help re-establish the society in the aftermath of the Civil War. At the same time the heroic element partly coincided with that of the Jacobean Revenge drama where a clear division of female heroines as "angels and whores"[48] was often crucial for the plays´ development. This division to a certain degree continues in the heroic drama and reflects in the customary opposition of the evil Oriental woman to the virtuous Christian (or Christian-like) heroine in the plays set in the Orient. The heroines that emerged from this tendency represent all the virtues that every Christian woman should have in such a spotless and idealized manner that they are nowadays often diminished as mere products of cultural misogyny. But even as Eileen Jorge Allman characterizes this understanding of idealization as "a male fantasy given material form by playwrights and foisted on women, real and fictional,

who are esteemed only because they have internalized the script," she also asserts that this

[46] For more information refer to Rachel Willie, *Staging the Revolution: Drama, Reinvention and History, 1647 – 72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

[47] Galina I. Yermolenko, "Roxolana in Europe, "*Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture,* Ed. Galina I. Yermolenko (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) 37.

[48] Petra Spurná, "Female Characters in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama," Ms thesis (Masaryk University Faculty of Arts, 2012) 84.

stance cannot "be dismissed as inseparable from contempt and equally disempowering and dehumanizing."[49] Allman goes on describing why this particular dismissal of idealized female characters as misogynistic cannot be applied to Jacobean Revenge drama, however, it would be similarly erroneous to apply them to Davenant´s Ianthe.

To a degree, Ianthe does follow the role of dehumanized, disempowered victim of idealization. Similarly as these "female angels" in the previous periods she too is ultimately good character painted in black and white, and the praised characteristics she represents arise from and strictly follow the rules of the patriarchal society to which Davenant was born. Unlike the heroines created by playwrights of the next period, such as Manley, Ianthe never actually challenges the patriarchal system, a fact that some recent critics would understand as reinforcing it. Her loyalty to her husband cannot ever be questioned by the spectator and in fact stands behind the reason of most of her actions. Yet it is exactly these characteristics she needs to possess and the actions she does in being loyal to her husband, that in many ways go against the idea of women and femininity of the time. It is her role of active heroine that extricates her from the dehumanizing clutches of idealization and makes her rather than a passive object of author´s imagination a striving new ideal that can be understood as a celebration of the new perception of women.

Unlike many of his predecessors (and some successors as well), Davenant describes this idealized characters not as something that is or should be but rather as what could be if both sides, both men and women, were equally determined to strive for it. This Davenant´s belief that both sides need to make concessions if the new ideals, presented both by Ianthe and by Alphonso, are to be reached, can be perhaps best seen in the answer of the generic Women chorus to the urges of Men to follow the example of Ianthe:

Men.
Then strait hither come, a new Pattern to see,
Which in a good humour kind fortune did send.
A glass for your minds, as well as your faces:
Make haste then and break you own Looking-glasses;
If you see but your selves, you´l never amend.

Wom.
You that will teach us what your wives ought to do,

[49] Eileen Jorge Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (Newark: Associated University Presses, 1999) 17.

Take heed; there´s a pattern in Town too for you.

Be you but *Alphonsos,* and we

Perhaps Ianthes will be.[50]

This conversation eventually leads to a common understanding of both parties for the need of concessions: "Let both sides begin then, rather than neither;/ Let ´s both joyn our hands, and both mend together." (p. 222)

But Ianthe cannot be read as the ideal representative of her gender without taking in consideration that she is not only meant to represent paradigmatic wife and woman, but Christian and Western one at that. It is Ianthe´s position as a woman, and consequently also as the bearer of traditional values, that reinforces her position as an ideal. Ianthe, unlike any other character in the play, is twice confronted with the Eastern enemy and it is thus one of her main functions in the play to stand for the West and to re-asses the values connected with it. Nevertheless, these values cannot be simply overlooked as that which distinguish the Westerners form the Easterners since they are attributed to characters on both sides without, however, losing their significance as markers of Western civilization. Especially remarkable is Davenant´s depiction of sultan Solyman of whose gallant and honourable behaviour Ianthe affirms that "He seem´d in civil *France*, and Monarch there" (p. 218) and that "Solyman has civil been,/ And did much Christian honour win." (p. 261) Susan Wiseman, who closely examines this phenomenon in her *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War,* attributes this Davenant´s depiction of the Turks to the ambivalence of the Ottoman image in this period and points out that "'the Turk' is a recognisable enemy, as personified by the sultan, 'he' also presents a dangerous, uncanny *doppelgänger,* a representation of the West to itself."[51]

But as the Christian values in *The Siege of Rhodes* can be adopted by Turks and hence cannot be perceived as intrinsically Western, then the same values can be missed by the Christians themselves, which allows Davenant a touch of social criticism, emphasizing the need for change. Whereas honour and bravery of the Christian characters in the play are repeatedly praised by their Ottoman enemies, the historical fact that Rhodes in the end had to face the aggressors on its own is emphasized as well and even though apologies are made for England and France, the whole matter is summed up in relatively

[50] Sir William Davenant, *Love and Honour and The Siege of Rhodes.* Ed. James W. Tupper (Boston: D. C. Heath & CO., Publishers, 1909) *Internet Archive,* 221 – 222. Web. 19 July 2016. All future references in this chapter will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses.

[51] *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War,* 153.

unflattering fashion: "All gaining vainly from each others loss;/ Whilst still the C*rescent* drives away the *Cross.* (p. 202) Similar technique Davenant uses in his unflattering image of Western women in the minds of the Ottomans who in the play repeatedly associate them with adultery. Such idea, which must have been understood as especially insulting when pronounced from the mouths of polygamy practising Muslims, is in the play contradicted both by Ianthe´s actions and proclamations.

When Ianthe first appears before Solyman, she is wearing a veil, a propriety most commonly connected with Muslim women, symbolizing mostly their chastity. Though Inathe´s appearance in this scene might have been inspired by 1637 French play *Osmond the Great Turk*[52] where Despina is brought before the Tatar tyrant Melcoshus, Ianthe (unlike Despina) does not allow anyone to unveil her and thus symbolically proves that she can be as faithful as any Oriental woman while still retaining her Christian values. The idea that Christian women are more unfaithful than those in the East is also the reason why Roxolana, making the same mistake as later Alphonso when he refuses to believe in Solyman´s honour, initially refuses to acknowledge the purity of Ianthe´s loyalty to her husband:

Roxol.
This well they [Christian wives] to their Husbands are so true.
But speak, Ianthe, are they all like you?

Ianth.
I hope they are, and better too,
Or, if they are not, will be so.

Roxol.
They have been strangely injur´d then.
But Rumour does mistake.
Some say they visits make.
And they are visited by Men.

Ianth.
What custom does avow

[52] According to Birchwood, "both Bess Bridges of Heywood´s *The Fair Maid of the West* (1631) and Despina of Carlell´s *Osmond the Great Turk* (1637) suggest themselves as models for Ianthe." (*Staging Islam in England,* 104).

Our Laws in Time allow;
And those who never guilty be

Suspect not others liberty.

(p. 307)

Ianthe´s answer is mainly an appeal for change and the need for re-establishment of Christian values on which, as Davenant tries to demonstrate, rests the Western moral superiority. This superiority is, after all, also what by the end of the conversation asserts Roxolana herself when persuaded by Ianthe´s defence of Christian faithfulness and love: "These Christian-Turtles live so happily./ I wish, for breed they would to *Asia* fly". (p. 308)

Similar acceptance of the superiority of the Western values is also the reason behind Solyman´s depiction as a good ruler. It is Ianthe´s virtue, honour and bravery that at the beginning of the play changes Solyman´s prototypically Eastern bloodthirstiness into Western civility and which eventually leads to his questioning of his own expansion: "Of spacious Empire, what can I enjoy?/ Gaining at last but what I first Destroy." (p. 278) Bridget Orr, reading Solyman as an example of non-Western Other, describes this Ianthe´s influence over the Ottomans as "psychological colonization" and stresses out that in the end of the play it was "Christian womanhood which had subdued the Turk, rather than Christian arms:"[53]

Soly.
Go back *Ianthe*; make your own
Conditions boldly for the Town.
I am content it should recorded be,
That, when I vanquisht *Rhodes,* you Conque´d me.

(p. 337)

What makes Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes* so interesting is that these values Christian woman and wife should have and on which in the play the Western moral superiority rests, considerably match those of ideal man and husband and thus partly goes against the beliefs of the society of the early Restoration period that women and men are biologically, intellectually and socially different. The popular idea that women should be

[53] *Empire on the English Stage 1660 – 1714,* 72.

"tender and nurturing", while men "reasonable and strong"[54] can be applied to *the Siege of Rhodes* only to a certain degree. Ianthe, while still retaining the female characteristics, adapts some of the typically male ones as well. Ianthe, motivated by her love for Alphonso, shows remarkable courage in most of her decisions. Her attempt to reach Rhodes, her participation in the battle when she fights "than man more fierce" (p. 235) or her decision to return to the enemy camp definitely questions the characteristics of women as the "frail sex." And it is certainly not without significance that Ianthe herself (even as she is hesitating if their decision not to leave Rhodes was right) asserts that she fears "not as a woman, but a wife." (p. 225) Yet perhaps even more daring is the proclamation Davenant´s Chorus of Women makes when giving call for women to join the war preparations:

> Our Patches and our Curls
> (So exact in each station)
> Our Powders and our Purls
> Are now out of fashion.
> Hence with our Needles, and give us your Spades;
> We, that were Ladies, grow coorse as our Maids.
> Our Coaches have drove us to Balls at the Court,
> We now must drive Barrows to earth up the port.
>
> (p. 210)

The propagation of women´s participation in defence, here set on the neutral Rhodian grounds, must have had several implications in post-Civil War England. Many women had to defend their estates when their husbands were participating in the war. For example, Countess of Derby successfully let the defence of her home, Lanthom House, when it was besieged by the Parliamentary forces and she even refused any offers of safe conduct for her and her family. Others, like lady Bankes when defending Corfe Castle, even actively participated in the fights.[55] Examples of these brave women, although not always successful, made the perception of women´s participation in wars much more understandable in England. Such representation of women might also be drawing again on Henrietta Maria, whose participation in the war was both praised and criticized. Rachel Willie in her long

[54] Raquel Serrano Gonzáles and Laura Martínez García, "How to Represent Female Identity on the Restoration Stage: Actresses (Self) Fashioning," *Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal* 16. 1 (2014): 98. *De Gruyter*. 14 July 2016.
[55] Mary Elizabeth Ailes, "Camp Followers, Sutlers and Soldiers´ Wives: Women in Early Modern Armies (c. 1450 – c. 1650)", *A Companion to Women´s Military History,* eds. Barton C. Hacker and Margaret Vining (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012) 68.

comparison of Ianthe and Henrietta Maria claims that "in the character of Ianthe the more controversial aspects of Henrietta Maria´s actions may be discreetly overlooked while her role as a supportive wife can be celebrated."[56] Similar is the reading of Birchwood who suggests that this allusion might also have been the reason why the scene where Ianthe sells her jewels and sets out to besieged Rhodes was left out in the first version of the play.[57]

When the introduction of heroic plays questioned the idea of valour as solely male characteristic, it by analogy also questioned that of female honour, which is again in *The Siege of Rhodes* displayed as equally necessary by both genders. This typical characteristic of the heroic drama is present in the play in various places and can be even considered to be its most prominent theme. Even though honour is singled out as the most distinguishing characteristics of the besieged but still fighting Rhodians it is also the characteristic that distinguishes Davenant´s depiction of Solyman from that of his predecessors and that makes Christian Ianthe, rather than Roxolana, his mirror image in the play. Whereas Alphonso repeatedly questions Solyman´s honour as that of a Turk, Ianthe´s honour, on the other hand, he takes in consideration only in relation to his own, a mistake that soon lights up his jealousy and eventually leads to his being captured by the enemy.

Yet the fact that Ianthe´s honour, in all the meanings of the word, is as strong as her husband´s is in the play asserted by her deeds. It is both honour and love that make her sail off to Rhodes and it is the reason of her bold decision to return to the enemy camp for negotiations. But her sense of honour is repeatedly stressed out by Ianthe herself. When she first arrives at Rhodes she joins Alphonso´s decision and similarly as before mentioned Countess of Derby refuses the safe conduct from Rhodes offered to her by Solyman: "If that forbid it, you shall never see/ That I and that will disagree:/ Honour will speak the same to me." (p. 218) While it might seem that this her decision was made only because she feels the need to follow her husband, the final scene, where Ianthe refuses her husband´s wish to return to Sicily and instead decides to stay in Rhodes shows how much Ianthe tries to assert honour as a laudatory characteristic both in men as well as in women: "*Alphonso,* I have honour too;/ Which calls me back to Rhodes with you." (p. 337)

These characteristics not only underline the equality of women in high places, that is in the audience towards which they were directed, but also put her in a position where she can inspire and morally improve others. Willie in her comment on the end of the play writes: "Davenant depicts the victor relinquishing the terms of the conquest to the woman who

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[56] *Staging the Revolution: Drama, Reinvention and History, 1647 –72,* 129.
[57] *Staging Islam in England Drama,* 120.

represents the defeated Rhodians, thereby celebrating the power woman can hold over a leader."[58] But whereas it is true that Solyman does confess to be "conquer´d" by Ianthe, her power over him is of strictly moral character and based not only on her femininity but also on the fact that the values she represents are Western. Consequently, Ianthe offers a limited argument in the question of women and power. This question is, however, also addressed in the character of Ianthe´s Eastern rival Roxolana.

