

## **The Coded Discourse: Eastern Jealousy on the Restoration and the Eighteenth-Century Stage**

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### **Abstract**

There is almost consensus among the Easterners that Eastern culture suffers great distortion in Western writings, especially in literature. Western writers are usually accused of exaggerating and generalizing the social, political, and religious problems of the East. Easterners view the overwhelming Eastern jealousy and the violence that results from it in English drama as one of the manifestations of this distortion.

This study looks at the treatment of the East, in general, and of Eastern jealousy, in particular, in the drama of the Restoration and the eighteenth century from a different perspective; it suggests that the English dramatists employed the Eastern setting, with its presumed sexual fantasies and despotism, as a disguise to comment on the social, economic, and political problems of England itself. In other words, these dramas functioned as coded discourses through which the English dramatists were able to convey their ideas to the English audiences, rather than as real representation of Eastern life. The English dramatists presented dramas from which the English audiences could learn while at the same time conveniently disassociate, or at least distance, themselves from.

Since this study focuses on jealousy, it shows that because jealousy was increasingly becoming a social problem in England due to profound changes in the lifestyle of the English, the English dramatists in the Restoration and the eighteenth century employed Eastern jealousy to warn the English of the potential dangers of jealousy and did not purposely mean to distort the image of the East, as it is usually held by the Easterners.

Sexual jealousy is viewed in the West as a degrading passion; a passion that one is, at least, to suppress if not to root out entirely. It has been referred to variously as a disease, the greatest of evils, the most dreadfully involuntary of all sins, a lack of self-confidence, love of self rather than love of another, and a dragon that slays love. Despite the fact that the definitions are numerous, they all aim at the one target— to show how abhorrent this passion is. Karen Durbin points out that twentieth-century Westerners view the jealous man as “a kind of

capitalist pig of the heart,” a person who treats his beloved “like a piece of property with No Trespassing signs posted along the fence...”<sup>(1)</sup>. Modern writers, she adds, depict jealousy as “grit, mere sludge in the engine of the culturally revolutionary, non-possessive relationship”<sup>(2)</sup>. Other writers describe jealousy as “unworthy,” “ugly,” a passion that leads to “extreme unhappiness.” In other words, Westerners find sexual jealousy at odds with the modern view of man-woman relationships, which focus on equality and independence.

Surprisingly, the modern attitude towards sexual jealousy does not seem to differ much from that of the English playwrights in the Restoration and the eighteenth century; it is, more or less, an extension of it. The chorus of wives in William Davenant’s *The Siege of Rhodes* (1661) describes jealousy as a “cursed” passion and an “unnatural evil”<sup>(3)</sup>. Alphonso, a major character in the play, is ashamed of himself for feeling jealous because his wife Ianthe has praised Sultan Solyman. He chides himself and wishes that he had a poisonous snake inside him instead of jealousy: “Oh jealousy, if jealousy it be / Would I had here an asp instead of thee!”<sup>(4)</sup>. Lord Morelove, in Colley Cibber’s *The Careless Husband* (1705), says to his friend Charles Easy, “my senseless jealousy has confessed a weakness I never shall forgive myself”<sup>(5)</sup>. Lord Morelove’s jealousy causes him a good deal of embarrassment, especially when the lady he admires finds in it an excuse to mock him in public. In Aaron Hill’s *Zara* (1735), Osman says to his friend Orasmin, who notices the symptoms of jealousy on Osman, “Jealousy... I disdain it”<sup>(6)</sup>. Osman here, in his struggle to hide his jealousy, denies that he is jealous and asserts his contempt to this passion so as to appear a civilized person before his beloved Zara. These examples show that the attitude of the Westerners towards jealousy did not change over the years. It is, however, noteworthy that jealousy is much more addressed in the Restoration and the eighteenth century drama, comic and serious, than it is in the earlier period, the Renaissance.

The liberal lifestyle that started to emerge in England with the restoration of Charles II seemed to have provided a fertile soil for the thriving of sexual jealousy among the English, specifically among the urban middle class and upper class. Charles II, heavily influenced by the French libertinism, not only reopened the already existing theaters, but demanded that two more be built and allowed more masquerades to be held. Because of the luxury brought about by the Industrial Revolution, the middle and upper classes had now the leisure for more social gatherings in ballrooms and theaters. It is true that henceforth, to use Porter’s words, “The libido was liberated and erotic gratification was dissociated from sin and shame”<sup>(7)</sup>, but in actuality the English paid a high price for this liberal lifestyle— that is, they sacrificed the peace of mind their conservative

society bestowed on them before this liberation. The numerous jealousy-based intrigues in the comedies and the jealousy-motivated violence in the serious plays of the period indicate that jealousy was increasingly becoming a frustrating social problem. Men as well as women, the playwrights show in their dramas, complain about their jealous partners or mates.

In comedies, the harm that jealousy does to couples' relationships begins in the form of discomfort and embarrassment. For instance, in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Mr. Pinchwife keeps a watchful eye on his country wife, whom he wedded recently, to make sure that she is not seen by his friends. Mrs. Pinchwife, being a lady from the country and unaware of the jealousy fever that plagues the Gentlemen of London, asks her sister-in-law Alithea in astonishment, "Pray, sister, tell me why my husband looks so grum here in town, and keeps me up so close, and will not let me go a-walking, nor let me wear my best gown yesterday." Alithea's answer comes plain and direct: "O, he is jealous, sister," and she explains to her that "He's afraid you should love another man"<sup>(8)</sup>. George Colman, in *The Jealous Wife* (1761), shifts the attention to the jealous wife and the discomfort she could cause to her husband. Mrs. Oakly's irrational and "outrageous jealousy," which her husband believes to be the "devil" itself, makes him "so miserable" and confines him to the house "like a state prisoner, without the liberty of seeing [his] friends, or the use of pen, ink, and paper"<sup>(9)</sup>. Richard Sheridan's Sir Peter, in *The School for Scandal* (1777), is also tormented by jealousy. His old age compels him to thoroughly placate his young beautiful wife who, in turn, takes advantage of the situation and torments him by her insistence on being a fashionable woman—going to the dance and socializing with men. "Sir Peter, Sir Peter," she says to him, "You may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in every thing, and what is more, I will too"<sup>(10)</sup>.

