

Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* and the New Attitude Towards the Orient

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With the first production of *The Siege of Rhodes* in 1656 came the birth of a new dramatic form in England, a heroic play which, more or less, has all the ingredients of the genre. Davenant dramatised a memorable historical event involving the Orient, an event which no one had attempted to represent on the stage before (and probably never afterwards). In fact, the historical battle for Rhodes with all the exotic Oriental details in Davenant's plot allowed him to introduce and explore vividly various theatrical techniques, such as the use of spectacular settings and of multiple and changeable scenery. Davenant revised the first version of his play, producing a second part in 1661; the two parts together were published in one edition in 1663. The play, which also has claims to being the first Opera on the English stage, marked the resumption of theatrical activity after the long closure of the theatres. The play is, therefore, situated at a crucial turning point in the history of English drama. Moreover, *The Siege of Rhodes* inaugurated a new attitude towards the Orient in English dramatic tradition. Davenant's adaptation of a historical Oriental subject, i.e. the Turkish siege and conquest of Christian Rhodes, and of a heroic, romantic atmosphere, has attracted some critical commentary. In this paper, I am interested in Davenant's handling of the Oriental material available to him. I seek to throw light on his original and complex representation of the Orient in this first Restoration drama representing such an important historical event for both Christians and Turks.

The significance of the play arises from its position as the text, which initiates what can be called "Restoration Orientalism." Quite interestingly, *The Siege* marks a perceptible shift in the English dramatic tradition with regard to the treatment of the Oriental Turk, away from the purely conventional representations of Renaissance Orientalism. Davenant actually complicates the conventional (simplistic) image of the Oriental Turk as wholly "barbarian" by adding to the legendary Crescent – Cross confrontation another dimension, specifically within a partly rhymed structure and a fixed heroic theme of "love and honour." Davenant presents the Orient in a striking dichotomy between two opposite tropes. The Orient is represented in a conflation of Otherness and similitude: simultaneously, in the first part, as the Devilish enemy and, especially in the second part, as the civilised, similar "Other." *The Siege*'s Orientalism certainly has a notable influence on many heroic representations of the Orient in the Restoration.

The year of the first production of the play witnessed a very critical event in the history of the struggle between East and West. A fresh Christian triumph signified a turning point in the Western confrontation with the East. Susan Wiseman believes that the shattering defeat of the Ottoman fleet by the Venetians in 1656, months before the play's production, partly accounts for the "dual" representation of the Turk, simultaneously as Other and Similar.¹ The Turkish defeat certainly called into question the common literary view that devised the myth of the Turkish peril. Viewing this historical shift and other contemporary historical developments, Davenant prepared a play that partially addressed history by subverting the established myth of the Turk as dreadfully diabolic. He eventually transformed historical tensions and hostilities between East and West into peaceful, relaxed exchanges, often enacting the chivalric code of love and honour.

The author, as we will see, might have been interested in romancing the Orient's image by shaping his Turkish characters in the heroic mould. Effectively articulating his strategies of romancing the Other, Davenant, in his dedication, states that "I have likewise . . . softened the material encounters between Solyman and the Rhodians, with intermingling the conjugal virtues of Alphonso and Ianthe."² One of Davenant's innovations is the invention of the peace issue as a prominent motif in the legendary conflict between Christian Europe and the Muslim Turks. In

his reshaping of the Orient, another important manipulation by Davenant is his assimilation of the European value system into Oriental life and culture. In the same manner, following his innovative experiment, mainly with his alteration of the character of the Oriental despot, Davenant has Sultan Solyman: "arraign'd at your Tribunal, where you are the Censor of his civility and magnificence," as he states in his dedication "To the Honourable the Earl of Clarendon.". We find, therefore, that Davenant ultimately turns Solyman's notorious tyranny into mercy, his uncontrolled lust into virtue. The 1656 version of the play (later the first part) is rather different from the second part in the 1663 version, in terms of the representation of the Orient. The first part depicts the Oriental Turk as "Other" and culturally different from the European. While the second part questions and revises that conventional notion, the initial image implies the Turk's significance and the European concern with the Turk as a recognisable enemy in 1656. However, a combination of English interest in the Ottoman decline and antagonism towards the lingering enemy during the Civil War and Protectorate, accounts for the play's dual representation of the Turk both as dangerous Other and "humanised" Similar.³ The first part of the play, ending in fictional Christian triumph, sets up the complex and paradoxical portrayal of the Oriental Turk. This operatic part, however, largely retains, with the repeatedly opprobrious lines assigned to the Chorus, the medieval rhetoric that conveys the Crusading spirit.