The figure of Solyman´s wife Hürrem, known in Europe mainly as Roxolana or Roxelana, had a long history in European writing. In fact, even as her depiction was in England based mainly on Richard Knolles´ *The Generall Historie of the Turks* her image over the years transformed so much that she became almost solely the product of Western imagination. Her name soon started to put on various associations as she became the "Exotic Female Other *par excellence,*" characterised especially by her sensuous, jealous and often even malicious nature, all of which in the eighteenth century resulted in the name "Roxolana" being almost synonymous to a "whore." Roxolana reappeared on the British stage many times in the years following Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes.* Especially in the late 1660s and 1670s plays like Roger Boyle´s, Earl of Orrery´s *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1668) or Elkanah Settle´s *Ibrahim, The Illustrious Bassa* (1676) picked up on her popularity and helped to establish the prototypical figure of Eastern rival to the chaste Christian virtue of the main heroine. Yet while it is true that Roxolana´s main role in Davenant´s play is probably to represent Oriental opposition to Ianthe in order to emphasize the ideal of Christian wife and Western values, Davenant in her description refuses to succumb to such binary oppositions for she also represents Alphonso´s mirror image, demonstrating that jealousy is a universal danger for marriage for both sides and sexes.

In both cases the jealousy is produced by racial prejudices – whereas Alphonso refuses to believe in the "wondrous Turkish chastity" (p. 219), Roxolana lives under the impression that Christian wives "are visited by men." (p. 307) But although Ianthe never really blames Alphonso for his faults and accepts them as the evidence of her love for him, the same can hardly be said for Solyman who sees his wife´s jealousy as a product of her sensuous nature. These contrary understandings of jealousy can be understood in the terms of the different status of a husband and a wife. Ianthe´s role as an ideal wife does not allow her to question the rightness of Alphonso´s jealousy although it eventually leads her to the decision to throw her life away on the battlefield. Alphonso´s jealousy is thus

[58] *Staging the Revolution: Drama, Reinvention and History, 1647 –72,* 130.

in the play criticized only because it rests on false accusations and leads in the end to his being captured by the enemy. On the other hand, Solyman´s authority gives him the right to punish his wife by giving Ianthe to her care and it is the fact that she in the end of his test stops being jealous that he understands as the proof of her love for him, taking it as an indication of her finally being sure of his heart. In fact, as Birchwood points out, Roxolana´s jealousy might have been perceived in the play as possibly debilitating the internal unity of the Turkish encampment.[59] The "Civil Warr" (p. 313) Solyman has to face at home is the main cause why he seeks solace in his territorial expansions and thus has far graver consequences than the jealousy of Alphonso. Still, in both cases jealousy is described as "Love that has lost it self in a Mist" (p. 232) and it is only when jealousy is overcome that love can flourish and the pairs are united.

Yet jealousy in not the only reason Solyman has to be crossed with his wife. What seems to cause him almost as many problems is her ambitious nature that Solyman perceives as the main reason for her attempts to secure the thrown for her own sons. However, similarly as in the matter of jealousy, despite the reasons he has to condemn such behaviour, his wife still appears to hold her power over him. This prototypically female power, described by Suvir Kaur as "worryingly proud, demanding, and possibly emasculating,"[60] is most probably based on her account by Richard Knolles who not only blames her for the execution of prince Mustafa but also uses her as an example of the dangers of female power in the matters of state. In Knolles´s account, Roxolana is described as one of the reasons of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and even depicted as a "commandresse of him that all commaunded."[61] Davenant, however, although obviously working with Knolles´s text, refuses to join Knolles´s arguments in this matter and instead shifts Roxolana´s role in history more towards her favour when he describes the reasons of Roxolana´s scheming as those of a concerned mother acting against the barbarian laws on which the Oriental tyranny rested. When Solymon charges her with scheming against his oldest son, her protests against the Oriental cruelty allow Davenant not only to show Western succession system as superior to the Oriental one but also to show the possible positive contribution of motherhood in the questions of state: "Because her Son the Empire shall enjoy,/ Must therefore strangling Mutes my Sons destroy?" (p. 317)

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[59] *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640 – 1685*, 121.

[60] Suvir Kaur, *Eighteenth-century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) 44.

[61] *Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture,* 28.

Davenant refuses to join Knolles´s campaign against the "dangerous" female power and instead portrays Roxolana as a rather effective ruler, perfectly able to manage affairs of both local and international importance. The appeal of Bassa Rustan "Do not your Sultan´s will, my Counsel call" (p. 280) provokes her to what is probably her most powerful monologue in the play where she protests against the prejudice claiming that women can be easily manipulated by these "Court-Monsters" (p. 280) and refuses to succumb to the role imposed upon her by the patriarchal society:

> Roxol.
> Then sawcily believe, we Monarch Wives
> Were made but to be Dress´t
> For a Continu´d Feast;
> To hear soft Sounds, and play away our Lives.
> They think our Fullness is to wain so soon
> As if our Sexes Governess, the Moon,
> Has plac´d us, both for Sport on Fortunes lapp;
> They with bold Pencils, by the changing shape
> Of our frail Beauty, have our Fortune drawn;
> And judge our Breast transparent as our Lawn;
> Our heats as loose and soft, and slight
> As are our Summer vests of Silk;
> Our blood as sweet as is our Milk.
>
> (p. 281)

Nevertheless, even these Roxolana´s passionate protests cannot be understood without objections as an example of proto-feminism. Not only that she avoids questioning Solyman´s authority and does not contradict Rustan´s claim that she is doing Sultan´s will, but in fact all these protests are based on her Oriental ethnicity since she underlines that she is "no European Queen,/ Who in a Throne does sit but to be seen;/ And Lives in Peace with such State-Thieves as these." (p. 281) Similarly as in the case of many other characters that avoid clear classification as either good or bad it is difficult to decide how to read Roxolana´s words and to what extent they can be understood as Davenant´s criticism of the forced passivity of European Queens. The discrepancies between their interpretations by critics show that Davenant´s Roxolana resists simple characterisation.

Orr, for example, sees Roxolana as an "ambitious virago"[62] and stresses out her negative characteristics by representing her as Ianthe´s Oriental Other. Consequently, for Orr Roxolana´s bold monologue is mainly an example of Roxolana´s ambitious nature as opposed to Ianthe and can hardly be understood in proto-feminist terms as she points out that her femininity is "perverted by corrupt institutions, false religion, despotism and power, won only by a 'wondrous kind' Christian wife."[63] Such interpretation is, however, disapproved by many contemporary critics such as Wiseman, Birchwood or Ballaster, all of which highlight the play´s refusal to "enforce conventional binaries"[64] and point out that Roxolana "both invokes and revokes the parallel between Occident and Orient" only to subvert the role that is expected of her.[65] The fact is that Roxolana complicates any straightforward interpretations by her counterfeit but also by the contradictions between her words and actions. Roxolana´s attempts to secure the throne for her own sons are found out to be caused not only by her ambition but also by her motherly instincts, her claim that "Nature our Sex does to revenge incite" (p. 332) is a moment later disapproved by Roxolana´s releasing Alphonso and even as she jeers at Ianthe´s kindness and "Domestick pity," (p. 331) deriding Christian women as "soft fools", she seems to admire her because precisely these characteristics are what brings Ianthe and Alphonso their happiness. Roxolana´s ambitions seem to be an obstacle to her relationship with Solyman, but at the same time, they are also represented as understandable and in fact not so distant from the ideal as represented by Ianthe. After all, Ianthe might appear frail and soft when compared to the Oriental Roxolana, but as shows Ianthe´s resemblance to Henrietta Maria, she can neither be described as the kind of woman that would sit on a throne "but to be seen."

Roxolana in her speech often draws on what should supposedly be her Oriental characteristics to clearly distinguish herself from Ianthe and her Christian counterparts, but as Davenant was arguing during the whole play, no such clear distinction is possible. Roxolana´s jealousy is paralleled to that of Alphonso, her comparison to the European Queens would fail if compared to Queen Henrietta Maria and the Christian ladies in the play instead of being "soft fools" "bred up in narrow Western Courts;/ Which are by Subjects storm´d like Paper-Forts" (p. 331) rather sell away jewellery for weapons and ask for spades

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[62] *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1785*, 70.
[63] *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1785*, 71.
[64] *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640 – 1685,* 123.
[65] Ros Ballaster, "Performing *Roxane,*" *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods,* eds. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2013) 171.

instead of needles. In the end Roxolana is inspired by Ianthe to find some of this "Domestick Pity" for herself as well and Ianthe shows that Christian women, at least in their ideal form, can be active equals to their male counterparts.

## Elkanah Settle´s *The Empress of Morocco*

Elkanah Settle is one of the many playwrights that continued in the fashion of *The Siege of Rhodes,* drawing on the popularity of the drama set in the Orient in the 1670s. During his career Settle produced a whole range of such plays, all of which had a considerable influence on the formation of the British discourse of the Orient.[66] But *The Empress of Morocco* was undoubtedly the most successful one. Settle, known as a master of great scenes and pompous productions, produced plays that featured all that became characteristic of the Orient – harems, eunuchs, tyrants, shocking violence and, as in the case of *The Empress of Morocco,* even a Moorish dance.[67] Nevertheless, Settle´s Oriental plays seldom described the Orient as it was and the plots they presented were more the products of Settle´s imagination than a depiction of any historical events. The Orient served Settle mostly as a fitting stage for his grand heroic drama and as a distancing mechanism that would allow Settle to propagate his political, mostly anti-popish (and later Whiggish) views.

In this matter, *The Empress of Morocco* is no exception. The play´s eponymous protagonist – the diabolically evil Queen Mother Laula is by several critics understood as Settle´s representation of the English Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria and of the Machiavellian figure her critics often connect with her - Catherine de Medicis. Consequently, the play´s argument against Catholicism also works with the idea of the ambitious and lascivious Oriental woman as a means of warning against women holding power over rulers or against the dangers women can pose as an unsuspected power. Her openly expressed sexuality, lawless ambitions and corrupted femininity make her the exact opposite of all those characteristics a woman and a mother should have. It is then her standing out of the boundaries of what is feminine that makes her resulting depiction a woman so thoroughly evil that it is impossible to view her as a realistic character, and which enabled critics such as Anne Hermanson to classify her among the "monstrous women."[68]

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[66] Settle employed the Oriental setting already in his first tragedy – 1667 *Cambyses, the King of Persia.* Its success encouraged him to continue in this fashion, giving birth to his even more famous 1673 *The Empress of Morocco* and other such plays as 1676 *Ibrahim, the Illustrious Bassa*, 1676 *The Conquest of China, by the Tartars* or the continuation of his Moroccan plot – *The Heir of Morocco* from 1683.

[67] The dance of Moors undoubtedly draws on the masque tradition of the English drama, but more than that it is also a great example of Settle´s ability to mix genres and avail all the possibilities seventeenth-century drama was capable of.

[68]Anne Hermanson dedicates to the concept of "monstrous women" and its demonstration in *The Empress of Morocco* a chapter "Monstrous Women: Aphra Behn´s *Abdelazer; or the Moor´s Revenge* and Elkanah Settle´s *The Empress of Morocco"* in her book *The Horror Plays of the English Restoration.*

The play begins when Muly Labas´s father, the Emperor of Morocco, assumes the role of an Oriental tyrant and plans to kill his own son because of his relationship with Princess Morena, with whom Muly Labas ran away from the court of the king of Algiers, Taffalet, now planning to attack Morocco. Muly Labas and Morena are, however, saved when the Queen Mother Laula secretly poisons her husband. Her intent is, however, to put on the throne her own lover, courtier Crihalmaz. After Muly Labas and Morena are married and crowned, general Muly Hamet returns from the war and is formally engaged to Princess Mariamme. Muly Labas gives the general a permission to visit Laula and that is when the general finds her sleeping on a couch with Crihalmaz. Shocked Muly Hamet takes Crihalmaz´s exposed sword as a proof of what he saw and leaves, intent on killing Crihalmaz the next time he sees him. Yet shortly afterwards he meets the king, who insists on finding out whose sword it is. Ashamed of revealing Queen´s weakness, Muly Hamet finally confesses what he saw. But the Queen has already prepared her defence – she accuses the general of an attempt to rape her and presents Crihalmaz as her saviour. Refusing to believe in his mother´s wickedness, Muly Labas condemns the general to death but, after Mariamme´s attempt to save him, changes his verdict to an exile.

