

Shakespeare's Language and Cultural Politics in *Othello*: An Analysis of the Metaphor of the "Turk" and the Concept of Cultural Hybridity

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Résumé

*Cet article est une analyse de la métaphore du « Turc », et du métissage culturelle dans *Othello* (1604), l'un des drames le plus controversé dans l'œuvre du dramaturge anglais William Shakespeare. Par une analyse du discours, nous tenterons de démontrer que la métaphore du « Turc », et par extension celle du Maure, structure non seulement l'intrigue, mais révèle le revirement dans la politique culturelle anglaise envers l'alliance avec le monde musulman, au lendemain de la mort de la reine Tudor Elisabeth 1^{re}, et de l'accession au trône du Stuart Jacques 1^{er} en 1603.*

"Why how now hoa? From whence ariseth this?/ Are we turned Turks? And to ourselves do that/ Which Heaven hath forbid the Ottomites." These are the words which will no doubt keep resounding in the reader's mind of William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) or for that matter in that of the spectator, both contemporaneous and contemporary. Othello the black moor general of the Venetian army stationed in Cyprus addresses them as a rebuke to those involved in the general riot within the walls of the city that has divinely been saved from Ottoman conquest. Earlier during the day and out of stage, the "winds of God," a tempest wrecked and dispersed the Ottoman fleet. This godly victory and the arrival of the newly wed (Desdemona and Othello) from Venice offered a good occasion for the inhabitants to feast and celebrate. Mindful of keeping his soldiers from excess drinking so that no brawls might rise as a result and fright the inhabitants, or disgust them with the new-landed forces, Othello charged his lieutenant Cassio to stay on guard-duty for that night. The chess board is laid and Iago starts the theatrical game whose final objective as in the game of chess is to corner the King which in his case is Othello who had promoted Cassio over his head. Wearing all types of friendly guises, the revengeful Iago makes the first move against Cassio by enticing him to drink toast after toast to the happy couple during a drinks party. Cassio soon finds himself drunk and involved in a provocation prompted by Roderigo a gulled gentleman who has come over from Venice with the vain hope of regaining the hand of Desdemona. The provocation ends with a scuffle during which a worthy gentleman by the name of Montano was wounded as he tries to interfere between Roderigo and Cassio. To amplify this slight drunken quarrel, Iago causes the castle-bell to be rung with the intention to alarm Othello that some sort of general mutiny is under way and concurrently get rid of Cassio for the transgression of military discipline. Such is the general context in which Othello invoked the "Turk" to rebuke those who broke out the riot into domestic tranquillity.

There is no doubt that you realise already that the "Turk" as an external enemy (a referent) is defeated militarily with God's intervention only to come back in the form of internal, domestic enemy which in linguistic and cultural terms is rendered as a trope or metaphor for circulation and management of the public space. The image or representation of the "Turk" in Renaissance literature has of late received considerable attention from critics interested in the relationship between early modern

England and the Dawlet-El-Othman and the Muslim world at large. However, only short space is devoted to that processes of tropic discourse involving the representation of the "Turk" in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. I would argue that unless the reading of this play is placed in the global context of the time during which the Ottomans exerted as much economic, political and cultural power over the world then as the Americans do today, the full understanding of the wide circulation of the metaphor of "turning Turk" by Shakespeare will be missed for the contemporary reader. In his book about hybridity, Robert Young affirms that products of cultural contacts like Creole and pidgin and miscegenated children show that it is through language and sex that processes of hybridity motivated by colonial desire are best preserved. In this paper, I would add that in addition to the cases of creolised and pidgin languages that Young cites as examples of hybrid forms, metaphors and tropes like that of the "Turk" in Shakespeare's *Othello* are also hybrids speaking of conjunctions and disjunctions in the process of identity formation at a transitional period of English history marked by both a shift in dynasty, from Tudor to Stuart Dynasty, and a change in English foreign policy in the Mediterranean basin after the accession of the foreign born James I to the English throne. If the "hybrid has developed from biological and botanical origins, (p.6)" as Young put it, so too, it seems, is the matter with the origins of metaphor as the following definition by Aristotle shows: "Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species, or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another, or by analogy (Quoted in Ching, Haley and Lunsford, 1980:44)."