1. Part I: "It seem'd to civilise a barb'rous foe."

In most of the 1656 edition (i.e. Part1), Davenant indirectly mirrors the historical shift in the European conflict with the Orient by subscribing to conventional notions of the diabolic Turk. The opening of the play introduces the nature of the struggle: panic, disorder and confusion in the Christian camp preparing to defend Rhodes from fierce assault by the approaching fleet of this fearful "foe." A multi-national Christian force comprising various European nations (German, French, Spanish, Italian, Avergnois and English) and guided by the "Cross," attempt to hold back the advances of this common enemy. That these European forces suffer from internal conflicts among themselves does not appear to diminish the Crusading spirit of the Christian fighters. Once the Turkish siege begins, both Villerius, the Grand Master of Rhodes, and Alphonso, the Sicilian

Duke defending Rhodes, clearly identify the confrontation as one between the "bright Crescent" and "our bloody Cross" (1 *The Siege*- I.i.44, 49).⁴

With such an introduction of the environment of the military encounter, Davenant incorporates in this part conventional tropes of difference which highlight religious and cultural tensions. Reasserting European hegemony, or rather, the superiority and triumph of Christian values, is an implicit (but consistent) aim behind the use of these tropes throughout the whole play. These tropes feature, besides the religious zeal of honourable Alphonso, the Chorus, whose words sometimes recall medieval hostilities. Prompted by his sense of honour to fight the Turks, Alphonso attacks the religion and Prophet of the Turks, reproducing medieval anti-Muslim rhetoric. Instead of providing an objective and detached commentary on the dramatic action, the Chorus, however, echoes Alphonso's unjustified words, though in a collective fashion: "Our Swords against proud Solyman we draw,/ His cursed Prophet and his sensual Law" (1-I.i.85-6). The Chorus pursues the role of generating Crusading feelings when describing the total disregard of the various European forces of the Rhodian cause: "All gaining vainly from each others loss;/ whilst still the Crescent drives away the Cross" (1-II.i.25-6). Alphonso soon refutes the Chorus' charge by praising the martial performance and "Valour" of the various nations, not omitting, of course, the courage of the "cheerful English." Davenant pleases his audience further yet with another allusion to European superiority in the battlefield. Such outstanding Christian courage strikes the enemy so much that they are reduced to the role of approving spectators: "Our Foes, like Friends to Valour, prais'd/ The mischiefs they received" (1-II.i.37-8). Likewise, the astonishing courage of Alphonso himself forces Solyman to make another ironical gesture of approval of Christian "Valour," which is not without considerable exaggeration:

That flame of valour in Alphonso's eies,
Out-shines the light of all my Victories!
Those who were slain when they his Bulwark storm'd,
Contented fell,
As vanquish'd well;
Those who were left alive may now,
Because their Valour is by his reform'd,
Hope to make others bow (1-V.i.41-8).

Although Alphonso displays tremendous valour, which, "out-shines" all of Solyman's achievements, because of jealousy, he fails to relieve

Rhodes from the harsh siege. The Chorus, re-inciting the Rhodians to keep up the resistance, sings what seems to be a Crusading anthem. Implying that Christian loss to the “infidel” could lead to great ruin for all humanity, the Chorus urges the Rhodians to “bravely sally out from all the Forts!/ Drive back the Crescents, and advance the Cross,/ Or sink all humane Empires in our loss!” (1–IV.iii.38-400). Thus, Davenant’s first part sets up successfully the background of cultural and religious difference as envisaged within the mythic military conflict.