Crihalmaz, now in charge of the army and treasure, finally turns against the king. Not knowing what to do, Muly Labas decides to listen to his mother´s perfidious advice and goes to Crihalmaz´s camp, hoping to talk him out of his treacherous intentions. He is then killed in a masque by his own wife, who, misinformed by Laula, thought she was killing Crihalmaz. But as Laula´s evil plot is finally finishing and Crihalmaz is named the new ruler, he reveals his passions for Morena and accuses Laula of regicide. The queen in her last attempt to do mischief kills Morena and then, as she fails to murder Crihalmaz, stabs herself and dies too. Meanwhile, Marriame sets off to visit Muly Hamet in his exile, where she is captured by Crihalmaz´s men and brought back to the court. This, however, enrages Muly Hamet to that extent that he allies with Taffalet and marches to Morocco. Finally, Crihalmaz is betrayed by his own men, Marianne is saved and Muly Hamet is named the new Emperor.

According to Orr, *The Empress of Morocco* was probably based on Lancelot Addison´s 1671 account *West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco. With an Account of the Present Custums, Sacred, Civil and Domestick*,[69] where wife to the Moroccan Emperor Muley Sheck, Laella "began to be exorbitant in her appetites, and to meditate disloyalty to her Husband´s Bed," which

[69] *Empire on the English Stage 1660 – 1714*, 102.

eventually led her to kill her husband.[70] And although there the plot of the play starts to gradually drift away from the original account, which no longer mentions Laella, but replaces her lover (and the future ruler of Morocco) Kirum El Hadge in the position of the main villain, the play keeps endorsing Addison´s idea of "the Mahumetan Women" as dexterous in the wickedness of sorcery[71] and plotting with "feminine invention".[72]

On the other hand, despite Settle´s repeated attempts to make the best of the heightened interest of the public in the Tangerian affairs,[73] and to emphasize its "exoticism", the Moroccan court seems surprisingly civil – not only that Settle omits the polygamous nature of the relationship between the late Emperor and the Queen Mother as mentioned in Addison´s travelogue[74], but he also presents a set of characters that are virtuous and pious, and whose affiliation to what might be described as a civilized heritage, he emphasizes by their attendance in a masque based on an Ancient Greek legend. In fact, the only "barbarous" presence in the play, and the instigator of the typically Oriental violence and cruelty, is the advisor Crihalmaz and, more importantly, the Queen Mother Laula. While such relatively civilized depiction might have its origin in the heroic nature of the play and its tendency to elevate royalty and aristocracy, it also bolsters possible readings of the Moroccan court as a parallel to the court of England.

*The Empress of Morocco* was first performed probably in 1673, that is at a time of great political tensions when the threat of Catholic dynasty was greater than ever before. Not only that Prince James had just openly admitted his Catholicism and was marrying a Catholic princess Mary of Modena, but Charles II was also expressing his sympathy for Catholicism, not to mention that his French mistress Louise de Keroualle was at that time an influential presence at court. These conditions, together with the notoriously political nature of Settle´s plays and Morocco´s reputation of the "nest of Poppish sympathizers"[75]

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[70] Lancelot Addison, *West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco. With an Account of the Present Custums, Sacred, Civil and Domestick.* (Oxford: Printed at the Theater, 1671) 17 – 18. *Early English Books Online*, University of Michigan Library. Web. 19 July 2016.

[71] *West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco,* 19.

[72] *West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco,* 18.

[73] In the 1670s the importance of Tangier affairs for Britain started to increase as there was established an English garrison in Tangier. Negotiations over Tangier continued during the 1680s when England was visited by a Moroccan ambassador Kaid Mohammed ben Hadu. According to Orr, "It is possible, though unrecorded, that Ahmed Hadu attended *The Empress of Morocco,* as the play was sojourned during his play in London, as was Settle´s second play on a North African theme, *The Heir of Morocco* (1682)." (*Empire on the English Stage 1660 – 1714*, 100).

[74] Addison defines Laella as one of Muly Sheck´s wives. (*West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco,* 17).

[75] "Settle, Elkanah" *The Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660 – 1789*, gen. eds. Gary Day and Jack Lynch, Vol. 1 (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015).

led many contemporary critics to assume, in the words of Matthew Birchwood, that "*The Empress of Morocco* is an early response to the Exclusion crisis" and that "it is perhaps significant that Settle chooses to have the Moroccan succession subverted by a specifically female agency, not only that of his mother, but of his wife."[76] Orr implies that the feminine threat represented in the play by Laula might have been intended to resemble Charles´s Catholic Queen Catherine of Braganza, who was at the time often seen as the source of the evil[77] and Anne Hermanson compares Laula to Catherine de Medicis and suggests that she also might have found its counterpart at the English court in the still powerful influence of another Catholic from the family of de Medicis –Henrietta Maria, who "tried desperately to control her son´s affairs."[78]

What all these readings demonstrate is that Settle´s Queen Mother probably evoked in the minds of its contemporary audience several women whose negative influence on the royal family posed a threat to the stability of the state and who were all in this perhaps most anti-Poppish period of English history often denounced as the symbols of the growing tolerance of Catholicism of the Stuarts. Anne Hermanson asserts that the repeating image of the evil queen on Restoration stage has its origin in the general social anxiety of the time, originating from previous experience with female monarchs such as Catherine de Medicis or "Bloody" Mary.[79] However, Settle´s portrayal of Roxolana in his 1676 *Ibrahim, The Illustrious Bassa*, shows that Settle did not have to be necessarily criticizing women´s involvement in political matters as such, [80] but rather invoking the stereotype of the ambitious Oriental sultana and the "evil queen" to aim at specific women at Court and to point out their harmful (that is Catholic) influence on the monarchs.

Unlike them, Laula does not seem to have any political reasons for her actions. She is already in the highest possible position an Oriental woman could ever hope for and even her influence over her son allows her to establish what could be described as the beginning of another sultanate of women. The appearing lack of motive for her actions has already been noted by Settle´s contemporaries. For example in the devastating critique "Notes and

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[76] *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640 – 1685,* 159.
[77] She reminds that the play was presented at time when the Queen was highly unpopular figure with many opponents and points out that Titus Oates went even as far as accusing her of attempting to poison her husband. (*Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1714,* 103).
[78] Anne Hermanson, *The Horror Plays of the English Restoration* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2016) 77.
[79] *The Horror Plays of the English Restoration,* 61.
[80] In fact, in Restoration England the positive memory of Elizabeth I´s rule was still present in the minds of its citizens, which is also attested by the relatively low criticism of the female rule during the reigns of Queen Mary and later Queen Anne. (Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500 – 1700* (London: UCL Press, 1998) 57).

Observations on *The Empress of Morocco"* usually attributed to Dryden, Thomas Shadwell and John Crowne, it is emphasized that "she kills without the least occasion, for the mere lechery of bloodshed."[81] But while Laula´s reasons to as she puts it "Betray and kill and damn to that degree/ I´le crowd up Hell, till there´s no Room for Me,"[82] might seem insufficient, this insufficiency is exactly the key to our understanding of her actions. Laula, as Settle presents her, is more of a monster than a woman, a character that builds its identity in going against the social norms and morality as such.

As Hermanson demonstrates in her essay, Laula´s monstrosity is mainly based on her aberration of the traditional role of a mother, a wife and a woman.[83] Like Addison, who is even willing to endow Laella with supernatural powers to demonstrate the monstrosity of a woman able to kill her own husband in order to put her own lover on the throne, so does Settle demonize Laula´s "unnatural" desire, but goes even one step further – he strips her of any emotional feelings for Crihalmaz (or anyone else) and makes her an embodiment of female wickedness, a warning against the dangers a transgressive woman can present. To put it in words of Orr, "she figures the threat of that unlimited feminine desire which is fundamentally subversive of all social order."[84]

Such understanding of female sexuality was nothing new on the Restoration stage. According to Marsden, who closely examines this topic in his *Fatal Desire,* in the Restoration period female desire was perceived as "potential for complete disintegration."[85] The dangers of this rather vexed issue were especially emphasized in its portrayal on stage, where "drama´s sexualization of 'Ladies of Quality' and the damaging effect these characters have on the women who watch them" was argued by critics like Collier.[86] Settle disavows the idea that female sexuality (unless in a married or to-be-married couple) could be based on such feelings as love and presents the relationship between the Queen Mother and Crihalmaz as "slight excursions of a wanton flame." (p. 19) Therefore, the only reason behind Laula´s relationship with Crihalmaz is nothing else but lust, a female desire.

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[81] John Dryden. "Notes and Observations on *The Empress of Morocco, or, Some Few Errata´s to Be Printed instead of the Sculptures with the Second Edition of That Play*." (Ann Arbor; Oxford: Text Creation Partnership, 2003) page unnumbered. *Early English Books Online.* Web. 19 July 2016.
[82] Elkanah Settle, *The Empress of Morocco (1673)* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994) 24. *English Verse Drama Full-Text Database.* Web. 20 July 2016. All future references in this chapter will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses.
[83] *The Horror Plays of the English Restoration,* 72.
[84] *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1714,* 102.
[85] *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality and the English Stage, 1660 – 1720*, 13.
[86] *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality and the English Stage, 1660 – 1720,* 23.

Collins in her essay writes that the Restoration tragedies used to "depict feminine violence as rooted in excessive sexuality and as simultaneously unnatural and unavoidable."[87] Laula´s lust for Crihalmaz, the only visible origin of her wicked plots, leads her even to such horrible acts as the murder of her own royal husband and son. Her actions are thus an extreme incarnation of the contemporary belief that if woman´s passions are left unguarded the woman might become uncontrollable and violent.[88] At the same time, however, these "fits of passions" were usually attributed to female "weak" nature, which made it difficult for women to resist them. This seems to be, after all, also the belief of Muly Labas, who, when met by pale Muly Hamet, just leaving the Imperial harem, in the words of the author(s) of "Notes and Observations on *The Empress of Morocco*," "can less than guess his own Mother to be a Whore, because she is a Woman"[89]: "But she´s my Mother, and I dare not guess;/ But she´s a Woman, and I can no less/ Then start at horrours which my Honours stain." (p. 17)

The demonization of female sexuality was on the Restoration stage often connected to the Oriental setting, the home of the cabals of women whose power was seen as originating both from their ambitions and from their ability to abuse their bodies and femininity towards their own, "unlawful" ends. Such is also the case of the Queen Mother who, like her historical counterpart Laella, plots with "feminine invention," portrayed in the play as basically the ability of women to hide their transgressions and to abuse male expectations about women. During the play the Queen Mother repeatedly abuses her gender to remain beyond all suspicions and her actions might be read as a warning against the understanding of femininity and the female sex as one. This mistake is what the male characters in the play repeatedly make and which eventually leads to the play´s tragic end. When Muly Hamet finds the Queen Mother lying on a couch with Crihalmaz, it is Crihalmaz he blames for taking advantage of the Queen´s weakness, considering him a traitor, while when it comes to Laula he only feels the need to "right her Wrongs" and "conceal her shame." (p. 15) Later, Muly Labas refuses to believe in Muly Hamet´s account exactly on the grounds of Laula´s being a woman and his mother.

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[87] Margo Collins, "Feminine Conduct and Violence in Mary Pix´s She-tragedies." *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research* 18. 1 (2003): 2. *Literature Online*. Web. 20 July 2016.
[88] Jacques Olivier, *A Discourse of Women, Shewing Their Imperfections Alphabetically.* (London, 1662) 36. Cited in "Feminine Conduct and Violence in Mary Pix´s She-tragedies," 4.
[89] "Notes and Observations on *The Empress of Morocco,*" 24.

Nonetheless, his mistake is completely understandable since Laula is admirably skilful at imitating the expected reaction. It is the mix of specifically women´s frailty, loyalty and virtue she uses to persuade Muly Labas of her innocence:

Q. M.

Hold, Sir, the Story does to me belong,
A Womans frailty from a Womans Tongue.
Whilst pensively I in my Closet sate
My Eyes pay´d Tribute to my Husbands Fate,
And while those Thoughts my sinking Spirits seis´d
His Entrance my dejected Courage rais´d:

*[Pointing to Muly Hamet.*

The sudden Object did new Thoughts produce;
My Griefs suspended, lent my Tears a Truce:
For then I otherwise employ´d my Eies,
Whilst in His Aspect I read Victories.

*[points to Muly Hamet.*

But *Muly Hamet,* then your cruel Breast--

(p. 20)

As Hermanson argues, Laula´s hidden viciousness behind her feminine countenance is what makes her "the enemy within," a specifically female threat that demonstrates that the most dangerous evils might lie unsuspected at home.[90]

But what is perhaps even more important – such representation shows that even as Laula´s means of manipulating others are clearly feminine, they have nothing in common with the idea of femininity as such. In fact, in *The Empress of Morocco* the ideas the audience would have about women are gradually dissolved. In this way the play mirrors the great shifts in the understanding of femininity which ensued after the Revolution when it became more and more clear that the growing female agency and women´s acquiring new social roles must be answered with appropriate changes in its conception. On one hand, as writes Runge in her *Gender and Language in British Literary Criticism, 1660 – 1790,* Restoration femininity could still be such assigned such qualities as "softness smoothness, beauty, love, quietness, sweetness, and simplicity,"[91] yet at the same time, as shows the great number

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[90] *The Horror Plays of the English Restoration,* 78.