The "Turk" is a pervasive figure throughout the play. Indeed, it is so persuasive that the play closes with the suggestion that it is not concerned with *The Tragedy of Othello the Moor of Venice*, a Venetian tale from which Shakespeare is said to have inspired the writing of his play, but rather that of the "Turk within him." These words that Othello transmitted to the Venetian Signiory before he murders the "Turk within," besides being a moral coda for some sort of morality play involving all kinds of issues, including the tragic consequences of passion in love relationships, it also provides a global framework that takes the reader all the way back to the threatening military presence of the Turks at the beginning of the play:

Othello: Soft you; a word or two before you go:/ I have done the State some service, thand they know't: No more of that. I pray you in your letters,/When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,/ Speak of me, as I am. Nothing extenuate,/Not set down aught in malice./ Then you must speak,/ Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well:/ Of one, not easily jealous, but being wrought,/ Perplex'd in the extreme: Of one, whose (Like the base Indian) threw a pearl away/ Richer than all his tribe: Of one, whose subdu'd eyes/ Albeit unused to the melting mood,/Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees/ Their medicinable gum. Set you down this: And say besides, that in Aleppo once,/Where a malignant, a turban'd Turk/ Beat a Venetian, and traduc'd the State,/ I took by th' throat the circumcised dog,/ And smote him, thus./ He *stabs himself* (137-138).

The last verses invite us to reconsider the status of the Othello in the play. After all that is said about him, Othello confesses in some sort of a self-erected scaffold speech where he imagines himself as a "malignant, a turban'd Turk," "a circumcised dog" in that central Eastern trade centre of Aleppo, doing violence to both a Venetian

merchant and indirectly to the Venetian State, and who out of murderous regret wilfully kills himself in the market place. Admittedly Othello's self-erected scaffold speech and self-punishment has a direct relevance to a local national domestic tragedy, but it gives a more global or international scope to his actions in the widening of the theatrical space, which until this final scene is confined to Venice and its colony Cyprus, to Aleppo. Othello speaks of the local, national, or domestic matters in terms of the global, giving birth to that linguistic hybrid that is known today as the glocal.

At this juncture, one might ask who Othello really is. I want to start answering this question by coming back to Othello's confession that he was all through the play but a "malignant, Turbaned Turk." The first remark to be made is that in the literature of Captivity Narratives which Shakespeare could hardly have failed to come across, "to wear the turban," or "to turn Turk," are tails and heads to a similar coin circulated in the cultural market of the time as a metaphoric way of speaking about apostasy or conversion to Islam. You will remember no doubt that the whole tragedy of Othello turns around the issue of the handkerchief or napkin, a family heirloom that his mother passed to him to be handed to his would-be wife. You will also remember that in due course Othello presented this oriental "magical handkerchief" to Desdemona as his first marriage gift, which the latter inadvertently drops out as she tries to wind it round her husband's aching head. This silken handkerchief or rather turban retrieved by Emilia, Iago's wife and attendant maid on Desdemona, in order to be passed it to her revengeful husband Iago, is the one cloth or textile which the latter later brings out as evidence of Desdemona's adulterous relation with her husband's lieutenant. Iago drops it in Cassio's way, where it might be found. It is this self-same handkerchief or turban that Iago said that he saw "Cassio this day wipe his face with." Iago makes Othello become so obsessive with the silken handkerchief that before he declares himself a "malignant, a turbaned Turk," he has already metaphorically put it on. As Iago un/winding the text/textile, he makes Othello involved in a type of cross-dressing that ultimately reveals him as a "Turbaned Turk" on the self-erected scaffold farewell address.