Such instances of conventional tropes of difference may very well suggest that the play simply conforms to common Renaissance anti-Turkish practices of representing traditional Others. Nonetheless, Davenant starts his complication of the Orient’s image in the middle of this first part by underscoring the powerful influence of his virtuous heroine, Ianthe, on the character of Solyman. Ianthe is the play’s symbol of Christian virtue and of peace, of the European values that Davenant’s play implicitly celebrates and juxtaposes with conventional Oriental values. She is Davenant’s fictional creation invented to subdue Oriental brutality and sexual license. The heroic element of the play is closely associated with Ianthe’s involvement in the action. She provides the link to the important theme of jealousy, as her absolute trust in Solyman arouses the bitter jealousy of her husband, Alphonso. On her way to Rhodes to join her dear husband, the “Cicilian flower” is captured by the Turks and presented to the Sultan. The Sultan, yet, is prohibited from beholding her marvellous beauty. The Turkish Bassa, Mustapha, has pledged on the Koran that she would not be violated, and that her safe return to Rhodes would be guaranteed. Christian virtue has its enchanting effect on the Bassa as well as on his master. Hence Solyman, although resentful of his being outdone in virtue by his “slave,” treats his captive nobly and approves of her safe return. Ianthe therefore remains veiled from Solyman’s sight, to be unveiled only by her groom. Ironically, the honour of this “Christian wife” is protected by “our Prophets plight” (1–II.ii.100) (clearly meaning “pledge” in modern sense) or rather by the same “sensual law” that the Chorus referred to earlier. Unlike Kyd’s Solyman in *Solyman and Perseda*, the Sultan here, though expressing potential lust, abstains from any sexual advances towards his captive. In depicting Solyman’s noble treatment of Ianthe, Davenant hints that it is actually thanks to Ianthe’s virtue that the Sultan has undergone such a remarkable transformation. In this way Davenant asserts the idea of European superiority over Oriental conventional values, especially the notion of the

Oriental despot. "O wond'rous vertue of a Christian wife" (1-II.ii.76) is Solyman's first impression of Ianthe, and indeed, it seems that by providing a model of virtue, what she has done is "to civilise a barb'rous foe" (1-III.ii.84). By contrast, "O wondrous Enemy," and "O wondrous Turkish chastity" (1-III.ii.104,127) are Alphonso's expressions of scepticism when hearing Ianthe's fascinating story in the Turkish court. He cannot believe that Solyman's honourable treatment of his beauteous captive truly shows that the Christians have been "besieg'd then by a friend" (1-III.ii.130) and not by a cruel foe. Alphonso's remark illustrates Davenant's incorporating of the literal and metaphorical uses of the idea of "besieging."

The tension grows in this part between cultural, political and religious animosities and the Other's heroic gestures of honour and friendship, especially on the personal level. The Christian agents for Rhodes, i.e. the Sicilian couple, have contrary opinions on this issue. Alphonso fails to make the distinction because he thinks friendship with the enemy is treacherous. Ianthe, on the other hand, has personally experienced the Orient's generosity and thus maintains a consistent faith in the Turk's honour. She draws the line between political and religious hostilities and human relationships. Alphonso resolves to carry on the "holy war" for Rhodes against Solyman despite Ianthe's affirmation that "he is a foe to Rhodes, and not to you" (1-IV.ii.21). The tension here renders an ambivalent image of the Turkish Sultan who appears both as the traditional Satanic Other and as the honourable reliable monarch; for Alphonso, he is the "faithless Solyman," yet, for Ianthe, he "though a foe, is generous and true:/ What he hath done declares what he will do" (1-IV.ii.29,41-2). Ianthe's commendatory view of Solyman, on which she remains steadfast, particularly throughout the second part, is rejected by Alphonso. Davenant's juxtaposition of Ianthe's complete trust of Solyman's honour with Alphonso's suspicions and scepticism of Oriental nobility links the heroic theme of the play to the main siege plot. More importantly, Davenant has acquainted his audience with a different, favourable European view of the Sultan.