[91] Laura R. Runge, *Gender and Language in British Literary Criticism, 1660 – 1790* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 57 – 58.

of female characters in the heroic drama, women started to be ascribed the role of moral guardians and consequently the concept was enriched with the ideas of women´s active agency, strength and purity.[92] Such change is especially notable in Settle´s depiction of Morena and Mariamme. Their courage and sense are repeatedly elevated as sometimes even greater than that of their male counterparts in the fashion of the heroic plays such as *The Siege of Rhodes*. But while the heroic depiction of these women shows that Settle too refused to portray women´s frailty as a necessary characteristic of a woman, their strength is chiefly moral and thus enforces the idea of woman as the guardian of moral values.

This can hardly be said about Laula, whose behaviour contradicts everything that can be described as feminine. Already in the first act Laula surprises the audience when she laughs at Crihalmaz´s supposition that she should be devastated by her husband´s death and accompanies her demonstration of her being completely void of any such "womanly" feelings by assuming greater courage and Machiavellian-like coldness than Crihalmaz ever could, refusing the idea of women´s natural frailty and tenderness:

> Crim.
> The Falls of Kings are heavy, and on You—
>
> Q. M.
> Hold, Sir, sure you have drunk the Poison too,
> That thus your Blood grows cold, and your faint Breast
> Is with such dull and stupid Fears possest.
> A States-mans Breast should scorn to feel remorse;
> Murder and Treason are but things of course.
>
> (p. 7)

As the play continues Settle´s attempts to demonstrate that Laula´s nature, her mischievous deeds and her unlawful sexuality, have nothing in common with femininity become even clearer. She is portrayed as a woman that never sheds tears "but when those Tears draw Blood," (p. 31) and what is worse – as a mother that completely denies her maternity, openly

[92] As argues Sponberg, this conception of femininity was revived especially after the French Revolution in what she calls "the ideal of domestic heroism." (Mary Spongberg, *Writing Women´s History Since the Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) page unnumbered).

laughing at its concept. Not only that she does her best to murder her own son[93] but she even repeatedly abuses the concept of maternity to precipitate Muly Labas´s end.

When Laula tries to persuade her son to go to Crihalmaz´s camp she purposely emphasizes her position of a mother to point out her unquestionably good intentions: "Accept my Counsel, to preserve my Son,/ I´le save your Life, your Empress, and your Throne." (p. 43) Settle´s attempts to portray the Queen Mother as only pretending to have any feminine characteristics eventually graduates to her own assertion that she can hardly be classified as a woman: "Curse on weak Nature which my Rage unman'd, /A Masculine heart linkt with a Female Hand./ My Stars had been more just had they design´d/ Me less of Hell, or less of Woman-kind." (p. 60) Hermanson, who also draws on this scene, argues that "the female appropriation of the male role is what drives the fear of female monstrosity in the horror plays" and emphasizes her courage and other male attributes such as her ambitions and aggression.[94] But more than as a man or a woman, the Queen Mother is portrayed as something in between, a monster that has refused its place in the society. With her unfaithful behaviour, Laula has overstepped the boundaries of what was considered natural and lost her femininity. But as shows her own assertion of her inability to surmount the limits of her female body and nature, she at the same time remains unable to become a man.

The transgression the Queen Mother commits is by Settle described as a chain reaction, a process which, if we were to read it in the context of the often pointed out misogynous nature of Settle´s other works,[95] might be understood as a demonstration of the importance of keeping women under control. Laula´s unfaithfulness leads not only to her violent behaviour but also to a complete disintegration of her moral system, a fact that emphasizes the close connection between the moral and the socially accepted in the Restoration. How much she has gone wild is perhaps best seen in her last monologue:

> Let single Murthers, Common Hands Suffice:
> I Scorn to kill less than whole Families.
> In all my Race, I nothing find that´s ill;

[93] In fact, according to Ismael in the play´s sequel 1682 *The Heir of Morocco,* she also ordered the death of her two grandsons, one of which, however, survives and is revealed to be the protagonist of the second play. (Elkanah Settle, *The Heir of Morocco (1682)* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994) 12 – 13. *English Verse Drama Full-Text Database.* Web. 19 July 2016).

[94] *The Horror Plays of the English Restoration,* 68.

[95] The misogynous nature of Settle´s writing is especially criticized in his 1680 play *The Female Prelate: Being the History of Life and Death of Pope Joan.* According to Wikander, "the play´s crude anti-Catholicism mingles with an equally powerful misogyny." (Matthew H. Wikander, *Fangs of Malice: Hypocrisy, Sincerity and Acting* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002) 60.

But that I´ve Barren been; an wanted still

More Monarchs to dethrone, more Sons to Kill.

My Actions are scare worth the Memory.

And I am yet too Innocent to Dye.

Had but my Hand performed thy Murther too,

I should meet Death with smiles upon my Brow.

But Oh my Spirit´s Faint—yet I have Breath,

Enough to make a Prayer before my Death.

If there be such a place as yields abodes,

To Souls that scorn the company of Gods:

May I in Hell hell´s greatest Torments bear,

Provided ´tis thy Doom to meet me there.

*[Dyes]*

(p. 61)

The Queen Mother dies without demonstrating any remorse for her actions, monstrous until the very end. She gets her last chance to beg for mercy, but instead she grabs it as her last opportunity to draw on her supposed femininity and kills her rival, when she pretends to ask her for forgiveness:

Q. M.

Fair Innocence, I for your Pardon sue,

T´a condemn´d Traytour, but a *Mother* too:

Let her repenting Sighs her griefs impart;

Who thus---Offers her Tears---and thus---thy Heart.

*Stabs the Young Queen*

Die Rival---and Die Traytour---

(p. 59)

According to Collins, it is only through death that the violent women of the Restoration stage could help to restore the social order they previously violated. So is also the case of Laula, in whose suicide Settle considerably, but not unexpectedly, deviates from Addison´s account and restores the social order at the end of the play. What is more, it also serves as the ultimate proof that transgressions as that of the Queen Mother can be not only pernicious but also self-destructive. Settle´s intention was not, after all, to follow historical facts or stories but rather to avail the stereotype of the Oriental woman to warn against influence women can have on courts and to point out that women can pose

an unsuspected danger that might appear when the social barriers are crossed. It would be, however, a mistake to say that Settle viewed all women as necessarily naturally perfidious as some of his contemporaries did. Laula is represented as her “Sexes shame” (p. 61) and her Oriental nature together with her exaggerated wickedness make sure that she is not understood as an outright attack on the female sex. Her behaviour reflects the Restoration concepts concerning the understanding of feminine gender and more than anything Laula´s example should be perceived as a warning against the possibility of a female threat, general in its application, anti-Catholic when read politically.

**Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks***

Tyranny, luxury, sensuality or debauchery, such were the stereotypes that accumulated around the idea of the Orient by the end of the seventeenth century, yet unlike Davenant who tried in his works to refuse and refute them, the group of female writers commonly known as The Female Wits[96] used them as grounds for their discussions of such otherwise hardly available themes as female sexuality or the justification of dethronement. This is also the case of Mary Griffith Pix´s 1696 play *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* where the exotic, mostly harem settings are used in various ways. Not only that such stereotypes as lustful Turkish sultan, his lascivious Oriental mistress or rape helped to build the play´s popularity as quite an erotic spectacle but at the same time they enabled Pix to work with the unclear line between tyranny and violence bound to the Orient and build on it a parallel with England of the period in both political and gender terms.

While Pix was in *Ibrahim* working with Rycaut´s *Continuation of the Turkish History,* unlike its author who compared notoriously promiscuous and tyrannical Sultan Ibrahim (1640 – 48)[97] to Charles I on the grounds of both of them being dethroned, Pix, as several writers have pointed out,[98] used the same account to justify the events of 1688 and thus to support the Whig view that deposition of a monarch, even of the one drawing its power from the legitimate hereditary law, is justifiable if the monarch abuses his powers. Such unlawful abuse of authoritative power is in the play symbolized by Ibrahim´s rape of Mufti´s daughter Morena whose virtuous behaviour and suffering enabled Pix to move the audience and consequently, as is argued by Anne Greenfield, also to help to establish a greater understanding for rape victims in England.[99]

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[96] The term "Female Wits" is usually used to refer to female playwrights staging their plays in 1695 - 96 consisting of Manley, Trotter and Pix, and even though the term was first used in satirical play *The Female Wits,* a misogynist reaction to their success, the term eventually lost its pejorative tone. For more information on the topic see Fidelis Morgan, *The Female Wits: Women Dramatists on the London Stage, 1660–1720* (London: Virago, 1981).

[97] Pix herself identified the source of her inspiration in her Preface. She also apologized for her mistakes in calling Ibrahim 'The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks' and not twelfth as Rycault does, explaining: "I was pleas´d with the story and ventur´d to write upon it, but trusted too far to my Memory, for I never saw the Book afterwards till the Play was Printed." (Mary Pix, *Ibrahim (1696)* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994) page unnumbered. *English Verse Drama Full- Text Database.* Web. 20 July 2016. All future references in this chapter will be to this edition and will be inserted in parenthesis).

[98] Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim* was not the only play that struggled to justify the events of 1688, according to Derek Hughes such plays started to appear after the Assassination Plot and names, for example, Charles Gildon´s *The Roman Bride´s Revenge* (1696) or Cibber´s *Xerxes* (1699). (*The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, 136).

[99] Anne Greenfield, "When Sultan Becomes Rapist: The Politics of Rape in Orientalist Tragedy," *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research* 21. 2. (2006): 60. *Literature Online.* Web. 14 July 2016.

Mary Pix was probably the most popular of the Female Wits that dominated the English stage of the late 1690s. Nevertheless, despite the popularity of *Ibrahim* during Pix´s life both the play and its author are nowadays often overlooked by contemporary critics. Although the most obvious reason for this phenomenon might seem to be Pix´s famous sense for the public taste thanks to which she is nowadays mainly seen as a commercial playwright[100] and less as an innovative one (like Manley or Trotter), another perhaps even more important reason might be found in the problematic nature of Pix´s stance concerning representation of gender. Similarly as the other Female Wits, Pix too was well aware of her insecure position as a female playwright but unlike the rest of them, she made her sex her most important weapon and focused chiefly on writing the so-called she-tragedies,[101] a new genre that evolved from heroic plays and quickly gained popularity by concentrating on female suffering and distress, working with emotional pathos and sympathy the heroines produced in the audience.[102] According to seventeenth-century critic Charles Gildon, the success of *Ibrahim* lied in the fact that it "never fail'd to bring Tears into the Eyes of the Audience."[103]

However, such representations of female suffering featured heroines that were usually made passive subject to male violence and desire, and consequently, as shows del Valle in her essay, "helped to construct an idea of femininity based upon ideas such as powerlessness, passivity, self-sacrifice and self-punishment."[104] Pix´s contribution to such misogynist representation of women continues to gain her severe criticism from contemporary critics that is often underlined when read in comparison with the other Female Wits like Delaviere Manley. Pix´s *Ibrahim* is often criticised for its conformism in adopting male-produced stereotypes about women (for example by Jacqueline Pearson) and Derek Hughes even described her as "a slavish upholder of male authority."[105] On the other hand, in recent years there appeared several attempts to offer alternative readings of *Ibrahim* that focus on Morena´s active resistance to tyranny (Allman), point out Pix´s use of feminist orientalism (Andrea, Ballaster) and generally help to amend Pix´s reputation by reading her

[100] Such reading is in fact to be found already in the title of one of the most famous works concerning *Ibrahim* - Jean I. Marsden´s "Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim*: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright."
[101] This term was first introduced by Nicholas Rowe in the Epilogue to *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714).
[102] Jean I. Marsden, "Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim*: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 32. 2 (Autumn 1999): 36. *Literature Online.* Web. 14 July 2016.
[103] *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets*, 111. Quoted in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre,* 182.
[104] María José Calero del Valle, "The Ravished Heroine in Restoration Tragedy: *Ibrahim the Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks* and *The Conquest of Spain*" *SEDERI* 11 (2000): 253. Web. 14 July 2016.
[105] Derek Hughes, *English Drama, 1660 – 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 419.

plays as examples of feminist or proto-feminist literature. Nevertheless, these discrepancies in readings more than anything show the play´s reluctance to conform to such clear labels as feminist of anti-feminist as we understand them nowadays.