It follows that Othello "was," as Dymphna Gallagher writes it, "a white man (1996: 193-215)," but I shall here add that he was also a "Turk." To demonstrate that Othello was "white" "not in the sense of the critic I quote," she writes, Gallagher lays bare the cultural politics of representation in the Renaissance which while admitting Moors as exhibits in non-mimetic representations, excludes them along with women from theatrical representation or mimesis. In developing her arguments as to this artistic exclusion, Gallagher seems to suggest that Renaissance drama had politically rehearsed the Aristotelian concept of mimesis that looks at art as an imitation of life, or to use a Saussurian terminology as an arbitrary sign with no necessary connection with its outside referent. Mimesis just as the linguistic sign is over-determined by artistic conventions propped up by a white-male nascent capitalism. As a cultural economy, Renaissance mimesis does not demand the presentation of hard copies or coins, but cosmetic species in the form of Blackface and White Face in order to affirm white masculinity and ensure the fluidity of its economic system across racial and cultural differences.

While I admit the perceptiveness and subtlety of Gallagher's analysis of the workings of Renaissance drama that she carries mainly with reference to *Othello*, and while I agree with his demonstration that its central character "was white," I find that her emphasis on the question of the aestheticisation or cosmeticisation of skin pigmentation in Renaissance theatricals has obscured the importance of looking at

Othello as a "Turk". What is overlooked in the emphasis placed on the true colours of Othello is that as a "Moor," his ethnic or racial origins are subsumed under that of the "Turk." I shall venture the analogy that in the English and cultural system at the time a Moor was to a "Turk" what the other nationalities or other ethnicities in the British Isles are to an English man. Today to comply with the politically correct we call British, citizens hailing from the United Kingdom though we think of them in terms of English. More than that, in the usage, the sign "Turk" was so floating, so completely detached from its cultural and geopolitical referent that it could be applied nationally within the frontiers of England as well as cross-nationally to refer to potential internal and foreign enemies against "Things English." The wide scope of application of this generic sign has, as recent studies shown, due to the cultural and political dominance that the Dawlet El-Othman had in the Renaissance period.

I would argue that what allowed Shakespeare to bring the representation of a Venetian drama close home to refer to "Things English" is the national and trans-national application of the cultural and linguistic sign "Turk." The reference to the menacing presence of the "Turk" is recurrent in Scene Three, Act 1. Reports about the Ottoman fleet strategically bending its course to the Island of Cyprus to regain it from the possession of the Venetians causes the Duke to call the Venetian Senate to council in order to decide on the appropriate military strategy to defeat this invasion. The urgency of the situation is complicated by what seems to be the contradictory nature of Venetian intelligence about the "Turkish fleet." The "letters," of one Senator report "a hundred and seven galleys," another "a hundred and forty," followed by equally contradictory messages about its deployment, one saying that the "Turkish fleet" is "bearing up to Cyprus," and another that it is "mak(ing) for Rhodes." The debate closes when a final messenger comes in with the news that indeed "The Ottomites ...[are]/ Steering with due course toward the Isle of Rhodes,/ Have there injoined them with an after fleet.../ Of thirty sail: and now they re-stem/Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance/Their purposes towards Cyprus." With the exact number of ships in the enemy fleet established and the final destination of its deployment clear, the Duke at last has enough military intelligence to organise his defence. It is at this climatic moment of Scene Three, Act One that Othello comes into the Senate in Council. Othello, it has to be observed, is solicited both as a military man for employment "against the **general** enemy Ottoman," (note the importance of the word general) as well as a "thief," a pirate, I would say, and therefore, an outlaw to be judged by the same Senate. In Scene One, Act One, Othello and Desdemona privately get into wedlock transgressing in this way the paternal and state laws of Venice. Othello, who is so to speak, arrested in some sort of hue and cry, is escorted by Brabantio, at once Desdemona's father and Senator to answer for the charge of having bewitched and pirated his daughter.