Davenant introduces the other heroic element of the play, the theme of jealousy, in this part and carries it further in the second, with the more important role of Roxolana, the Turkish Sultana. Davenant here demonstrates his fascination with cultural difference as he presents and juxtaposes European and Oriental perceptions of jealousy. When Ianthe

becomes zealous in her defence of Solyman's honour, Alphonso's jealousy grows "sinful," because he gives in to a suspicious thought against her honour. However, Alphonso's "cursed jealousy" (1-IV.v.1) is shared by his Turkish counterpart, Roxolana, whose jealousy of Solyman is based on similar, but more intense and authoritative, reasoning: "he follows passion, I pursue Reason/ he loves the Traitor, and I hate the Treason" (1-IV.vi.19-20). Her jealousy drives her to show indifference to her religion and even to reveal her sympathy with the enemy. Thus becoming "a friend to the Besiegers grown,"⁵ she teases Solyman with a rhetorical question, "Can I forsake the Crescent for the Cross?" (1-V.iv.2), which anticipates and perhaps ironically reveals a psychological Christian influence on her. By contrast, the jealousy of Alphonso proves at first a more instructive instrument for Christians in the military struggle. Articulating his feelings of guilt, he reminds us of the play's heroic code:

Honour and pitty have
Of both too short a time to choose!
Honour the one would save,
Pitty, would not the other lose (1-V.i.117-20).

In the name of "honour," Alphonso makes an extraordinarily brave attempt to relieve Rhodes from the harsh Turkish siege. Ianthe's spiritual involvement, more than her actual physical participation, is also instrumental in saving Rhodes, despite the resulting injuries of the heroic couple.

In the same way that he manipulates Oriental character, Davenant, neglecting any sense of historical accuracy at the end of this first part, undermines the Turks' military achievement. He closes this part with another shift in his ambivalent image of the Orient, with a violent return to the conventional representation of the Turk. Solyman, now more like the conventional Oriental despot, urges his "numerous slaves" to fight diligently to win this "Audacious Town" (1-V.ii.1,11). The Sultan perhaps appears as the "barb'rous" foe who is willing to sack Rhodes at any possible moment. However, as Davenant desires, the town is saved temporarily, while we expect it to fall sooner or later. The author turns the 1656 historical shift in the struggle with the Turk into a theatrical reality, allowing Christian courage to force the Turks to halt in their advances. The moral value of this fictional Christian triumph is highlighted by Alphonso's feeling of repentance for his rash suspicions

against his virtuous Christian wife, who has not yet resolved to forgive. "Let me in darkness mourn away my sin" (1-V.iii.108), painfully says Alphonso although his sadness does not affect the Chorus' celebration of this triumph. The Chorus cheerfully mocks the fictional Turkish defeat, alluding to the Turks' often quoted religious custom of abstinence from wine:

You began the Assault
With a very long Hault;
And, as hauling ye came,
So ye went off as lame;
And have left our Alphonso to scoff ye.
To himself, as a Daintie,
He keeps his Ianthe;
Whilst we drink good Wine, and you drink but Coffy
(1-V.v.25- 32).

The end of the first part marks the play's violent return to the conventional trope and, ambivalently, to the hostile attitude towards the Other.

2. Part II: "This Christian Turk amazes me."

The first part is more operatic in mode, providing the conventional image of the military encounter, the second more properly dramatic giving the historical struggle a heroic tone. Davenant produced this part shortly after the Restoration, in 1661, when conventional notions of the Other were on the way to being replaced by more tolerant notions underscoring the Other's familiarity. Thus the second part, omitting the Chorus' role, is free from the tropes of difference that focus on religious hostilities and Crusading rhetoric. Abandoning negative Renaissance commonplaces about the Orient, Davenant in this part begins to explore and revise cultural difference through personal and friendly exchanges, rather than through military encounters. Instead of giving an accurate Oriental account, he, nonetheless, depicts a falsely heroic picture of the Orient, mostly enacted in the domestic realm. The focus of this part is subsequently on heroic themes, especially around the theme of jealousy. Davenant elaborates on the theme of jealousy as the means to honour for the powerful Eastern woman Roxolana as well as for the sceptical Christian, Alphonso.