One of the reasons behind the different readings of *Ibrahim* might be originating from Mary Pix´s own uncertain position as a female playwright and from the precautions she had to take if she wanted to be successful and politically correct. Her precautions begin already in the Prologue where she calls for help to the women in the audience, relying on the sympathies arising from their common sex: "Then Ladies own it, let not Detracters say,/ You´ll not protect one harmless, modest Play./ The Hero to our Sex is still inclin´d,/ Securing you, we´re sure of all Mankind." (page unnumbered) She also tries to apologize before-hand for the possible mistakes the audience and the "Rude Blustering Critique" could find in the play, combining modesty with what Marsden identifies as playing on her "feminine helplessness" in a similar way as later does her own heroine.[106] Yet although it is true that Pix skilfully uses her own gender to reduce the dangers of potential critique, her attitude, as well as that of Morena, cannot be without objections described as evoking "the reasoning articulated in contemporary conduct books that a woman´s feminine helplessness is her greatest strength,"[107] as Marsden argues.

It is beyond doubts that Pix indeed evokes such sentiments as part of her commercial strategy but at the same time she disapproves her own helplessness when this "harmless, modest Play" (page unnumbered) turns out to be from its very first lines a criticism of tyranny and, as the play develops, also a Whiggish political manifesto justifying regicide, a fact that refuses to stay hidden behind the distancing mechanism of the Oriental settings. But more importantly, Morena´s helplessness is not as complete as it might seem since what is portrayed as physical shortcomings of her gender, Pix compensates by giving Morena a weapon she herself was wielding with remarkable skill – her wits, which give Morena the power to appeal to Ibrahim´s feelings so that it is only because of Sheker Para´s and the Visier´s endeavours that the spark of Ibrahim´s lust is renewed and he continues to carry out "the fatal act." (p. 23) Pix´s stereotypical Orient, where women are strictly subjected to male authority, in fact, shows the limited possibilities women had to defend themselves. In

[106] "Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim*: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright," 36.
[107] "Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim:* The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright, 36.

this too, Morena, as argues Ballaster, meets the idea of the Oriental woman, whose eloquence and ability to tell stories are her only means of defying tyranny.[108]

Nevertheless, at the same time what Pix seems to be trying to express in *Ibrahim* is that the power of "female wits," if not also accompanied by virtue and chastity, can easily be abused and turned into the negative "feminine invention" we have already seen in Settle´s *The Empress of Morocco*. As in Morena´s case, Sheker Para´s eloquence is also on several occasions connected to her gender, but this time it is revealed as her means for manipulating the Sultan. Sheker Para herself is fully aware of this power as can be seen in her own words when she is trying to persuade the Visier to join her in attempts to take revenge on Amurat, who rejected her advances:

> Shek.
> On whom it´s thou art studying revenge,
> Old Statesman! would´st thou have it better,
> Deep and secure; take a Woman with thee!
> ---Or Bloody, as thy remorseless Heart can frame,
> Still take a Woman's Counsel!
>
> (p. 15)

But although it is true that Pix´s representation of Sheker Para as the main villain and the main culprit behind the rape of her rival Morena has undoubtedly its origin in the widespread theory that the stagnation of the Ottoman Empire near the end of the century was a product of the ill influence women had on the sultans, Pix´s main intention does not appear to be as simple as criticism of women involved in matters of power. Not only that it would contradict her own propagation of the Whig party, but by the deviation from Rycault´s and Knolles´s account, where Ibrahim was described as manipulated by the Queen Mother,[109] Pix manages to shift the focus of the play from criticism of women´s influence to more direct attack on polygamy and lifestyle connected to sexual excess.

Thanks to this more than on women, the play in this matter concentrates on criticism of weak men who let themselves be persuaded by bodily charms and earthly pleasures.

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[108] Ballaster repeats this idea many times in her book, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662 – 1785,* pointing out the repetition of this theme in many of the works set in the Orient of the time and analysing it in her chapters "Loquacious Women 1" and "Loquacious Women 2." There, she compares Morena to Manley´s Almyna from eponymous play, writing that: "Both playwrights make extensive use of the potential of the stage, a medium structured on the twin axes of visual and verbal representation, to draw the contrast between the sultan´s power to 'stage-manage' the scene of his pleasure or revenge, and the loquacious seraglio heroines´ capacity to use language to temper, transform, or instigate a challenge to despotism." (*Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662 – 1785,* 86).

[109] *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1714,* 89.

Ibrahim´s scandalous lifestyle of what would later be known as "the lustful Turk"[110] lures his attention away from matters of state and from the very beginning of the play can be seen as paving the way for the justification of his dethronement. According to Ballaster, such depictions of the harem might also be read as a possible allusion to the libertine life of the court in England:

> the erotic fascination of the harem could be exploited for titillation and scandal with regard to sexual indiscretions in the English court or to suggest by analogy the political corruption of England´s statesmen.[111]

By taking advantage of her own feminine body in order to gain access to Ibrahim´s power, Sheker Para in fact undermines the whole harem system residing on wrong values, which allows Pix to use the Oriental court as a deterrent and to re-asses on its image the Western one characterised in the play by court love, monogamous relationships and love rather than lust:

> *Sheker.*
> How different, *Achmet*, is this from the *European* stories;
> I have read there, twenty Heroes for the Ladies
> Burn and die, here twenty Ladies for the Hero.
>
> *Ach.*
> It shows that Mankind maintains his Charter
> Better here, yet loses sure the sweetness
> Of submissive love (...)
>
> (p. 4)

This quotation also shows that although the lack of such values as virtue or chastity on Sheker Para´s side seem to rest at the heart of the opposition between her and Morena, perhaps even bigger difference between them lies in their different attitudes towards male authority and social norms. While Sheker Para is described as "that vile Woman, to whom/ he [Ibrahim] hath given the sweet Name" that "with the Visier,/ Joins to ruin *Ibrahim*" (p. 2) and who, as adds Mustapha, "contrary to our Contries Laws/ Exposes her to publick view, lets her converse/ With Visier, Bashaws, or whom she pleases," (p. 2 -3) Morena is in the

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[110] The image of Turkish (or generally Oriental) men as prototypically hungering for the pleasures of female bodies became even more popular in the plays of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, perhaps best manifesting itself in the anonymous erotic epistolary novel *The Lustful Turk, or Lascivious Scenes from a Harem* (1828).

[111] *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England, 1662 – 1785,* 171.

following line described by her father in terms of her submissiveness and compliance: “But that I have a Daughter,/ Whose early Vertue and sincere Obedience,/ Ties my Soul to dote upon;/ I for my Countries sake wou´d Curse the Sex.” (p. 3) Describing the two female heroines from a male point of view, in fact, serves Pix to introduce the theme which pervades throughout the play and which ensues in the following scene - that is female sexuality and its relation towards authority.

Pix makes female sexuality one of the main points of *Ibrahim,* but like Settle in *The Empress of Morocco* she too in many respects reiterates the common ideas of its time concerning its potentially dangerous nature for the social system and even some myths concerning its origin. In comparison to Delaviere Manley, who in her *The Royal Mischief* displays female lust as caused by men´s attempts to supress it, Pix, on the contrary, portrays female sexuality as possibly arising from too much personal freedom, a claim that is asserted not only by Mustapha´s description of Sheker Para, but also by Sheker Para herself when she confesses her love for general Amurat to Achmet:

> Shek.
> Full well thou know´st the Sultan gives me greater Privilege
> Then ever Woman had in the Ottoman Court;
> That has undone me, for there I have seen
> This Robber of my rest, this cruel charming *Amurat.*
>
> (p. 5)

In this point, Pix not only advocates the common idea of the time that men are responsible for the chastity of their wives but also further emphasizes the dangers of polygamy that impede Sheker Para from any functional relationship with Ibrahim. Ibrahim´s naïve belief that she will help him satiate his “Sickly Appetite” while staying “the Grateful Mistress” (p. 4) is strictly disclaimed by Sheker Para in her jealous monologue set off by the idea of Amurat´s loving another, where she shows that love can stand no rivals: “The Emperour thinks perhaps,/ Because I share him with a hundred Rivals/ My Nature´s tame. No, No!/ We easily give what we despise.” (p. 5) Sheker Para´s relationship with Amurat is not, however, the pure love like the one of Morena, but strongly motivated by sexual desire and her advancements more than anything indicate her rejection of male authority. Deriving her power from Ibrahim, Sheker Para does the same mistake Ibrahim later does with Morena when she demands her lover´s submissiveness solely on the grounds of the prerogative of power:

Shek.

If *Amurat´*s aspiring Soul is only full of Plots

To raise him higher, fixt above the Visiers Power,

And faster in our Empires Honours, I am happy,

For I can further his Ambition; and he in gratitude

Must pay me back with love (…)"

(p. 10)

Nonetheless, unlike Ibrahim, whose authority is supported by his gender, Sheker Para´s attempts to seduce Amurat are from the beginning doomed to be unsuccessful and their depiction seems almost ridiculous since in her attempt to assume this otherwise traditionally male position of the seducer Sheker Para purposefully works to put Amurat into the feminine role, calling first attention to his blushing and then emphasizing her power over men:

*Shek.*

Let Confusion be Instead of Order

If your heart's like mine; for mine is all

Tumultuous, Oh General!

Awe me not with thy blushes,

For I have lov'd thee long---You

Perhaps despise the Jewel, because 'tis offer'd,

But know Visier Bashaws, the greatest

Of our Port, in vain have beg'd a smile.

(p. 12 – 13)

When the last of her attempts fail, she feels the need to reassert her power over him, even going as far as calling him "a Curst Beardless Boy" (p. 13) and resorting to violence, swearing revenge on his lover´s virginity. Like Elkanah Settle´s the Queen Mother, Sheker Para´s violence is portrayed as incompatible with femininity and therefore monstrous. The similarity is further developed by the fact that in both cases the villainess´s lack of femininity is projected to her assuming male roles and even by her own description of herself as more male than female. As Cuder-Dominguez writes, "her ambition is conveyed in terms of excessive masculinity" and asserted when Sheker Para wishes she were a man[112]: "Oh! That I were a Man to face/ These Devils, and save my Lord!" (p. 33) The fact that in

[112] Pilar Cuder-Dominguez, *Stuart Women Playwrights, 1613 - 1713* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) 85 – 86. E-book.

both Sheker Para´s and Laula´s case the violence is brought about by the possession of political power and unlawful expression of female sexuality shows greater social anxiety at the time about the issues and how the stereotype of the Oriental villainess was applied for deeper discussions of the topic.

It would be, however, exaggerated to say that Pix´s intention was to endorse suppression of female sexuality as such. It is much more probable that she wanted to avail the typically Oriental theme in order to erotize her play and that her insecure position did not leave her much choice but to support the common views of the time including the idea that theatre should not only entertain but also provide a strong moral, supporting values like virtue, honour or love. In addition, as shows the huge number of critics lie Orr or Pidar-Dominguez, who read the play in feminist terms, in spite of the negative portrayal of female sexuality and Pix´s decision to advocate the ideas supporting patriarchal view of femininity, Pix still leaves place for alternative reading, not unlike the one often argued for Manley´s Homais. Not only that making female sexuality one of the main foci of the play Pix underlines its existence as such, but it is also clear that to some extent Pix herself was fascinated by the subject and did her best to convey her fascination to the audience as well. Thus, even as Sheker Para´s ending conforms to the idea of the time that no such monstrous personality could be left alive and her re-discovered love for Ibrahim serves as the herald of the renewed social order, her death is still depicted as an act defying such rules and as she dies Sheker Para´s last speech remains triumphant: “Look back! and see! how vain thy Curses are!/ Thus!---I defie thy Malice! (Stabs her sef.)” (p. 37)

On the other hand, Morena´s sexuality is in the play characterised as that of a victim, reflecting the contradictory ideas of Oriental women as either overtly sensuous or veiled subjects to male authority. Such Oriental connotations allow Pix not only to emphasize Ibrahim´s power over her as that of an absolute Oriental ruler but also as that of a man, as Ibrahim himself asserts when he reacts to Morena´s refusal to comply to his amorous attempts: “Shall my almighty Will/ Which half the Universe obeys,/ Without dispute be contradicted/ By a Woman?” (p. 22) But Morena is no ordinary Oriental woman who, like the twenty virgins brought before Ibrahim at the beginning of the play, would let herself be made just another object to Ibrahim´s lust. Rather she is transformed to a Christianized heroine, whose opinions are not very far from those of her Western counterparts. Her education allows her to be familiar with Western philosophy and cultural history from which she draws her virtuous behaviour, showing once again its moral superiority:

Mor.

Look down ye *Roman* Ladies

Whose tracks of Virtue I with care,

Have followed---Behold! a

*Turkish* Maid---who to the last,

Your great Example imitates:

Scorns to survive when Honour's lost!

(p. 38)

Her Christian way of thinking is also underlined in her persisting on a completely monogamous relationship with Amurat. Consequently, it is difficult to see Morena as representing either European or Turkish culture, and more than anything her Westernized Turkishness serves Pix to emphasize the ambiguity of the Ottoman image she presents as relating both to Orient as well as to England. In a similar way as Pix turns Ibrahim´s dethronement into an argument supporting the events of 1688 so she appears to be arguing for universal application of gender themes as well. According to Greenfield, "what likely made plays like Ibrahim so powerful and successful was their ability to use their Oriental settings to achieve a tone of universality."[113] While Greenfield argues that Pix used this universal feeling created in *Ibrahim* mainly to support the idea of regicide as universally acceptable in certain conditions,[114] she can also be argued to call for a similar universal understanding of violence as produced by overt sexuality or chastity and honour as the universally accepted laudable virtues. In fact, despite Pix´s depiction of the Oriental harem as depraved, she refuses to coin such images as intrinsically Islamic when she lets Mufti, the interpreter of Islamic law, highlight the importance of virtue and chastity in Islam. On several occasions the Mufti also stresses out the illegitimacy of Ibrahim´s violating "a Free-born Maid" (p. 31) and even goes as far as to call Ibrahim to answer for his crime in his fatwa.