But this discomfort can evolve into a breakdown of the relationship between spouses, as is the case in William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), and between lovers, as in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676). In Congreve's play, Mr. Fainall plans to abandon his wife because he is jealous of Mirabell, who has seized her attention. While engaged in these plans, he leaves a "motto" for all husbands: "All husbands must, ... pain, or shame, endure; / The wise too jealous are, fools too secure"<sup>(11)</sup>. His wife's earlier complains to Mrs. Marwood that "Men are ever in extremes... While they are lovers... their jealousies are insupportable: and when they cease to love... they loath"<sup>(12)</sup>. Dorimant, in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), uses jealousy as an excuse to forsake his woman, Loveit. He accuses her of entertaining Sir Fopling at one of the parties and therefore lashes at her and abandons her declaring that

he “would not have a woman ... that can think well of Fopling”<sup>(13)</sup>. Loveit herself had deserted Mr. Lackwit, a former admirer, only “for taking up another lady’s fan in [her] presence”<sup>(14)</sup> at one of the social gatherings. It is clear that jealousy feeds upon suspicions and doubts.

It is also clear that the evils of jealousy in comedy range from discomfort or embarrassment to abandonment. For reasons that have to do with the nature of the genre, these evils are set in a light-hearted atmosphere, and despite the fact that they do not escalate into physical violence, they still throw light on the damage that jealousy can cause to relationships between spouses or lovers. However, in serious plays, the consequences of jealousy are even more dire. Jealousy, in these plays, is more vehement; it is presented as an overwhelming and dangerous passion, the manifestations of which could mount to murder. But what is thought provoking is that, unlike the comedies that are set in England, the serious plays that address this passion are set in a region remote from England— in the part of the East that was known to the English as the Levant, i.e. the Muslim World. The question that arises here is “why do the English playwrights of the Restoration and the eighteenth century use Eastern settings when they treat jealousy seriously?”

This study suggests that the English dramatists, using different techniques, employ Eastern jealousy, with all its presumed vehemence, as a scarecrow to warn the English people of the potential dangers of this passion. They thus transport Eastern images in general and Eastern jealousy in particular to the Restoration and the eighteenth century stage. In other words, this study shifts the focus from the East as the focus of the playwrights, to England, by revealing that these dramas had more to do with England itself than with the East per se. This explanation is not, of course, an attempt to deny, excuse, or dismiss the damage and distortion that these plays cause to the image of the East.

The bulk of Eastern criticism (particularly that of Edward Said) on European Oriental writings, including drama, views such writings as systematic representations of the East intended to present the East to the Western people as the domain of freewheeling sexuality and despotism to function as commercial titillating material, on the one hand, and to show the superiority of the West to the East, on the other. From this perspective, English theatergoers do not find in the dramas that are set in the East more than real representations of savagery and wild sexual fantasies, and they seek these dramas, according to Said, because they titillate their sexual desires and enhance their pride in their culture, a feeling that will later transform, as Said argues, into “European-Atlantic power over the Orient”<sup>(15)</sup>. Said excludes any other goal or function for this type of writing. But the dislocation, at least of the plays of the Restoration and the eighteenth

century, allows us to see the vehement and violent Eastern jealousy portrayed in these plays as a tool used by the playwrights to address the growing social problem of jealousy in England itself. Mahmoud Alshetawi points out that particularly with the restoration of Charles II, England was becoming “receptive to foreign influences” and was “fervently abandoning stereotypical notions about foreigners”<sup>(16)</sup>, a viewpoint that supports a different reading of the drama of the period. Thus, it is important both to analyze the different techniques used by the English playwrights to disclose the potential dangers of jealousy and to acknowledge that England is the real concern of the playwrights, not the East.

English dramatists, who use Eastern settings, vary in the techniques they use to alert the English people to the potential dangers of jealousy. Sometimes the discourse in these plays is quiet and rational, as in Roger Boyle’s *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1665); at other times it is sharp and irrational, accompanied by roguery of different kinds, as in John Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada* (1670–1) and Mary Pix’s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperor of the Turk* (1696). Some dramas combine the two to juxtapose the rational and the irrational, as in Sir William Davenant’s *The Siege of Rhodes* (1661). In other cases, the presentation is openly violent and bloody, as in Aaron Hill’s *Zara* (1735). In spite of this variation in the technique, the dramatists meet at one point—in their agreement that jealousy is a dangerous passion and the English have to be aware of its potential evils.