Softening the “martial encounters” between East and West, Davenant registers the heroic familiarity of the Orient while indirectly employing the Restoration dramatic pattern, “to turn Christian.” In Davenant’s play, however, the assertion of European values does not imply that Oriental Turks literally “turn Christian” -- as Dryden would later have the Moors do. The Turks, still, express their admiration of Christian values, so much so that they are willing to relinquish their own values and imitate the Christian way. Later heroic plays, even more than does this play, establish a constant pattern in which Oriental Turks are largely assimilated into Western Culture, and their Oriental cultural identity is therefore thoroughly obscured. In her study of the text of *The Siege* as a form of colonial discourse that stresses gender roles, Bridget Orr calls this process a “psychological colonisation by which the norms of ‘native’ Turkish behaviour, both domestically and politically, are critiqued and subverted.”⁶ In my opinion, “psychological colonisation” may dismiss the appearance in the first part of an anti-Turkish tone and of the hostile attitude towards the Other. It also sounds paradoxical, at least in this historical context, to refer to implicit Christian superiority as “colonisation,” since Rhodes does not actually come back to its “old religion” but eventually falls to the Turks, even though peacefully. I prefer, however, to throw light on and discuss *The Siege of Rhodes* as the Restoration text that represents the shift in Western attitudes towards the Orient’s culture, in which the notion of “Otherness” is gradually undermined. I tend to stress the general Western literary assimilation of Oriental culture as rehearsed in Davenant’s romancing of the Other’s conventionally dreadful and incomprehensible image. My reading of the play sees both Solyman and Roxolana undergoing “psychological conversion,” where both learn virtue and exemplary behaviour from the play’s Christian model, Ianthe.

Roxolana is the Oriental heroine of the second part. Acting like “no European Queen” (2-II.iii.49), she boasts about her authoritative Eastern voice and her powerful political presence. Her first appearance in this part (2-II.iii) shows her political involvement in state affairs. Not only is she haughty and ambitious but is also obsessive and powerful enough to cause trouble for great Solyman by making him a “Slave” to her beauty. The Sultan recounts bitterly her troubling influence:

... I at night
In vain seek Sleep with a tempestuous wife.
Wink at my shame, that I, whose Banners brave
The world, should thus to Beauty be a Slave (2-III.i.40-3).

Solyman, however, exercises his authority over his jealous Empress for the safety and comfort of his female guest. He entrusts to her care the Christian lady who has put her absolute faith in the Sultan. Ianthe has been dispatched to the Turkish court to appeal to Solyman to accept peace, because "The people find that they have no defence/ But in your Beauty and your eloquence" (2-I.i.226-7). Ianthe's "sacred mission" to save Rhodes from famine and destruction inevitably brings her face to face with the powerful Turkish Queen.

Roxolana's encounter with Ianthe has the same enchanting effect on Roxolana's barbarian, Oriental character as Solyman's first encounter with this "Cicilian flower." As soon as she lays eyes on the virtuous woman, Roxolana admits that she "turns my Envy into shame;/ And does it so reclaim/ That I am Conquer'd who came here to kill" (2-IV.iii.64-6). Roxolana begins to experience a psychological conversion and grows gentle with Ianthe, even if Ianthe cannot repress her fears, being confined to this mysterious Oriental world. The two women engage in an intriguing conversation about cultural differences between the East, geographically identified here as "Asia," and the West, theologically determined as the Christian world.