One remark needs to be pressed home in relation Othello's social position. First, Othello is a type of foreigner and stranger that Julia Kristeva would have called the "metic." Julia Kristeva tells us that in Ancient Greece, "les étrangers qui ont choisi de s'installer dans le pays et dont on juge l'artisanat ou le commerce utiles à la Cité représente la catégorie des métèques, des résidents domiciliés, le terme indiquant chez Eschyle le changement de domicile (cf. *métouikein*) (1988 : 73)." Citing in support Marie-Françoise Baslez, Kristeva adds that the metic is bound to the Greek City by an economic contract that makes of him a "homo economicus" divested of political and civil rights. What allows strangers or foreigners to elect residence in Greek cities are economic necessities. From here follows the analogy that she establishes between twentieth-century immigrants/foreigners in European countries and the metic in Greek

cities. In calling Othello a metic following in this Julia Kristeva, I do not want to qualify her argument that metics in Greek Cities do not participate in national defence, though for the contemporary period I can cite the Foreign Legionaries. What I want to point out, instead, is that what in the Renaissance is called the "art of war" is the trade that Othello follows, and it is this ware that he seems to have so successfully marketed in the Venetian marts whose main interested customer is the Senate. To use today's commercial jargon, Othello, I would say, is a warrior-trader who has brilliantly managed to sell himself to the best bidder.

To carry the argument above further I would also claim that Othello is to Brabantio what the Greek metic is to the "prostate" and "proxénie." Kristeva borrows these Greek terms to refer to the patrons or hosts under whom the metics are placed to ensure their civic protection. "Her father lov'd, oft invited;/ Still question'd me the story of my life,/ From year to year: the battles, sieges, fortune/That I have (p.40)," Othello says in refutation of his host's or patron's accusation in the Senate that he has bewitched his daughter. In his capacity as a metic warrior, Othello cannot escape all the ambiguities implied in the English term "commerce." As he advertises his wares or what he humbly calls the "unvarnished tale" of his life in his host's home, in words or coins minted in the imaginary of his time, his commerce assumes unexpected contours. The dangers associated with commerce with the outside world will be discussed. For the moment, it is enough to note that Othello is summoned to the Senate as a metic, a trader-warrior, knowing well that he incurs no punishment for breaching the rules of commerce because "My services, which I have done the Signiory/ Shall out-tongue his [Brabantio's] complaints (p.30)."

Political expediency allows Othello to depart from the Greek metic counterpart in his commerce with his hosts. While the latter, Kristeva tells us, is denied property, Othello bids for the capital of Venice by making away with the Venetian icon Desdemona. Brabantio turns out to be wrong when he thinks that "my brothers of the State,/ Cannot but feel this wrong, as 'twere their own, /For such actions may have passage free, Bond-slaves, and pagans shall our Statesmen be (p.33)." Ironically, state reasons makes the Senate turn into "pagans" kneeling at the foot of the fetish "Othello" that it sought to propitiate by granting him Desdemona's hand just in order to aver the danger of a "Turkish invasion" of Cyprus. The Senate might well have condemned Othello for witchcraft, in spite of his claim that he has won Desdemona's had through an "unvarnished tale," not through the administration of a bewitching potion. Such a defence would have sounded untenable for the Elizabethan and the Jacobean people accustomed to the political discourse of the time that associates "dangerous words" like Othello's with poison. Iago makes this analogy in the course of the play and Othello seems to be aware of this association when he declares that his tale, the one he has recounted to his hosts in high sounding words, to be unvarnished. And yet, the Duke in Senate whitewashes Othello by declaring him Brabantio's "son-in-law... far more fair than black (43)."