In *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1665), Roger Boyle reveals that jealousy is stronger than the bonds of brotherhood and friendship combined. However, he offers the rational discourse as an alternative to evade the evils of jealousy. Thus Mustapha and Zagner, the two brothers, adopt rational discourse to resolve the conflict that emerges between them because of jealousy. Purposely and from the very beginning, Boyle establishes what seems an inseparable knot of friendship or unmatched love between the two half-brothers, Mustapha and Zagner. The bond of love between them endures what is apparently beyond the human capabilities. The Turkish tradition of killing the younger brother(s) when the eldest ascends the throne (introduced in the play) is by itself sufficient to generate insurmountable hatred between the two brothers, let alone the fact that Mustapha and Zagner are half brothers. Besides, Roxolana, Zagner’s mother, relentlessly plots to destroy Mustapha before her son is sacrificed for the sake of the unity of the empire, and Solyman, his father, contemplates killing Mustapha because of his rising fame among the soldiers—states of affairs, in ordinary situations, generate a great amount of Mustapha’s hatred towards Zagner. Nevertheless, the two brothers are bound in a friendship that Mustapha finds “a stronger Tie, than that of Blood”<sup>(17)</sup>. They are willing to sacrifice everything to preserve their friendship and stay close to each other. Zagner vows not to outlive

the day on which Mustapha dies after the latter has vowed to overthrow the Turkish “bloody custom” if he ever wore “the Turkish Crown”<sup>(18)</sup>. Unexpectedly, this fortress of friendship, which seems impenetrable, is severely shaken by the storm of jealousy. The love of Mustapha and Zagner for the Hungarian Queen turns them into stubborn rivals and “mutual magnanimity,” as Cecil V. Deane remarks, “soon succeeds to jealousy”<sup>(19)</sup>.

But in spite of this rivalry, they discuss their dilemma in a rational way, away from violence and even away from exchanging insults and accusations. Zagner argues that he is more entitled to the queen’s love because he saw her first, drawing a correlation between his right to the queen’s love and Mustapha’s right to the Turkish throne because he was born first:

Yet we may just to one another prove;  
You are the Heir to Empire, I to love:  
You as the eldest the Sceptre bear:  
You first the World did see, I first saw her;  
And as I no Invasion would design  
Against your Right, so you should leave me mine.<sup>(20)</sup>

Mustapha, in turn, calmly repudiates his brother’s argument and tries to come up with a more convincing counterargument to justify his eligibility for the queen’s love. Mustapha, without mocking his brother for his viewpoint, reveals to him that his argument is invalid, simply because, with such a criterion of possession, things will continuously and eternally be moving from one person to another and chaos will surely prevail:

If by mere Sight we may Possession take,  
How vain is that long love which lovers make?  
None but the Sleepy can their Fortune doubt;  
Men need but rise betimes, and look about.<sup>(21)</sup>

Then he presents him with a more credible criterion: “he who loves her most, deserves her best”<sup>(22)</sup>. For fear of slipping into the unreasonable, Boyle, of course, cannot let one brother convince the other of his right to the Queen’s love. Thus, Mustapha insists on pursuing his passion, taking it as his destiny to be simultaneously the rival and the friend of his brother. Zagner, on his part, refutes Mutapha’s intent to combine friendship and rivalry as unreasonable, and thereupon reveals to him his conviction that “He who a rival is, is then a Foe”<sup>(23)</sup>. Zagner contends that friendship can never transcend enough “to endure a Rival in a Friend”<sup>(24)</sup>. Although the rivalry does not develop into animosity or

any form of violence between the two brothers, the message here is obvious—the two brothers are on the verge of a fatal confrontation.

It must be remembered that the eloquent and rational discourse, which Boyle bestows on Mustapha and Zagner is more of an ideal presentation than of an actual representation. It is as if Boyle is offering a role model to his audience to follow if ever plagued with jealousy, while still keeping the potential danger of jealousy looming. In his discussion of the function of the Restoration tragedy, Bonamy Dobree states that “Tragedy... attempted to cure humanity of itself by presenting the exalted picture”<sup>(25)</sup>, i.e. presenting what actual life lacked or denied. The exalted picture that Dobree talks about is, indeed, salient in the character of Mustapha and Zagner. Therefore, the rational discourse of Mustapha and Zagner is to be taken as a proposal that Boyle presents to handle jealousy. Cecil V. Deane seems to miss this point when he chastises Boyle for what he deems “departures from [theater] orthodoxy” by presenting, according to him, “abstract” and “thin” characters (he means here Mustapha and Zagner) and presenting “situations” that are no additions to truth<sup>(26)</sup>.

Boyle, nevertheless, seems to be entrapped in this unusual way of handling jealousy, and to find a way out, he raises the tempest of East / West conflict in the heart of Isabella, the Hungarian queen; she unexpectedly turns into a staunch Westerner who refuses to associate herself, from her perspective, with the enemies of the Western culture: “How can I aught of Love from Princes hear, / Who scorn those Altars, where I kneel with Fear?”<sup>(27)</sup> she says to the Cardinal who encourages her to take advantage of the two brothers’ love for her and acquire some gain for her conquered country. Moreover, Boyle accelerates the deteriorating relationship between Mustapha and his father, diverting the attention of the audience from the rivalry between the two brothers to the supposedly more exciting issue—the destiny of Mustapha— leaving the jealousy problem between the two brothers unresolved.

Sultan Solyman becomes more envious of Mustapha and interprets his victories over the enemies of the empire as an attempt on Mustapha’s part to outshine his father. In consequence, the father revokes the banishment decision, which he took earlier, and decrees Mustapha’s death on grounds of treason, that his son is setting the scene for untimely succession. So it is only when Mustapha’s death is decreed that he resigns his love for the Hungarian Queen for the sake of his brother Zagner: “I shall rejoice, When I am thither gone,” Muatapha pathetically says to Zagner, “That you possess my Mistress, and my throne”<sup>(28)</sup>. Thus, death is portrayed as the only force that can resolve the conflict between the two rivals, an indication that jealousy is so an overwhelming passion that even the bond of brotherhood and friendship

combined cannot withstand. Such a notion is actually supported by some modern writers who think that jealousy is one of the strongest among the human passions.