Roxolana's encounter with Ianthe, in fact, falsely decreases the sense of tension grounded on the deep gulf between Eastern and Western cultures. Roxolana, impressed by the virtue of Christian wives, eagerly inquires about Western norms of behaviour governing connubial rights and relationships. In admiration of the "liberty" given to Christian wives in socialising with other men, Roxolana wishes that this custom might be introduced to the Orient: "This would in Asia wonderfull appear/ But Time may introduce that Fashion here" (2-IV.iii.109-10). Roxolana's admiration of Christian customs suggests, besides Christian superiority, her feeling of insecurity with her own Oriental values. The peaceful encounter is "sealed" with Roxolana's "kiss" of friendship. Roxolana befriends Ianthe as Solyman does earlier in the first part, and these personal friendships probably represent the possibility of broader friendship between the two conflicting nations. We notice how in the

second part, Davenant entirely subverts conventional Oriental barbarity and sexual license. For example, Solyman does not ravish the Christian lady seeking peace as he conventionally would do, neither does Roxolana plot to murder the lady entrusted to her care. The Turkish rulers, rather, treat their female Christian guest nobly and even seek guidance from her ideal conduct. As it does with Solyman's conventional cruelty, Roxolana's exposure to Christian virtue cures her of jealousy, though she would still to Solyman "seem your jealous enemy" (2-IV.iii.166).

In the whole play, Davenant demonstrates more acquaintance with Renaissance discourses of the history of the struggle (basically from Richard Knolles' *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, published 1603) than with accounts of Oriental life and culture. He shows little evident interest in depicting true Oriental society and customs. However, in the same scene discussed above, where Roxolana asserts her emotional influence over the Sultan via a lengthy heroic exchange, Davenant offers an amusingly brief comment on the Sultan's private life. While the military conquests of Solyman the Magnificent have often interested English dramatists, Davenant here highlights for his heroic play the domestic aspect of Solyman's life. He intriguingly imagines and penetrates into the private life of the Sultan, ingeniously disclosing sensitive domestic affairs. The dominating heroic tone of this scene and of all of this part indeed relegates the siege issue almost to dramatic oblivion. Although Solyman has exercised his authority as monarch and husband by commanding that Ianthe "must be sought with Love, and serv'd with fear" (2-III.iii.50), he has to confront the passionate reaction of his jealous wife. Solyman's consideration for Ianthe's safety and comfort is misinterpreted by Roxolana. Only after meeting virtuous Ianthe does she actually discover that Ianthe is too true to her husband to return Solyman's amorous advances. Roxolana, however, chides Solyman the husband, not the Magnificent monarch, for abandoning her by seeking a "Stranger" and by hunting for more military glory. Changing her mood, and dissembling jealousy, Roxolana determines to torture Solyman further with showers of tears. Using a beautiful metaphor, Solyman compares the mood of his Empress to the annual seasons:

What more in Season is than such a shower?
You still, through little Clouds, would lovely show,
Were all your April-weather calm as now

But March resembles more your haughty Mind (2-IV.iii.236-9).

Davenant, in fact, portrays the Sultan as so engaged in his private life that he almost forgets about the military conflict of Rhodes.

In an anachronistic allusion, Solyman charges Roxolana with a great offence against the state, referring to her role in the plot leading to the murder of his son, Mustapha. Roxolana's instigation of the murder historically took place much later than the siege and the conquest of Rhodes. In Davenant's version of the well-known Mustapha tragedy, Roxolana digresses in explaining the maternal motives behind her role in the murder of Solyman's son. Moreover, she argues against the cruel Turkish law of succession by which Mustapha, "Eldest born," would have had the right to eliminate his younger brothers, including her own son, when he assumes the throne. Her argument moves the Emperor to pity and remorse. Justifying the Ottoman method of self-preservation, Solyman's insightful reply hints at his displeasure with Oriental barbarity:

Those are the secret Nerves of Empires force.
Empire grows often high
By rules of cruelty,
But seldome prospers when it feels remorse (2-IV.iii.341-4).

The Turkish self-critique of the Empire's system stands in agreement with Davenant's falsely heroic representation of the Orient. Roxolana vigorously joins in this self-critique. When, however, she reminds the Emperor of the atrocities of his "Accursed Empire," she becomes the agency of Divine punishment rather than the gift that "our Prophet sent" (2-IV.iii.345, 51). This anachronistic allusion to the Mustapha story creates more space for Davenant to explore the internal world of Solyman.