Frank Kermode rightly associates the image of Othello to the idea of "magnificent North African Potentates" with whom, he says, "the Londoners of the time were familiar (2000:180)." He supports this association by citing Philip Brockbank who borrows information from one of the theatrical sources of the times (*The Calendar of Dramatic Records in the Books of the Livery Companies of London 1485-1640*) revealing that "The Black, or tawny soldier-hero was a figure in festivals long before he reached the Elizabethan stage... These Moorish shows were resplendent, soldierly and sensual... The role of the Moor in public conception of power and sexual potency in public spectacle in the early stages of Tudor empire (Philip Brockbank quoted in

Kermode, 2000:180)." The most interesting feature in Kermode's quote in relation to the argument developed in this paper is the geographical and cultural location that he assigns to the Moor in *Othello*. However, the link of Othello with "North African potentates" does not fit in with the textuality of European or English history about North Africa of the time. In view of the wide circulation of terms like "Turks" and "Barbary shore," to refer to North African States of Algiers, Morocco, Tunis, and Tripoli in history books of the time, a more apt appellation for their rulers might well have been that of "Turkish Potentates." Kermode seems to have been determined in the choice of words by the historical context from which he is writing his critique of Shakespeare's language. Since the Kemalist reform of the 1920s the usage of terms like "Turk" or "Turkish" has been circumscribed to refer solely the geopolitical and cultural reality known today as Turkey. In doing so, Kermode has not managed to break away completely from the de-historicising tendency of reading *Othello*.

I would contend that the detachment of an exhibit or a Moorish figure peculiar to the "Moorish shows" of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods for animation in a Shakespearean play has much to do with the historical and strategic importance that the "Turks" in command of Algiers assumed in English history, especially during the Elizabethan period. I join Sir Godfrey Fisher in his claim that the European "Barbary legend" woven around the North African states within the Dawlet-El-Othman has obscured, with the later complicity of some English historians and chroniclers, the strategic and commercial importance that "Algiers under the Turks" and the Porte played in the emergence of the British Empire. One of Fisher's arguments is that left alone neither France nor England would have escaped Spanish conquest. To support his claim Fisher refers to the Franco-Turkish alliance of 1535 concretised in the disembarking and the encampment of a huge Ottoman military presence under the Admiralty of Khair ad-Din in Toulon in defence of Francis I's France against the Spanish territorial encroachment. Once bitten twice shy. Fisher informs us that when England's turn during Queen Elizabeth's reign, came for soliciting an alliance with the Ottomans against the Spanish threat, the diplomatic offer was amicably turned down. The memory of the humiliating experience that Turkish forces had undergone during the Franco-Spanish war nearly fifty years earlier, and other strategic and military dangers that the removal of fighting forces to the Western Mediterranean might entail, made the Porte keep to what the English diplomats of the time called "promises." And yet as Fisher suggests these "promises" were not made in vain because the Regency of Algiers fulfilled some sort of delegated military mission from the Porte by their repeated attacks against the Spaniards on land and sea while providing access for English ships to the port of Algiers. Officially, there is no Anglo-Algerian military alliance against the Spanish, but the first official appointment of an English consul to Algiers in 1584, just two years before similar appointment in Constantinople, reads like one if placed in historical context. Following Fisher in the way he describes the relations between "Turks" of Algiers with England, one might say that the contemporary term of "containment" used by the American historian John B. Wolf (1979) in reference to the Spanish occupation of some strategic strongholds in "Algerian under the Turks" describes better the important role that Algiers played in containing the Spanish forces, which might otherwise have killed many emerging European nationalities and empires like that of Britain in the bud.