It is apparent that we cannot interpret the nobility and rationality bestowed on Zagner and Mustapha in view of Said's premise. Zagner and Mustapha are too far from the stereotypical image of the Eastern man that prevailed in Western writings before the Restoration. Viewing the East here as Boyle's means to address English domestic problems emerges as the more plausible interpretation of the play. Even when we take the play solely as a depiction of the East, it does not, after all, draw a totally negative picture of the East. Like the Hungarian Queen, the major Eastern characters (Mustapha, Zagner and even Solyman and Roxolana), as Alshetawi asserts, have their share of "virtue" and "honor"<sup>(29)</sup>. It is true that Solyman and Roxolana display unusual cruelty towards Mustapha, but it is also true that they, by their integrity, gain the trust and admiration of the Hungarian Queen. After all, they are human beings capable of both good and evil.

If Boyle, in *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1665), shows that the potential evils of jealousy can be mitigated by rational discourse, Dryden, in *The Conquest of Granada* (1670-71), shows that these evils triumph completely when this rationality is absent. Because Almahide does not display any signs of unfaithfulness, Boabdelin, her irrational fiancé, pours his jealousy-fueled anger on his rival Almanzor, an outsider who sees himself, to use Anne Barbeau's words, as "an earthly god"<sup>(30)</sup> and thus does not hide his admiration for Almahide. Surprisingly, Boabdelin thinks himself merciful when he does not kill Almanzor and is satisfied with his banishment: "take it as a grace / Thou liv'st, and art but banish'd from the place"<sup>(31)</sup>. He decrees the banishment of his rival to appease his anger, paying no attention to the interests of his people who see in Almanzor their sole hope to defeat the Spaniards and rescue the city. However, when Almanzor says that Almahide must accompany him if he is to leave, King Boabdelin immediately orders his guards to "kill the Traytour"<sup>(32)</sup>. It is interesting that Boabdelin labels Almanzor a traitor even though he could never restore his throne without Almanzor, who alone has defeated the usurper (Boabdelin's brother) and his supporters. Dryden here shows how an irrational jealous person could take fatal decisions and expose the lives of others to real dangers because he is blinded by jealousy.

Almahide, however, remains safe from the anger of Boabdelin only for a short period of time. Stricken by jealousy, Boabdelin—who by now has become her husband—accuses her of infidelity for obeying his demand to "call *Almanzor* back"<sup>(33)</sup> to defend Granada against the Spaniards, who relentlessly

press to make the besieged city surrender. He claims that her “too quick consent to [Almanzor’s] repeal” proves that his “jealousie had but too just a ground”<sup>(34)</sup>. In other words, he reveals that he has always suspected her infidelity but remained silent because he could not have anything against her, and now, according to him, he has disclosed what she has been careful to hide. He is irrational enough to think that she should have disobeyed him to show that she is more faithful than obedient to him: “You should have lov’d me more then to obey”<sup>(35)</sup>. Thinking that she has pleased her husband by her willingness to help, Almahide is baffled by his violent reaction and the twisted logic that he uses to prove her unchaste. He lashes out at her, thinking that he has proved what he has for long suspected. What Boabdelin does in this incident is to act out strong residual anger, generated by jealousy, at his wife. His irrationality becomes more evident when he decides not to call back Almanzor even if such a decision would lead to the collapse of his kingdom; he says, “Let my crown go; he never shall return”<sup>(36)</sup>.

Dryden goes a step further and discloses a more mortifying face of jealousy, the murderous intent of the jealous person. An irrational jealous person, Dryden suggests, is capable of murdering his / her spouse, for uncontrolled jealousy turns the jealous spouse, as Boabdelin admits, into a “Monster.” Lyndaraxa’s fabricated story against Almahide (that she had sexual intercourse with Abdelmelech) makes Boabdelin declare not only Almahide but all women “ingrateful and faithless”<sup>(37)</sup>. It is not surprising, though alarming, that Boabdelin, overwhelmed by jealousy, does not investigate the credibility of the story nor does he ask to hear Almahide’s response to this accusation. Instead, he demands that she be punished according to the law, “which dooms Adultresses to die”<sup>(38)</sup>. Even though Almahide is not stoned to death— because Zulema confesses, while dying, that “the Queen is innocent”<sup>(39)</sup>— the audience could hardly overcome the horror produced in them from the notion that a jealous husband could accept or plan for the death of his spouse to quench the anger generated by jealousy. Realizing that she was very close to paying with her life for the jealousy of her husband, Almahide abandons Boabdelin. Dryden, as Geoffrey Marshall maintains, took Restoration drama “seriously and assumed that the audience did so as well”<sup>(40)</sup>. Thus, the message here is salient, that irrational jealous people are blind and that they might plan for the murder of their spouses or partners.

Being written in a period renowned for its serious political plays (such as John Crowne’s *The Misery of Civil-War* (1672), Nathaniel Lee’s *The Massacre of Paris* (1679-81), Thomas Southerne’s *The Loyal Brother* (1682) etc.), *The Conquest of Granada* (1670-71) has also its own political connotations, which

make it, in its larger design, a comment on the different aspects of English life in the Restoration. Like Dryden's other heroic plays, it is, in the main, a celebration of "princely grandeur"<sup>(41)</sup>, and it ends "as a celebration of stable monarchy"<sup>(42)</sup>. This presentation of monarchy must have been designed to serve Charles II who was facing problems with the anti-monarchy factions in England. In another dimension, the play echoes the factious religious disputes of the time between the English Catholics and Protestants, which culminated between 1678 and 1682 in what came to be known as the Popish Plot. Running parallel to the religious discord was the relentless political strife between the Tories and the Whigs, manifesting itself, sometimes, in violent confrontations, at times when France posed a real threat to English interests.