Yet even as Pix rejects the stereotypical link between violence and Islam, she, however, still avails its connection with the Orient to feature what Marsden describes as perhaps the most "horrifyingly effective scene of rape in all of Restoration and eighteenth-century tragedy."[115] The brutality of the rape scene, unusual even for the Restoration standards, is designed especially to question Ibrahim´s right to rule and to make the audience

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[113] "When Sultan Becomes Rapist: The Politics of Rape in Orientalist Tragedy," 66.
[114] "When Sultan Becomes Rapist: The Politics of Rape in Orientalist Tragedy," 66 – 67.
[115] "Mary Pix´s *Ibrahim*: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright," 39.

sympathise with Morena. Even as the rape scene never actually takes place directly on the stage, its violence is foreshadowed by her stabbing her own hand in her defence and retrospectively projected into Morena´s appearance when she appears next time "led by Achmet, her hair down, and much disorder'd in her dress." (p. 25) As if such depiction was not enough, Pix helps the audience to picture the rape itself by Mufti´s rather disturbing monologue:

*Muft.*
'Tis well:---suppose then
This lov'd *Morena* torn from her
Helpless aged Father's Arms---dragg'd to
The presence of your honour'd Emperour,
Whilst his Cheeks glow with Lust---
His fiery Eyes dart on the frighted Maid
His fatal resolution---suppose
Her prayers, her tears, her cryes,
Her wounding supplications all in vain,
Her dear hands in the Conflict cut and mangled,
Dying her white Arms in Crimson Gore,
The savage Ravisher twisting his
In the lovely Tresses of her hair,
Tearing it by the smarting Root,
Fixing her by that upon the ground:
Then---(horrour on horrour!)
On her breathless body perpetrate the fact.

(p. 27 - 28)

Anne Greenfield, who makes the rape of Morena the main focus of her essay, writes that "the dramatic affectivity of the post-rape scenarios, along with the severe repercussions the abusers faced, emphasize the profundity of rape and appear, at last, to validate the plight of rape victims," emphasizing the discrepancy between the real-life, rather harsh treatment of rape victims[116] and the treatment Morena gets in the play by her father and Amurat:

Shall I forsake the Christal Fountain
Because a Rough-hewn Satyr there

[116] "When Sultan Becomes Rapist: The Politics of Rape in Orientalist Tragedy," 60.

Has quencht his Thirst? No! The
Spring, thy Virgin Mind was pure!

(p. 40)

According to Greenfield, Morena´s depiction as that of a woman with an extreme sense of chastity and virtue, combined with her swooning just before the act happens, served Pix to "thwart the popular 'blame the victim' mentality of this era."[117] On the other hand, considering the disturbing way in which the rape is presented and the way Pix uses the Orient for commercial purposes serves perhaps to undermine the desired effect. As Dominguez puts it, "eroticism and pathos are closely imbricated in this play, and it could be argued that they result in the victimization of women."[118]

Pix´s decision to modify Rycaut´s account and make Morena´s rape the reason for Ibrahim´s dethronement shows the need for more female agency in the 1690s plays and their attempts to feature women as instigators of action. Cuder-Dominguez stresses out Sheker Para´s role as an agent of action,[119] but although Sheker Para attempts to be credited the role of the chief culprit for Morena´s rape by crying: "'Twas I disclos'd the/ Cloister'd Maid, and forc'd her on the King/ That good Turn I ow'd for your Disdain" (p. 37), she is never given the satisfaction and it is Morena who, if anyone, can be considered the true active agent since already when still in the process of defence against Ibrahim, she threatens him with rebellion:

*Mor.*
Do Tyrant! but 'tis thy last of mischiefs
If thou dost not kill me---
With dishevell'd hair, torn Robes, and
These bloody hands, I'll run thro' all thy Guards
And Camp, whilst my just complaints, compel rebellion!

(p. 24)

Morena never really goes through all she promised to do to compel rebellion, but she still can be considered its origin and, to some level, its instigator as well. More than shame it seems to be her fragile femininity that prevents Morena from making the same mistake as Sheker Para does, that is to allow her passions to overthrow her in her want for revenge. Thanks to this Pix makes it clear that Morena´s only reason for want of rebellion is completely objective need for justice:

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[117] "When Sultan Becomes Rapist: The Politics of Rape in Orientalist Tragedy," 65.
[118] *Stuart Women Playwrights, 1613 - 1713,* 86.
[119] *Stuart Women Playwrights, 1613 - 1713,* 84.

Mor.
I am not used to rage, my Nature ever gentle,
At but the reading of a dismal story,
My Eyes wou'd flow, my Heart wou'd rise,
And sympathetick sorrow reign.
But now I am by wrongs a Fury grown
Holy Prophet, is it a sin to heave these
Bleeding hands to thee, and *Amurat*, for Justice?
Yes, yes, it is, for Justice leads to sharp revenge
That to horrid Mischiefs---away---away---
Give me Death, Distraction, any thing, but Thought.

(p. 30)

But even as Amurat´s seems to see Morena´s loss of virginity as more than a simple loss of patriarchal property and she can be argued to assume the role of an active agent in the play, it is still difficult to see Pix as a feminist writer. Her depiction of Morena is more telling of her compliance with what is expected of her as a daughter and potential wife than of her as a woman or an individual. What is more, as the play continues, her identity and especially her body are gradually diminished to the role of a symbol of Ibrahim´s misdeeds that eventually lead to rebellion against his tyranny, perhaps even more than her own words. At the end of *Ibrahim* Pix cannot but succumb to the conventions of the Restoration stage and lets Morena, like Sheker Para, die in order to symbolically restore the social order. And while it is true that Amurat´s decision to follow her to the grave can be, as Lowenthal proposes, seen as an expression of Pix´s need to create world "where men understand that a woman´s value resides not in her unbreached body but in her strong and unsullied mind,"[120] it could also be an expression of Pix´s caution which, for clear political reasons, did not allow her to let the leader of the rebellion live. The situation at the end of the play must have seem quite familiar to the English audience - the tyrannical ruler is deposed, his murderer lies dead, the rebellion has ended and a new legitimate king has been put on the throne. The social order was restored and the violence represented in the play by everything Oriental, from violent sensuous women to abusing weak rulers and their victims, has no place in the newly forming World.

[120] *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage*, 175.

**Delariviere Manley´s *The Royal Mischief***

Delariviere Manley´s first tragedy, the much debated *The Royal Mischief,* like Pix´s *Ibrahim,* premiered in 1696. In fact, the themes of the two plays greatly resemble each other and both can be said, in words of Jacqueline Pearson, to find "Turkey and other Islamic countries profitable for images of power relations between the sexes."[121] Manley, like Pix, avails the harem setting to address the theme of female sexuality and skilfully works with the ambiguous nature of the image of the Oriental harem, portraying it both as a space subjected to patriarchal power but also as the origin of female influence. Indeed, Manley´s version of the Oriental sultana, in this case beautiful Homais, wife to prince of Libardian, seems to encourage the same gender stereotypes as Sheker Para and it is not difficult to understand her as another representation of the dangers of unbounded female sexuality that breeds only violence and complete disruption of the social order, represented in the play not only by civil war but also by incest and violent deaths of the innocent vizier Osman and princess Bassima.

But while the correctness of such an understanding of the play might suggest itself at first reading as the most reasonable one, there can be found a subversive counter-discourse beneath the surface of the play that is targeted at revealing the gender discrimination of the patriarchal system. This embedded criticism became, after all, one of Manley´s typical strategies that are perhaps even more obvious in her later plays and especially in her anonymously published 1709 prose *The New Atlantis,* characterized mostly by its cunning subverting and undermining of the very bases on which they rested. This subversive aspects of Manley´s plays, only recently pointed out by feminist criticism, enable reading of *The Royal Mischief* as "a political resistance to masculine constructions of the feminine"[122] which calls attention to the fissures in the representation of Homais´s rebellion.

Homais´s attractive speech, her call for more personal freedom, her refusal to be objectified and her rather sympathetic behaviour of female rake, all of that clearly distinguishes her from the negative portrayal of the likes of Sheker Para or Settle´s Queen Mother and when put together with the hypocrisy and weaknesses of the play´s male characters, clearly reveals Manley´s strategy to be rooted in subversion and targeted against the patriarchal system as such. It is then perhaps not surprising that Manley´s endeavours

[121] Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists, 1642 - 1737* (New York: St. Martin´s Press, 1988) 16.
[122] John Richeti, *The English Novel in History, 1700 – 1780* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999) 21.

have not gone unnoticed by contemporary critics, who nowadays unanimously read *The Royal Mischief* as one of the first examples of feminism in England.[123]

The key to understanding Manley´s concealed feminist message of the play lies in its inter-connection with the Oriental setting and the stereotypes connected with it. For Manley the Oriental setting was not only a distancing mechanism but also a way to discuss issues which were shared both by the Orient and England such as men holding power over women, suppression of female sexuality or imposed feminine identity. The play is set in the historical Caucasian and Black Sea region of Iberia and Colchis, located today mostly in Georgia and Turkey, a place where, quite fittingly, the Oriental culture mixes the same Greek heritage from which the Western society derived its roots.[124] Manley draws the plot of the play chiefly from *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies* (1686),[125] where Chardin describes the life of King Levan and his mistress Darejan, whose malicious influence over him eventually led to the dissolution of the state. Chardin in his account marks women´s autonomy and ambitions as the major disruptive force behind the actions of Levan, who is otherwise described as "Valiant, Generous, a Person of great Wit." [126] But while Manley quite faithfully follows Chardin´s story, her own version of Derejan – Homais, is neither autonomous nor are ambitions her greatest motivation.

The reason behind her violent actions and evil plots is nothing else but her lust for Prince Levan. Yet unlike Laula or Sheker Para, whose desire seems to be rooted in their negative Oriental nature, Homais has at least one understandable reason for her lust - her unhappy marriage with Levan´s elderly uncle Prince of Libardian, who keeps her locked in the harem. The sensual and wicked nature of the Colchian women, described by Chardin as "the wickedest Women in the World, Haughty, Furious, Perfidious, Deceitful, Cruel and Impudent"[127] is thus presented in the play as arising not only from their negative features of the Oriental woman but also from their confinement. Bridget Orr, comparing Homais to other, specifically non-Christian *femme fortes,* highlights this Manley´s strategy as "novel, feminist etiology for these Oriental viragos." She adds, however, that Manley still "fails to

[123] According to Bernadette Andrea, *The Royal Mischief* situates Manley among what is nowadays known as "the first feminists through its emphasis on women´s disabilities under patriarchy." Bernadette Andrea, *Women and Islam in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 92.
[124] For a brief history of the Kingdom of Iberia and Colchis see entries "Iberia (Iveria)" and "Colchis" in Alexander Mikaberidze´s *Historical Dictionary of Georgia.*
[125] Misty Krueger in her essay "'Rouse up your self, and bear you like a Man:' Masculine Anxiety and the Body in Delariviere Manley´s *The Royal Mischief*" writes that another source of the play might have been anonymous novel *The Rival Princesses, Or, The Colchian Court* (1689).
[126] John Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and East Indies* (London, 1686), 133. *Early English Books Online.* Web. 19 July 2016.
[127] *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies,* 85.

deconstruct the antithesis between such heroic women, denizens of ancient history or the East, and modern English ladies implicit in this mode."[128]

Orr´s reading in fact enables an understanding of *The Royal Mischief* as an example of feminist orientalism as it is directed towards the transformation of Western society, working with the Westerners´ need to affirm their superiority. This argument was, however, refused by Andrea, who promotes counter-orientalist rather than orientalist reading of the play as she reads the play in terms of "Irigarayan mimicry."[129] She points out that the virtue of Homais´s rival, Bassima, lies solely "on the grounds of social conformity" and consequently fails to provide the binary opposition to Homais behaviour of the "dark woman,[130] and, what is perhaps even more important, that Manley´s work "located supposed 'oriental' abuses such as domestic immurement and polygamy within England itself,"[131] making it impossible to read the play as an example of Orientalism. The fact is that during the play Manley keeps evoking ideas connected with the Orient yet all these symbols and images are then used for feminist ends, questioning the practices in Britain rather than in the Orient.