This is the historical reality that helps account for Shakespeare's animation of a Moorish, I would rather say a "Turkish," exhibit, from the popular show of the time, and its assignment of a central role in a theatrical representation staged before the court. In reading the first act, we witness what we might call as a carnivalisation in

reverse. Mikhail Bakhtin's uses the term "carnivalisation" to refer that to that process of demotion or downgrading which he regards as the hallmark of popular festivals and their modern counterparts in mock-epic literature. Instead, Shakespeare's play with a mock-epic tone down-grading that "great arithmetician,/One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,.../ That never set a squadron in the field,/Nor the division of a battle knows/More than a spinster....(p.23)." The elopement of Desdemona with Othello provides Iago with the occasion for squaring accounts with the foreigner general for having promoted another foreigner Cassio over his head, in total disregard of the laws of "preferment." Iago's first attempt at squaring accounts finds expression in the charivari which he urges Roderigo to start outside Brabantio's house for his own end. Charivari, Kermode tells us "was an old custom: if you disapproved of a match as being incongruous in some way, for instance if you deplored of a disparity in age (or in colour) between bride and bridegroom, you could call your neighbours and make a disturbance outside their dwelling (2000: 167)." It is what Iago and Roderigo intend to do when Iago and Roderigo by setting uproar to alarm Brabantio's household and its neighbourhood. The billingsgate language such as "luscious Moor," "you'll have your daughter/covered with a Barbary horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins: and/gennets for germans," falls within the scope of charivari denouncing a natural disruption of the order of things that the antagonists seek to correct. However, the charivari, or what Iago calls the "rough music" is interrupted with the intervention of state agents demanding the presence of Othello in the Senate. The folkloric, carnivalesque or mock-epic treatment of Desdemona's marriage with Othello in the popular court of charivari is suspended to be taken over in the Senate, the official state court which ceremoniously declares Othello and Desdemona, husband and wife, the popular verdict notwithstanding. I understand the deflation Iago's instigated charivari and the elevation of the conflict to epic and romantic proportions in the last scene of Act One as evidence of the importance that the Moor and what I call the "Turk" assumed in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

In this last scene of Act One, we see the conflation between "Turk" within and the "Turk" without. To the Duke's sentential verdict that Othello and Desdemona's bonding is irremediable based as it is on the inexorable forces of love, and that Brabantio has consequently has to take it with a smile, Brabantio responds with this ironical analogy denouncing the tone of fatality in the Duke's judgement: "So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile,/ We lose it no so long as we can smile: He bears the sentence well, that nothing bears,/ But the free comfort which from thence he hears (p.40)." The marriage of Othello with Desdemona is put on a par with the conquest of Cyprus by the Ottomans. In the course of the play the "winds of God" spare not only Cyprus from Ottoman occupation but also the mixed marriage of Othello and Desdemona, who are hailed in this Venetian outpost almost as a royal couple. As has already been pointed out by many critics, marriage at that time is looked at as an ad/venture that might be wrecked on the sea storms of life. That the couple has managed to weather out the tempest can also been as a divine or hallowed confirmation of the mixed marriage.

To understand Shakespeare's enabling conditions that allow for this conflation of the "Turk within" and the "Turk without," we need to historicise the reading of the play. By now it has become place a critical commonplace in Shakespeare's criticism that if the dramatist often sets his plays in remote places and times, principally in Italy, it is in order to speak of things closer at home with more freedom. Suggestive analogy allows the treatment of thorny domestic, local or national issues and speaking

the truth to power in global terms without raising suspicions of subversion as was often the case at the time with the theatre. It has to be noted Shakespeare's *The Globe* performed off central London on the liminal periphery for many years during the last years of the Elizabethan period before being enrolled as the King's Men by the Stuart King James I. If the global, for Shakespeare, has local implications, it follows that his reference to the conflict between Venice and the Sublime Porte over Cyprus is also a wink to the conflict between England and Spain during the Elizabethan reign. On reading the play, one can but wonder what the former refers to exactly in terms of the history of the encounter of these two political entities in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. Is the conflict in the play, for example, a reference to the battle of Lepanto of 1571 in which Venice took part as a belligerent, and which saw the defeat of the Ottoman fleet regarded as the "general enemy" in the play? And is the marriage of Othello and Desdemona also reference to the second marriage of Khair ad-Din with the Italian princess from Reggio? I contend that in not providing definite historical bearings with which the reader can anchor or rather moor the staged love story of the Moor of Venice with Desdemona at Cyprus, Shakespeare purposefully lets drift it to the "warlike island," that is Britain.