From this standpoint the French correlate to the Spaniards in the play, whom Boabdelin, the King of Granada, describes, in his endeavor to bring peace between the two feuding tribes, the Zegrays and the Abencerrages, as the common foe against whom all the Granadans should unite. Talking about the intensity of the political and religious conflicts in England during the Restoration and the eighteenth century, Roy Porter points out that "Whig and Tory, Low and High Church ... tore at each other's throats like fighting cocks"<sup>(43)</sup>. Tim Harris refers to the depth of the conflict between the English Protestants and English Catholics when he writes, "The 1670s and 1680s were dominated by anxieties about popery: a Catholic presence at Court... the prospect of a Catholic succession"<sup>(44)</sup>. Anne Barbeau (1970) reads "Puritanism" in the Zegrays and reads English "Papist sympathizers" in the Abencerrages because the Zegrays' "championship of Islam," according to her, "makes them hate the Abencerrages"<sup>(45)</sup>, who are in favor of the Western culture. Accordingly, it is not going too far to say that these areas of national worries are reflected in the play in the competition between the Zegrays and the Abencerrages, the two major tribes of Granada. The anxieties of the Zegrays spring from the concern that the Abencerrages will overpower them, even though the Zegrays outnumber them, when King Boabdelin marries Almahide, an Abencerrago. Obviously, this aspect of the play mirrors the English Protestants' worries regarding Charles II's Catholic sympathies, stemming from the fact that he was married to the Catholic Catherine of Barazanga, the daughter of John IV, the king of Portugal. Moreover, picturing Almanzor, as the one-man army comes to fulfill an English need, for, as Bonamy Dobree asserts, "The age, then, was hungry for heroism, and feeling itself baulked of it in real life was happy to find it in its art"<sup>(46)</sup>. In consequence, to see the treatment of jealousy in the play as an English issue rather than an Eastern one is in line with the other English correlations seen by critics in the play.

In the same way that Dryden warns his audience of irrational jealousy in *The Conquest of Granada* (1670-1), so Mary Pix warns her audience in *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks* (1696), in which, however, she focuses on women instead of men. Irrational jealous women, Pix suggests in her play, could be as brutal as irrational jealous men, a notion that twentieth-century feminist critics, who tend to be dismissive of Pix being a conservative playwright, must have sneered at. But Pix, as Jacqueline Pearson, points out, adopted “a gender-neutral way”<sup>(47)</sup> in her plays. Sheker Para, Sultan Ibrahim’s favorite concubine, takes pleasure in ruining Morena, her rival for Amurat’s love. The one “thousand burning glances” and the “sweet herbs, and Amorous flowers”<sup>(48)</sup> that she sent to him were not enough to persuade him to shift his love to her. As a consequence of his indifference to her love and of his loyalty to Morena, Sheker Para transforms into a monster, a heartless woman who, fueled by jealousy, is thirsty to destroy Morena as well as Amurat in the most brutal way.

Knowing the Sultan’s “sickly appetite” for women, Sheker Para cunningly praises the beauty of her rival before the Sultan, saying to him that Morena has a “Lovely Face [that] strikes Envy dumb.” To make sure that his sexual appetite is set on fire, she adds:

- - - such a Creature  
My astonished Eyes ne’er view’d before.  
A skin clear like the upper Region,  
- - - - -  
Her large Black Eyes shot Rays intermingl’d  
With becoming Pride, and taking Sweetness.<sup>(49)</sup>

The burning fire of her jealousy is only partly appeased when the “Lustful Sultan,” after seeing Morena, decides to marry her against her will and the will of her father. Bringing Morena by force to the palace, her appeals to the Sultan to “spare” her only add to the joy of Sheker Para. She is also happy to see her “Cursed Rival”, as she calls her, cutting her hands with the Sultan’s “Scimiter” to prevent “The cruel Rape” from taking place. But when she notices that the Sultan is “confounded” and might spare Morena after she reminds him of a big favor her father had done for him, “the cruel creature” immediately and secretly asks the Vizier to encourage the Sultan to proceed in his plan. Her victory is accomplished when Morena, crying for help, is dragged by the slaves to “the royal bed”; she, joyous and triumphant, watches how her rival is being taken to her ruin. It is evident that, in this regard, Mrs. Pix tries to bring attention to a certain type of jealous women who turn into diabolical creatures and enjoy the destruction of their rivals, even when their rivals are weak and amiable.