On one hand, Homais seems to assume the role of the typical "bad" Oriental" woman. Homais´s "Easterness" is evident especially in the dialogue of Osman and Ismael, where Osman describes Homais by means of many of the topoi connected with the idea of the Orient such as luxury, senses and amorality:

> Her Vertue, Senses, Fame, are
> All made Slaves to Luxury, lewd in her
> Nature, Gilting from her Cradle, void of
> Religion and Morality, she knows no
> Tie of Conscience, nor Affection, rather
> Than loose what her vile sense calls Pleasure.
> Murder and Incest wou´d be easy Crimes,

---

[128] *Empire on the English Stage, 1660 – 1714*, 130.

[129] This term has its origin in the work of French feminist and philosopher Luce Irigaray, who in her book *This Sex Which Is Not One* defines femininity and female sexuality as imposed on women by the patriarchal system. Woman, who has no other possibility within patriarchy, can use mimesis, by the way of mimicry, to "recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it." Mimicry is done by assuming "the feminine role deliberately" - resubmitting to the masculine ideas about women and at the same time "unveiling" that such act is only a product of mimesis. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One,* trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 76.

[130] *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature,* 98.

[131] *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature,* 10.

Had she but power to act, as sure she

Has the will, the Earth wou´d groan to bear her.

(p. 11)

Yet on the other hand, although the last hypothetical part of Osman´s description actually comes true later in the play, his words lose their moral value since he himself is shown to lack this "Religion and Morality" he so ardently preaches when he without remorse casts off his wife Selima and seeks the unlawful amorous relationship with Princess Bassima in her place. In fact, as the play continues Homais becomes just one of the many morally corrupt characters in the play.

Homais´s double position of both the difference as well as the criticism of the patriarchy in England reflects in the ways she deviates both from the Oriental stereotype as well as from Chardin´s account. Manley calls for sympathy for her protagonist by making her the focus of the play but also by her attractive and explosive speech in which she calls for personal freedom and openly expresses her sexual desire. Manley´s choice of actress undoubtedly also played an important role in Homais´s agreeable representation for she chose no other than one of the first "stars" of the British stage of the end of the century, Elizabeth Barry, famous for her passionate roles and great eloquence.[132] Barry´s presence on the stage in the role of wanton Homais not only invited comparison with Barry´s own scandalous reputation but also helped to highlight the power of female body and speech, both of which ware inseparable from the idea of the Oriental cabals of women.

In one of her most emotive speeches Homais snaps at her eunuch Acmet:

Hom.

Thy vulgar Soul moves in the common road,

Mine loaths the beaten path, and starts aside,

To seek new Regions out, disgusted with the old,

And now the rich discovery is made,

I´ll push the bold adventure on,

And either die or Conquer.[133]

Homais, like Sheker Para, assumes male role and accompanies it by adapting

[132] For more information on Elizabeth Barry see Lowenthal, Cynthia. "Sticks and Rags, Bodies and Brocades." *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama.* Ed. Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996) 219 – 231.

[133] Delariviere Manley, *The Royal Mischief (1696)* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994) 3 – 4. *English Verse Drama Full-Text Database.* All future references in this chapter will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses.

"manly" language and, as Krueger argues throughout her essay, asserts her superior position of power by reminding the men around her of their sexual incapability,[134] first by remarking that Acmet´s "barren Soul ne´er knew the growth of love" (p. 4) and ultimately by calling her own husband a "Dotard, impotent in all but Mischief." (p. 45) Nevertheless, her almost aggressive expression of her own sexuality fails to sound ridiculous or unnatural (as in Sheker Para´s or Laula´s case) and even when Homais does not heed Acmet´s advise to find her "Charms at bay" (p. 19) or when she is revealed by Acmet to have Levan´s picture as "the chief Ornament/ Of her Apartment, answering/ Exactly to her waking Curtains," (p. 17) she does not lose her charm and quickly secures Levan´s heart and mind.

In fact, Homais´s libertine behaviour, such as her losing her interest in Ismael when she has "conquered" him, or her declaration "My Life, my Soul, my All, is fixt upon Enjoyment,/ Resistance but augments desire" puts her, as argues Hollis-Berry, in a position of female rake, which allows Manley to show such behaviour as natural for both sexes and ultimately to question the "man´s power to define women´s nature."[135] Similar is the reading of Rubik, who writes that Homais´s assuming male role

> undermines the Puritan ideology of self-denial, the masculinising of desire, the creation of woman as other and object, and the indivisibility of chastity and feminine identity.[136]

In this way, Manley converts the prototypical figure of the Oriental woman into a protest against the objectification of women in general which arises from men´s power to impose upon women their own definition of feminine identity.

The objectification of women is in the play heavily present and even though it is also a concept associated with the Orient, especially through polygamy, Manley in *The Royal Mischief* deviates from Chardin´s account (where polygamy and concubinate are described

[134] According to Krueger, "As the play unfolds, Manley´s medley of male characters – a eunuch, an impotent aging man, a scorned lover, a pining lover, and a potent younger prince – all share a part in producing , performing, and responding to male anxieties." ("'Rouse up yourself and bear you like a Man': Masculine Anxiety and the Body in Delariviere Manley´s *The Royal Mischief,* 51).

[135] Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1993) 83. Quoted in Elizabeth Hollis-Berry, "'No Party favour´d, no designs in view': Female Rakes and Heroes, Politics and Power in Delariviere Manley´s Heroic Drama," *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (2000): 185, note 2. *Erudit.*

[136] Here Rubik quotes Hunter´s essay about Behn, pointing out in her footnote that "Manley in fact goes much further than Behn." Margarete Rubik, "'My life, my soul, my all is fixed upon enjoyment': The Unabashed Expression of Female Desire in *The Royal Mischief." Gramma* 4 (1996): 170, note 9. *GRiSSH.* Web. 20 July 2016.

as common practice in these parts, allowing Levan to marry Derejan as his second wife[137]) and instead concentrates on the problem of objectification of women and wives in "more civil," completely monogamous society, revealing England as the real target of the play. Perhaps the best example of Manley´s representation of men viewing women as commodities is Prince of Libardian and his attempts to keep his wife confined. Manley keeps describing Homais´s confinement as something inherently Oriental, evoking in the minds of her audience the image of the harem as a "golden cage":

> Hom.
> What signifies the Crown upon my head
> When none can see how well the Circle sits,
> How rich and sparking are the Diamonds,
> The Pearls how Orient; and how well such
> Glory sutes the wearer face.
>
> (p. 9)

Yet at the same time such representation reveals the general tendency of the patriarchal society to give women only illusory power and uses the Oriental connection to show the "barbarity" of the British right of coverture, that is a status of a married woman putting her under legal protection and control of her husband.[138] In this matter, Manley joins the agenda of the Tory feminists who "shared a general suspicion of Whig republicanism, which protected only men´s rights."[139] For most of the time Prince of Libardian sees Homais not as an individual, but as a "treasure" (p. 6) he needs to guard. When Homais protests against her confinement which she compares to imprisonment with the guards as "Gaolers" and her husband "the Master Spy," his respond reflects the fear of cuckoldry, often repeated especially in Restoration comedy:

> Prince of Libar.
> O can you blame me to preserve a good
> On which the safety of my Life depends;
> Who but a Fool wou´d leave his wealth at large,
> To the uncertain Chance of Robbers hands,

---

[137] Chardin seems to enjoy describing the various vices of Levan´s Principality of Mingrelia: "Assassination, Murder and Lying are among them esteem´d to be noble and brave Actions. But for Concubinage, Adultery, Bigamy, Incest and Vices of that Nature, they are Vertues in *Mingrelia."* (p. 85)

[138] "Femme/ Feme Covert," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History,* ed. Bonnie G. Smith, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[139] Humberto Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670 – 1840* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012) 76.

When by securing it ´tis sure his own.
I am that Wretch undone, the moment, when
I lose your treasure.

(p. 6)

Like other elderly cuckolds in Restoration drama who married young and beautiful wives so does Prince of Libardian perceive Homais´s chastity as not only representing his honour but also his own masculinity. Krueger, who also draws on this scene, compares Prince of Libardian´s behaviour to overcompensating for his own lack in the question of body and sumps up that his attempts to confine her more than anything represent the male anxiety of being emasculated.[140] That his efforts to avoid being emasculated by Homais failed is demonstrated not only in the fact that one of the contemporary critics, Richard W. Bevis, calls him "almost a comic butt,"[141] but also that even when he brings Homais back from Levan´s camp to which she fled with him, that is at the time when he already knows her "malicious" nature, he again hopelessly swallows the hook and lets himself be persuaded by her charms and wits. In fact, it can be said that in Manley´s rendition the Oriental harem is changed into a place symbolizing male weakness and, by analogy, reveals the male need for coverture as just a construction of the patriarchal society she criticized.

Similar attempts to objectify women can also be found in the character of Ismael, Homais´s first lover. While he does not, like Almanzor, the Oriental ruler in Manley´s 1707 *Almyna, Or the Arabian Vow,* advocate the supposedly Islamic belief that women have not souls,[142] his claims that man is "The Lord of Womankind, born to Command/ That Sex which we intreat" and that women "like the forward and the bold/ For Virtue in such Souls is like their form,/ Only exterious Beauty, worn to deceive" (p. 10) are not far from the idea and are described by Andrea as a model of patriarchal orientalism against which Manley strove to delimit herself.[143] But Manley eventually undermines even Ismael´s misogynous claims when this "Lord of Womankind" is revealed to be a slave to Homais´s desire even to that

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[140] "'Rouse up yourself and bear you like a Man': Masculine Anxiety and the Body in Delariviere Manley´s *The Royal Mischief*" 46.
[141] Richard W. Bevis, *English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660 – 1789* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2013) 128.
[142] In her 1707 *Almyna, Or, The Arabian Vow* Manley returns to the Oriental setting to use them once more for her feminist ends, this time by presenting her altered version of 1001 Nights, where her feminist heroine Almyna uses her wits and charms to persuade the Sultan Almanzor of women´s having souls. The fallacy that in Islam women had no souls was at the time commonly spread in England. While Manley is certainly one of the firsts feminists to criticize it, she was soon followed by others, such as for example Mary Wollstonecraft, who in her 1792 *Vindications of the Rights of Women* also refuses the idea and uses it for her expression of feminist orientalism.
[143] *Women and Islam in Early Modern Literature,* 97.

extent that he actually offers her to imagine he is Levan during the sexual intercourse: "I´ll give you leave to fancy I am him;/ For whilst I press you close, and feel your Charms,/ No Circumstance can make the joy unesie." (p. 28)

Ismael´s desire thus offers an interesting comparison with the one of Homais – while for her it is a symbol of freedom and a way she can defy her husband´s authority, for Ismael it is merely a product of his bodily needs. The same can be said about Levan and Osman for whom sight seems to play the most important role in their falling in love. While Osman narrates that he fell in love with Bassima on first seeing her and emphasizes such details as her being "drest with such negligence as left her swelling/ Snowy Breasts, and her white Arms, all naked/ To the gazers view" (p. 12), for Levan it is enough to see Homais´s picture to let her "strike full" at his "heart." (p. 17) Both yearn for a woman more on the ground of their beauty rather than her personality – Osman brings his own terrible fate on his head when he refuses to listen to Bassima´s pleas to leave her alone and Levan´s desire for Homais proves fateful not only for himself but also for the whole kingdom. As Ballaster points out, unlike Pix´s *Ibrahim* which "celebrated the 'liberty' of companionate monogamous marriage by contrast with the polygamy and enslavement of the seraglio," Manley satirized "Whig/ Protestant figures as driven by hidden venal desires that led to dangerous influence of lust-driven women."[144] Manley there reveals the double standards the society sets for men´s and women´s sexuality, a theme which is further explored in the character of Bassima.

Bassima assumes in the play not only the role of Homais´s unlucky rival but also that of the heroine representing in the play Christian characteristics like chastity and virtue, rendering her the exact opposite of Homais. Her persistence in refusing Osman who keeps attempting to seduce her is, however, so exorbitant that it led several critics to view such scenes as a satire. Merrens claims that she stands for "values of glory, nobility and virtue - values that ring hollow in a place in which they find no other champions and precious little sympathy"[145] and Andrea adds that "she resists the adulterous advances of Osman on the grounds of social conformity rather than ethical principles."[146] Whatever was Manley´s intention, it is difficult to define how Bassima would have been perceived in times when the virtuous struggles and suffering of Pix´s Morena used to bring tears to the eyes of the audience. What is clear is, Manley did not want Bassima or her chastity to be the centre of

[144] *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in 1662 – 1785,* 55.
[145] Rebecca Merrens, "Unmanned with Thy Words: Regendering Tragedy in Manley and Trotter," *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama,* ed. Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996) 45.
[146] *Women and Islam in Early Modern Literature,* 98.

her play and Bassima´s suffering, culminating exactly at the moment when Osman is put into a canon and blown to pieces, was most likely meant to produce horror rather than pathos and sympathy.

Bassima´s resolution to remain faithful to her husband (whom she never chose and who openly cheats on her with another) even in the moment when she is clearly dying and everyone already considers her guilty, serves in its extremity as a fitting contrast to Levan´s own feeble resistance to Homais, who was not only already married, but to his beloved uncle and protector at that. The juxtaposition of these two extremes does not only reveal the double standards for men and women but also allows Manley to show Levan, rather than Homais, as the one to blame and, consequently, male sexual desire as equally disruptive force as that of a woman.