The spectator of the time cannot catch Shakespeare's historical drift as he refers to the tempest dispersing the Ottoman fleet at the approach of the "warlike island" of Cyprus by linking it to that tempest that wrecked the Spanish Armada in the Channel in 1588. A similar tempest dispersed another Spanish fleet which came in support of the Tyrone Irish rebels in 1599. These historical parallels reshuffle the signification of the term "Turk" in the play to refer not to subjects of the Sublime Porte but the Spanish Catholic enemy which a permanent threat to Protestant England all through Elizabethan times. Arguably there is an ideological connection to be made between the wars that Catholic Spain waged against the Moors and "Turks" against Muslim North Africa after the fall of Granada in 1492 and the ones that she declared against Protestant England with the Pope's benediction. These wars against Protestant reformers in England and all over Europe, Moors and "Turks" in North Africa are indistinctly considered as holy wars against heretics. Most of them fall within the theological scope of the *reconquista* whose best architect is Cardinal Ximenes. In this regard, Mathew Dimmock pertinently recalls the conflation made between the Muslim world and England as part of Protestant Europe in Catholic propaganda during the half-decade between 1590- and 95 which witnessed in his words the emergence of a form of a "crusading piracy" between Spain and England. Dimmock quote one of these propaganda sources wherein the "English are identified as 'the new Turkes' of Europe, who 'would exchange their *Geneua Bible* for the *Turkish Alkoran* had they not been 'so far distant,' and accusations that their 'new confederates' were 'the great *Turk*, the kinges of *Fesse*, *Marocco*, and *Algiers*, or other Mahometains and Moores of *Barbarie*, all professed enemies to *Christ* (2007:87-88)." For domestic consumption English propagandists resorted to a similar conflation by associating the Spanish Catholics and their sympathisers with 'Turk,' what the Duke in Shakespeare calls the "general enemy, the Turk."

In 1603 with the death of the Tudor Queen Elisabeth I, the Scottish-born James IV, accessed to the English throne as James I of England. The Anglo-Spanish treaty of peace of 1604 marked a dramatic change in English cultural politics. James courted Elisabeth's Spanish enemies, desperately trying to weave a matrimonial alliance through the marriage of his son Henry and then Charles with a Spanish Princess the better to seal the peace while keeping yesterday's Muslim allies at arm's length with the same aim of pleasing and reconciling with the Spaniards. This reversal in English

cultural politics is reflected in the tragic reversal of the romantic plot in *Othello* through the complicity of the English playwright Shakespeare with his barely disguised Spanish character Iago, who together plotted the fall of the Moor/Turk. Admittedly, Shakespeare gets Iago arrested after having tricked Othello to murder his wife and arrange for the assassination of his lieutenant Cassio, but put within the political context of James's cultural politics, it is easy for the spectator of the time and today's reader to infer that out of stage Iago will be pardoned if not elevated to the rank of hero. This is not the case of Othello who is made to recognize his "infidelity" to Desdemona before he does justice to himself by stabbing the Turk within him on the stage. It is in this way that Shakespeare, one of the King's Men, follows in the footsteps of James I by exorcising or abrogating on the public stage the alliance that Queen Elisabeth I made with the Turks in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. In other words, Shakespeare's literary disavowal of the Elizabethan rapprochement with the "Turks" as a "monstrous" hybrid publicly seals King James' deal with the Spaniards. This foreshadows that the brief but intense exogamous romance of the English with Moors and Turks is over supplanted by "a politics of plunder" culminating with Robert Mansel's attack on Algiers in 1621.

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