Even though the play as a whole can be seen as standing in the tradition of the Western depiction of the Orient as the domain of despotism and uncurbed sexuality, it has likewise its significance, as Marsden remarks, on the English “political and nationalistic moral”<sup>(50)</sup> level. The absolute authority of Sultan Ibrahim and the helplessness of Morena, according to Marsden, stand as an allusion to the absolutism of the English man and the helplessness of the English woman, in general, and the weakness of the English female writer in the male dominated English literary market, in particular. Marsden grounds this conclusion on Pix’s prologue to the play in which she depicts herself as a weak female playwright who admits her inferiority to male playwrights and asks for mercy from her audience rather than justice from critics:

I’m sent, by heaven knows what to say,  
Or bow to excuse a dull Heroick Play;  
Here’s no poignant repartee, nor taking Railley,  
- - - - -  
The Pit our Author dreads as too severe,  
The ablest Writers scarce find Mercy there.<sup>(51)</sup>

Moreover, it is worth noting that the dismal reputation of Charles II was significantly due to his indulgence in numerous extra-marital affairs, an indulgence the English lords themselves contributed to. Andrew Swatland, in *The House of Lords in the Reign of Charles II*, remarks that “A prominent feature of parliamentary politics in the early modern period was the close relationship between the Monarchy and the House of Lords”<sup>(52)</sup>, and Kristina Straub asserts that the Lords, for their political ends, presented Charles II (whom they knew did not pay attention to social standards when it came to sexual pleasures) with mistresses, especially actresses, such as Miss Davis and Eleanor Gwinn<sup>(53)</sup>. She also points out that actresses from the lower classes— such as Ann Oldfield, Ann Bracegirdle, and Catherine Clive— were known for the English people as the “toys and pets” of aristocratic lovers<sup>(54)</sup>. Hence, the mistresses (concubines) that Sultan Ibrahim keeps and Sheker Para’s commendation of Morena to the Sultan can safely be interpreted as a comment on the loose morality of the English elite, in general, and of Charles II, in particular.

After all, not all the characters in the play are like the Sultan and his assistants even though the characters are entirely Easterners and are expected, from Said’s point of view, to be portrayed in a negative way. The number of good characters in the play is equal to, if not greater than, that of the cruel ones. Morena is depicted as a virtuous young woman who is dutiful to her father and

faithful to her fiancé. The wealth and power of the Sultan do not tempt her to forsake Amurat, the general in the Sultan's army. Her father, the Mufti, does not try to dissuade her (when she rejects the Sultan) to preserve his position or gain more privileges. On the contrary, he, though an old man, supports his daughter and tries to protect her in every possible way, and when the tyrant Sultan insists on having her, he courageously says to him, "My Daughter is no Slave, and our holy Law / Forbids that you should force the free"<sup>(55)</sup>. Amurat and his friend Solyman vow to revenge the injured honor of Morena; they with their "select troops" storm the palace and kill the Sultan and his supporters, and Solyman, at the end of this revolt against tyranny, dies sacrificing his life for the sake of Morena and justice. In other words, the play is more about the strife between good and evil than about the East per se. The East is used as a vehicle to carry the various notions Pix wanted to convey to the English audience. Thus, Pix's employment of Eastern jealousy to warn the English audience of the evils of jealousy, particularly when the jealous person is base and irrational, becomes clear.

In William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1661), the technique operates through the establishment of a binary opposition— rational versus irrational. Alphonso, the rational jealous husband of Ianthe, is juxtaposed with Roxolana, the irrational jealous wife of Sultan Solyman. Ianthe does not conceal her respect for Solyman from her husband Alphonso. Describing Solyman as "generous and true"<sup>(56)</sup>, her defense of him against the hostility of her husband arouses the suspicion and consequently the jealousy of the husband. Davenant provides a detailed portrayal of the birth and development of jealousy in Alphonso. Ianthe's praise of Solyman's civility increases Alphonso's stubbornness and insistence on not accepting Solyman's friendship. As a rational person who has not noticed any change in his wife's love for him, Alphonso chides himself severely for insinuating to his wife that she might have compromised her chastity in her relationship with Solyman: "Wicked tongue, what hast thou said? / What horrid falsehood from thee fled?"<sup>(57)</sup>. When he realizes that his hostility to Solyman is actually fueled by jealousy and not by his sympathy with the Rhodians (as he tried to convince Ianthe and himself was true) he laments being plagued with such a shameful passion and wishes that he had "an asp" inside him instead of jealousy.

To present Alphonso as a role model for those who become hostages to jealousy, Davenant does not allow him to lose control or resort to violence even after Ianthe abandons him and insists on maintaining her friendship with Solyman. His reaction is rational, or as modern readers might call it, civilized; he simply stops showing interest in her. For example, when she is wounded, he is satisfied by not feeling pity for her, saying to himself, "Let pity fly, fly far

from the opprest, / Since she removes her lodging from my breast<sup>(58)</sup>; no remarks of joy in her suffering are uttered.

Parallel to the rationality of Alphonso runs the irrationality of Roxolana, the wife of Solyman. Roxolana, like Alphonso, interprets the relationship between Ianthe and her husband as immoral and thus views in Ianthe a rival. But unlike Alphonso, she does not make it a scruple to hide her jealousy or control it. On the contrary, her jealousy turns her into a belligerent person. Solyman becomes to her an enemy who should be removed and replaced by her son. Solyman says with bitterness to his Rustan, his Pasha, that his wife

To get unjust succession for her son,  
Has put in doubt  
Or blotted out  
All the heroic story of my life.<sup>(59)</sup>

Her servants, upon her orders, are turned to spies on her husband, and she does not hesitate to show her joy upon his loss in one of the battles: “Your looks express a triumph at our loss<sup>(60)</sup>”, Solyman disappointedly says to his irrational wife. Furthermore, her hatred of her rival Ianthe, pushes her to attempt to kill her even though Solyman has threatened in turn to kill her if she harms Ianthe; the second scene of the fourth act opens with Roxolana holding a “handkerchief in her left hand and a poniard in her right<sup>(61)</sup>” standing close to the sleeping Ianthe and contemplating planting the poniard in her heart:

But how can I my station keep  
Till thou, Ianthe, art by death remov'd?  
To die, when thou art young;  
Is but too soon to fall asleep  
And lye asleep too long.<sup>(62)</sup>

Yet Roxolana's jealousy does not make her lose her wits entirely; she does not murder her rival even though she comes very close to doing it. But the scene must have brought the spectators to the edges of their seats in outrage. This reaction is exactly Davenant's goal, i.e. to tell his audience that a jealous person in a desperate moment is very close to committing murder.