While Roxolana's jealousy is subdued by the exemplar of Christian virtue, Alphonso's is more attached to the code of honour and thus untameable. His jealousy might have brought about his fatal end and the downfall of Rhodes. Concerned over the safety of Ianthe, rather than that of Rhodes, Alphonso revives the military encounter with the Turks, bringing us back to the siege issue (which had quite possibly slipped from our memory). Davenant here intermingles the heroic theme with the political conflict. Believing Roxolana's letter which claims that Solyman

“to Ianthe lays/ A closer Siege than ere he did to Rhodes” (2–IV.ii.31-2), Alphonso once again leads a Rhodian sally to regain his wife from Turkish hands. Unlike his first successful attempt, Alphonso’s fight for honour fails this time. He violates the code of honour by insisting on his distrust of Solyman and by breaking the peace which Ianthe has sued for in the Turkish court. Alphonso is taken prisoner and transferred to Roxolana’s tent through the commands of Solyman, making possible her desire to re-unite the lovers. All goes well for the Empress, who renews her absorption into European values. The shrewd Eastern woman first tests the truthfulness of Ianthe by claiming that her proposed friendship has been sheer pretence and subsequently ordering the death of Alphonso. Ignoring Ianthe’s appeal to her sense of justice and to her religious devotion, Roxolana ironically renews her indifference to her religion: “Religion is but publique fashion here;/ And Justice is but private interest” (2–V.vi.73-4). Ianthe implores Roxolana to take her life instead, offering a splendid model of conjugal self-sacrifice. Overwhelmed by such fidelity, Roxolana wonders: “Are Christian Wives, so true, and wondrous kind?” (2-V.vi.87), perhaps pondering over Oriental “domestic” inferiority. She then decides to take off her cruel guise so as to unite the troubled lovers.

The last scene in the play reasserts Davenant’s heroic theme, more fully registering the familiarity of the Orient, which we have seen both Solyman and Roxolana enacting. Ianthe rebukes Alphonso for his shameful suspicion of Solyman’s honour. As she finally forgives his “sinful” violation of the code of honour, the re-union of the lovers becomes a symbol of the triumph of honour and virtue. Their “victorious” re-union itself embodies victory for Rhodes. Davenant dramatises the outcome of the political conflict as though the Rhodian resistance has been directed more towards the lovers’ re-union through Turkish agency than towards the town’s relief from Turkish aggression. He likewise confirms his heroic representation of the Orient in this part by portraying how Solyman too is capable of forgiveness. Demonstrating magnanimity of character, Solyman pardons the mistrusting enemy. Rhodes regains its honour through a smooth, peaceful transference of power and, strikingly, both Alphonso and Ianthe choose to work as Turkish agents in Rhodes. While Alphonso exhibits his gratitude to Solyman by resolving “To be in Rhodes your Suppliant, not your Foe” (2-V.vi.195), this part ends with “gracious Solyman” commanding that Ianthe accompany her husband to Rhodes to “make your own/ Conditions

boldly for the Town" (2-V.vi.208-9). The play thus orchestrates permanent peace between the Crescent and the Cross, a historical reality that Davenant might also have contemplated.

Notes

¹Susan Wiseman, "'History Digested': Opera and Colonialism in the 1650's." In *Literature and the English Civil War*. Ed. Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 199.

²"To the Honourable the Earl of Clarendon," *The Siege of Rhodes: A Critical Edition*. By Ann-Mari Hedback. Uppsala, 1973. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

³Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 151-64

⁴Ann-Mari Hedback subdivides the entries of this part into scenes. Using the structure of proper drama, to be fully adopted in the second part, she also assigns line numbers to each entry.

⁵Solyman's sentence should read: "a friend to the besiegeds grown," but Davenant's use of "besiegers" is puzzling

⁶Orr, Bridget. *Theatrical Voyages and Conquests: the Colonial Discourse of Restoration Drama, 1660-1696*. diss., Cornell University, 1995, p. 69.

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