Bassima´s extreme sense of chastity is thus a complete negation of Levan´s attempts to show women as evil and unfaithful during the whole play. When Levan is told that Bassima has been unfaithful to him he falls into a fit of rage against women, hypocritically proclaiming:

> Oh, woman fair only to outward show,
> Well have the pens of men and angels
> Been employed to paint your snares!
> Well have the saints and father taught us to
> Beware those shining evils, and as we
> Love our souls, avoid their faithless charms.
>
> (p. 31)

Homais immediately tries to refute such statement, pointing out that "there are women who have truth and constancy,/ As bright and lasting as the noblest male," (p. 31) but while from her such argument might sound a bit contradicting, all doubts of Manley´s true intention, that is to avoid blaming women and rather show the hypocrisy of such actions, are discarded by Bassima´s resistance. Bassima´s last words, like the whole play, blame the patriarchal system rather than anyone in particular - she repeats that she did her best to resist, contradicting the idea of women´s natural "frailty" in this matter as argued by Ismael (p. 10), and underlines that she never had a chance to choose her own husband, which made any functional relationship with Levan almost impossible: "My Royal Father gave me to your Arms;/ I strove to vanquish this unesie Passion:/ Knew all your God-like Virtues, and ador´d them,/ But yet unaided, could not do you justice." (p. 44)

Homais dies soon after Bassima when Manley, despite her efforts to make Homais

more than just a stereotypical Oriental woman, provides her play with a more conventional ending - at the moment of Homais´s triumph, she is killed by no other than her own husband, Prince of Libardian, who, having killed Ismael sent by Homais to get rid of him, suddenly appears on the stage “Sword drawn, runs at her, and kills her.” (p. 45) Critics have generally argued that such ending served to “appease the audience,”[147] but it might also have its origin in Manley´s Tory beliefs that did not allow her to feature an ending, where a king, even an Oriental one, would end up completely subjected to a woman´s power or even to portray him as directly responsible for such atrocities without letting him first realize his own mistakes.

Homais, like Sheker Para and Settle´s Queen Mother, never repents, and her husband´s sword, often read as a phallic symbol,[148] with which Prince of Libardian stabs her, also stands for the symbolical victory of the patriarchal society over the rebellious individual. Such under-standing is, however, refused both by Manley´s depiction of the story as well as by Homais herself, who in her last monologue underscores the impossibility of maintaining a system based on the false belief of male superiority and the suppression of women, emphasized by Homais´s pointing out the actual “effeminacy” and the hypocrisy first of her husband:

> Hom.
> Thou dotard, impotent in all but mischief
> How could´st thou hope, at, such an Age, to keep
> A Handsome Wife? Thy own Devil will
> Tell thee ´tis impossible—
>
> (p. 45)

and later of the rest of the male characters in the play:

> O thou too fainly Lover! Canst thou hear him?
> The coward *Ismael* too, who reapt my formost Joys;
> What an effeminate Troop have I to deal with?
>
> (p. 46)

The story ends the only way it could – with Princess Selima lying on the pile of “the smoking Relicks of her Lord” (p. 46) and only Prince of Libardian left on the stage, his cry“O horror, horror, horror!” (p. 47) still in the air. The ending in many ways resembles

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[147] “'My life, my soul, my all is fixed upon enjoyment': The Unabashed Expression of Female Desire in *The Royal Mischief,”* 174.

[148] An example of such reading is for example Margarete Rubik, who points out that such symbolism “could only be meant ironically in view of his impotence.“ “'My life, my soul, my all is fixed upon enjoyment': The Unabashed Expression of Female Desire in *The Royal Mischief,”*175.

that of Pix´s *Ibrahim*, but although in both cases the evil woman is killed and all remains of rebellion are annihilated, in *The Royal Mischief* no return of social order follows since Colchis is kingless and the only remaining male member of the royal family – Prince of Libardian, is left old and, presumably, impotent. The fact is, there could never be a happy ending for any of the characters. None of the pairs, whether it is Levan and Bassima, Osman and Selima or Prince of Libardian and Homais, could ever be happy in their marriages since at least one of the pair was in love with someone else. The limited position of women in their choice of husbands together with their overall inability to define their own fate thus become the crucial messages of the play.

## Conclusion

The Orient was in the Restoration tragedies often used as a place where playwrights could find more freedom for expression of their beliefs. The reason was not just the relative distance, both cultural and geographical that would serve as a convenient shield if what they were advocating was to be found too daring or inappropriate, but much more often the playwrights were also actively working with the stereotypes connected with the Orient and manipulating them for their own ends. As was revealed in the analysis of the four plays from the 1656 – 1696 period, these Oriental stereotypes and associations were strikingly similar in their representation but greatly differed in their use. While for most time the authors used the method of displacement to address matters of political nature, their representation of women in these plays was also sometimes used as a way of making an argument about the new position of women in the society or just reflecting the changes in their representation after the dramatic events of the second half of the seventeenth century.

In my thesis I analysed plays of four different playwrights - Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), Settle´s *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), Pix´s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696) and Manley´s *The Royal Mischief* (1696), giving each play a chapter on its own to catch its unique approach towards the representation of women. But the fact is that since the plays were all working with the ideas somehow connected to the Orient, the gender issues addressed in these plays were often coincident, such as female sexuality, the power-relations between the sexes, the question of double standards for the sexes or women´s influence on governing. What all these plays also shared was the binary opposition of the stereotypical Oriental woman and her Christian (or Christian-like) rival, which, however, found different shapes and use in each of the playwright´s representation. The attitudes the playwrights assumed towards these types of female characters in their plays are what best reflect the playwrights´ stance in the various gender-related issues of the time.

The first chapter of my thesis concentrated on the play that stands at the beginning of the popularity of the English drama of the Orient and which set the example to last for the whole Restoration period. Nevertheless, William Davenant´s *The Siege of Rhodes* greatly differs from the rest of the analysed plays that succeeded it since it refuses to encourage stereotypes of the negative East. More than its successors it follows the heroic ethics of its genre, putting the main heroine Ianthe in the position of the ideal Christian woman and wife that represents the Western values that are in the play juxtaposed to the Eastern ones. The play is full of propagation of more active social roles of women that is unparalleled in any of its successors and which can be read as an indirect praise of Queen Henrietta Maria,

with whom Ianthe has many common characteristics.

Similarly unique is Davenant´s version of the Oriental woman, which is in the play based on the historical figure of Roxolana. His Oriental sultana has all the characteristics that would later develop into the stereotype that lasted for the following centuries – she is described as highly jealous, lustful and ambitious character, whose main role in the play is to emphasize and provide an opposition to her virtuous rival. However, unlike her successors, Roxolana can hardly be described as a negative character. The main reason is the fact that she is in the play gradually "deorientalized" by the Christian heroine Ianthe until she ultimately loses the majority of her negative Oriental characteristics and conforms to the norms of the heroic drama that all aristocrats should be considered equal no matter their ethnicity, religion or gender. This surprisingly strong gender equality which pervades throughout the play enables Davenant to refuse the idea that women should stay out of the matters of politics and her juxtaposition to Alphonso demonstrates that Davenant did not consider the characteristic jealousy and tendency towards emotional reactions limited to women.

The image of the Oriental woman seems to change in the plays of Davenant´s successors who label the negative characteristics of the Oriental woman as of specifically female nature, which, of course, served the playwrights as an excellent ground to offer their own explanation of such wickedness with relation to the gender they represented. Good examples of this prototypically Oriental female threat are Settle´s Queen Mother from *The Empress of Morocco* and Mary Pix´s Sheker Para from *Ibrahim*, both of which avail their female charms to manipulate the monarchs and consequently, to present a warning against the female influence on the court. Although the depictions of these women are mainly based on the idea of the sultanate of women in the Oriental countries, the true target of the English playwrights is the court in England - whereas in Settle´s case the danger against which he warns is located in the Catholic female figures of the English court, Pix, on the other hand, directed her criticism against the profligate court of Charles II. Surprisingly, in both the plays the wicked nature of the Oriental women is caused not as much by their ambitions (the power they have over the monarch grants them more than they could ever ask for), but mainly by their sexual desire. In *The Empress of Morocco* and *Ibrahim* the women´s lust is displayed as something highly unnatural and even as the origin of their violent behaviour. In fact, the sexuality of these women is often described as a symbol of their rebellion against society, its rules and, more importantly, morals.

The refusal of women to accept their roles of wives, mothers and women is another

of the major themes connected to the idea of the Oriental woman, which in this way echoed the changes in the society of the late seventeenth century and the growing social anxiety they must have produced. Sexuality, ambitiousness and almost unnatural wickedness put these Oriental women in opposition to the traditional social order, in consequence of which both Pix and Settle portray them as stripped of their femininity and thus unable to remain attractive. Their unfeminine behaviour necessarily puts them into the male zone, where they, however, fail to assume the roles they would like to and need to compensate this lack by emasculating the plays´ male characters with their greatest strength – that of wits and knowledge. Their death is then presented in both plays as a necessary component of the restoration of the social order and a warning against such transgressions.

The characteristics of the Oriental women are also to a certain degree a determining factor for the role of their virtuous female rivals, who, despite the fact that none of them is Christian, represent in the play Western values and idea of femininity. The lustful, socially transgressive and overtly ambitious Laula is in *The Empress of Morocco* juxtaposed to the virtue, pure love and beyond-death loyalty of the pair of Mariamme and Morena, following the tradition of the heroic heroines. The character of Morena in Pix´s *Ibrahim* is also constructed in a similar way. In contrast to the Oriental villainess Sheker Para, Morena advocates courtly love in a monogamous relationship, obedience and even serves to propagate some values typical of Whiggish proto-feminism, when her education, power of wits and active role in the defence against the tyranny are emphasized. And while her rape by the Turkish sultan Ibrahim becomes the incentive for a rebellion and can consequently be used as a way of arguing for the right of people to dethrone a tyrannical ruler, it also calls attention to the unjust treatment of raped women in England.

If Davenant used this opposition of the Western and the Eastern to propagate the heroic idea of the ideal woman and wife and Settle with Pix availed the Oriental settings to address some of the gender-related issues, Manley´s strategy is to transform and subvert the stereotypes for her feminist argument. In *The Royal Mischief* the virtuous heroine Bassima seems to share many of the characteristics with Mariamme and Morena – she is exceedingly good, overtly obedient to her father and, more importantly, unbelievably loyal to the husband who openly cheats on her. Nevertheless, all these virtues appear in the result to be so exaggerated that it is a question to which level they can still be perceived as laudatory and when they might cross the line to satire. Either way, Bassima´s loyalty serves as a fitting contrast to her husband´s feeble resistance to Homais, underlining his hypocrisy and the double standards of the patriarchal society.

In *The Royal Mischief* the idea of the Oriental woman is similarly subverted. Manley´s Homais is endowed with all the characteristics previously described in the examples of Sheker Para and Laula and like them, Homais also rebels against the expectations the society has from her as a wife and a woman. Nonetheless, Homais´s transgression is not caused by some feminine tendency towards evil but instead the drive of her plots is recognized as another of the stereotypes connected to the idea of the Orient – the oppression of women. In this way, the fault is transferred to the patriarchal system which more than of the Orient reminds of the restrictions women had to face in England, such as the suppression of their freedom by jealous husbands or the right of coverture. Where Laula and Sheker Para are made unfeminine and despicable because of their sexuality, Homais seems natural and desirable. Her attempts to effeminate the male characters are mostly successful since the men in the play are revealed to be hypocritical and unable to resist her female charms. More importantly, even though Homais dies in the end of the play in a manner quite similar to that of the Queen Mother and Sheker Para, her death fails to bring back the desired social order.

As shows the rather homogenous set of characters in these plays, the image of the Orient was already firmly established at the beginning of the eighteenth century when the fashion finally reached its peak. The playwrights of this thesis helped to build these stereotypes, but the fact is that in drama more than in any other genre, the author is always limited by the tastes of the audience. These plays build their popularity on their exotic settings, breath-taking actions and stock characters and generally their plot and the ideas they strove to express were meant to please rather than challenge. The fact that it was under the Oriental veil of the exotic settings where these playwrights hid their messages and social critique (whether it was in matters of politics or discussion of women and their position) shows the cautiousness and artful subversiveness to which these playwrights had to retire to fully express themselves. It was probably only in the second version of *The Siege of Rhodes* when Davenant dared to include in the play scenes, where Ianthe would invite comparison with the much-debated Queen Henrietta Maria. Similarly, Pix and Manley wrote their plays with expectations of strong critique and their frail position of women playwrights produced in their plays overt cautiousness in the matters of representation of such taboos as female sexuality or criticism of the patriarchal system as such. In this way these plays offer a unique perspective on the image and status of women in the seventeenth century and related matters, where it is possible to see more than appears on the cautiously exoticized surface, one just has to look under the veil and carefully look around.

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