The juxtaposition of the two couples stands as a clear message to the English audience that excessive jealousy can lead to fatal mistakes and that self-control is the right antidote for it. The message that Davenant leaves his audience is that to have a jealousy free society, a society that is guarded by

virtue, should be the ultimate goal of every English citizen. Solyman's final words, by which Davenant ends the play, reinforce this message:

From lover's beds, and thrones of monarchs fly  
Thou ever waking madness, jealousy.  
And still, to nature's darling, love  
(That all the world may happy prove)  
Let giant-virtue be the watchful guard,  
Honour, the cautious guide, and sure reward.<sup>(63)</sup>

Davenant uses the chorus of wives to assert the negative meaning of jealousy. The first wife views it as "love that has lost it self in a mist." Another wife says, "'Tis love being frighted out of its wits." But the third one defines it as sickness when she says "'Tis love that has a fever got; / Love that is violently hot; / But troubled with cold and trembling fits"<sup>(64)</sup>. When Alphonso starts to suspect Ianthe, she immediately says to him, again identifying jealousy with sickness, "sure you are sick"<sup>(65)</sup>. Obviously, Davenant deals with jealousy as sickness to make his audience abhor and then abandon.

Aaron Hill in his play *Zara* (1757), an adaptation of Voltaire's *Zaïre*, takes jealousy to the extreme; Osman, the Arab king of Jerusalem, blinded by jealousy, stabs Zara, whom he loves truly, to death. To show the shocking transformation that jealousy could cause to man. Hill, contrary to the archetypal image of the Eastern man, presents Osman as a refined young king. So, to comfort his Western beloved Zara and make himself more appealing to her, Osman is very careful to introduce himself as a young man who is in favor of Western culture. He declares that he rejects all the Eastern customs and traditions because they are not in harmony with his refined taste; the "taste," "laws," "lives," "customs," and "loves"<sup>(66)</sup> of his ancestors, he tells Zara, do not delight him. On her part, Zara, though apprehensive about the environment she will be living in, returns his love and submits to his "pure and honest flame"<sup>(67)</sup>.

But jealousy gradually overcomes the true lover and destroys his precious love. He notices that Nerestan, one of the Christian captives, sighs, in the presence of Zara, before Nerestan leaves to the West to collect the ransom of the Christian captives. In the beginning, Osman desperately tries to deny that he is jealous even though the symptoms of his jealousy have become conspicuous to his minister Orasmin:

Jealousy, said'st thou? I disdain it:-- No:  
Distrust is poor, and a misplac'd suspicion  
Invites, and justifies, the falsehood fear'd.<sup>(68)</sup>

This denial on Osman's part is nothing but a flimsy mask behind which he tries to hide the fire of jealousy that has started to burn in his heart. At this point, he suffers what Alphonso suffers in *The Siege of Rhodes* (1661), the shame of being jealous. He feels ashamed when he recognizes that he is not what he tries to appear to be. But the absence of Nerestan cools down the fire of jealousy, albeit temporarily. Interestingly enough, Nerestan becomes the captive whom Osman wishes not to return to the East. Nevertheless, after the return of Nerestan, Osman, clinging to his state of denial and contrary to the strict tradition of the Eastern harem, allows Nerestan to meet Zara in the harem. He explains to Orasmin, who is stunned by such a violation, that "Restraint was never made for those, we love;" furthermore, he "Disclaims ...Asian jealousy"<sup>(69)</sup>. Osman here seems to be aware of his jealousy, but he acts as if he tries to defy it, to encounter it and defeat it privately. But his jealousy increases as Nerestan "Dares... to press a second interview"<sup>(70)</sup>. At this stage, like Dryden's Almanzor, he directs his anger towards Nerestan, his "vile rival," preferring not to suspect his beloved and reassures himself by saying that her virtue makes her beyond suspicion. It is a fruitless endeavor to protect his beloved from the rage that boils inside him because of his jealousy.

Zara enters the zone of his anger, however, when she asks to postpone the marriage ceremony. Because of his jealousy, he views her request a sign of unfaithfulness. The frail mask of trust he wears to hide his jealousy is shattered into pieces. The terror of Osman's anger "pierces" to Zara's soul. Misunderstanding the whole relationship between Zara and Nerestan and becoming more violent than Dryden's Boabdline, Osman stabs the one he loved truly, saying to her "This [dagger] to thy heart"<sup>(71)</sup>. To show him how blind he has been, Hill has Nerestan arrive a few minutes after the murder to tell the jealousy-blind Osman that Zara is his sister. Thus, like Shakespeare's Othello, the darkness in which Osman commits his crime becomes a symbol of the darkness of his mind, darkness brought about by jealousy.

Undoubtedly, to interpret the portrayal of Eastern jealousy in these plays as actual representations of the nature of jealousy in the East (as some English audiences might do) or as an inaccurate representation or intentional distortion (as many Easterners usually do) would undermine the achievement of the plays and limit them to a very narrow interpretation that definitely would not justify the degree of success the plays achieved on the stage. The more plausible interpretation is that they are examples of coded discourse used by the playwrights to alert the English people to the potential evils of jealousy since its alarming manifestations had begun to appear in English society. Jealousy, particularly in the well-to-do married Englishman, took a more complicated

dimension because he connected it not only to personal injuries but also to loss of family property. Such a husband would be highly sensitive to notions of infidelity because he would not, in Porter's words, "wish to bequeath his property to a son unless he is sure of paternity"<sup>(72)</sup>. However, whether in men or in women, jealousy is depicted in the Restoration and the eighteenth-century drama as an evil passion, and the primary motive of English playwrights for portraying the supposedly more volatile Eastern jealousy was to create an object lesson for their own countrymen—a lesson their audiences could learn from while at the same time conveniently disassociate or, at least, distance themselves from.

## الخطاب "المشفر": الشرق على المسرح البريطاني في فترة عودة الملكية والقرن الثامن عشر

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### ملخص

يتفق معظم الشرقيين على أن صورة الشرق تعرضت للتشويه خلال القرون الماضية في كتابات الغربيين المختلفة. يرى الشرقيون أن الكتاب الغربيين في غالب الأحيان يتعمدون تشويه صورة الشرق وذلك بالمبالغة والتعميم والاختلاق أحياناً عند نقل العادات الشرقية والمشكلات الاجتماعية والسياسية أو تصويرها في المجتمع الشرقي. أحد مظاهر هذا التشويه هو تصوير الغيرة الشرقية كعاطفة شرسة استحوذت خارجة عن سيطرة الفرد ينجم عنها الكثير من العنف والظلم. والتركيز على الغيرة الشرقية يبدو واضحاً في المسرحيات الانكليزية التي كتبت في فترة عودة الملكية (the Restoration) 1660-1700 والقرن الثامن عشر.

ولكن الدارس للأدب البريطاني يجد أن ظاهرة الغيرة حاضرة أيضاً في كثير من الأعمال التي تصور الحياة البريطانية في الحقبة ذاتها. هذا يدل على أن الغيرة كمشكلة اجتماعية كانت تنامي في المجتمع البريطاني نفسه حتى أصبحت محل اهتمام الكتاب، وبشكل خاص كتاب المسرح. وسبب تنامي هذه المشكلة يعود لرياح التغيير التي كانت تعصف ببريطانيا حيث كان من مظاهرها التحرر من القيود الدينية والاجتماعية واستقلالية الفرد الفكرية والاقتصادية.

لذلك فإن ما يراه الشرقيون تشويهاً للغيرة الشرقية في مسرحيات هذه الحقبة هو في حقيقة الأمر محاكاة، ولكن بخطاب "مشفر"، لمشكلة اجتماعية بريطانية، وليس تشويهاً متعمداً لصورة الشرق. فقد استفاد الكتاب البريطانيون من الفكرة الموجودة عند جمهورهم من أن الغيرة الشرقية تتسم بالعنف واللاعقلانية لتحذير البريطانيين من أنهم يتجهون نحو العنف واللاعقلانية باستمرارهم للغيرة ووقوعهم في شراكها. بالطبع هذه القراءة المختلفة لتلك المسرحيات لا تنكر أو تقلل من الآثار السلبية لتلك المسرحيات على صورة الشرق، ولكنها تبين وجهاً آخر وهدفاً مختلفاً لهذه المسرحيات.

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### Notes

- (1) Karen Dubrin, "On Sexual Jealousy", p. 38.
- (2) Ibid, p. 40
- (3) William Davenant, *The Siege of Rhodes*, p. 288
- (4) Ibid, p. 284.
- (5) Colley Cibber, *The Careless Husband*, p. 414.
- (6) Aaron Hill, *Zara*, p. 39.
- (7) Roy Porter, *English Society in Eighteenth Century*, p. 278.
- (8) William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, p. 95.
- (9) George Coleman, *The Jealous Wife*, p. 675.
- (10) Richard Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*, p. 845.
- (11) William Congreve, *The Way of the World*, p. 332.
- (12) Ibid, p. 318.
- (13) George Etherege, *The Man of Mode*, p. 168.
- (14) Ibid, p. 165.
- (15) Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 6.
- (16) Mahmoud Alshetawi, "A Study of Islam in Three Heroic Plays of the Restoration Period", p. 5.
- (17) Roger Boyle, *The Tragedy of Mustapha*, p. 10.
- (18) Ibid, p. 9.
- (19) Cecil V. Deane, *Dramatic Theory and the Rhymed Heroic Play*, p. 193.
- (20) Roger Boyle, *The Tragedy of Mustapha*, p. 37.
- (21) Ibid, p. 37.
- (22) Ibid, p. 37.

- (23) Ibid, p.44.
- (24) Ibid, p.44.
- (25) Boname Dobree, *Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720*, p. 22.
- (26) Cecil V. Deane, *Dramatic Theory and the Rhymed Heroic Play*, p.193
- (27) Roger Boyle, *The Tragedy of Mustapha*, p. 49.
- (28) Ibid, p. 72.
- (29) Mahmoud Alshetawi, "A Study of Islam in Three Heroic Plays of the Restoration Period", p.18-21.
- (30) Anne T. Barbeau, *The Intellectual Design of John Dryden's Heroic Plays*, p. 115
- (31) John Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada*, Part 1. p. 80.
- (32) Ibid, p. 80.
- (33) Ibid, p. 101.
- (34) Ibid, p. 101.
- (35) Ibid, p. 102.
- (36) Ibid, p. 102.
- (37) Ibid, p. 146.
- (38) Ibid, p. 147.
- (39) Ibid, p. 151
- (40) Jean I. Marsden, "Mary Pix's Ibrahim: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright", p. 5.
- (41) John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, p. 14.
- (42) Alice Brown, *The Eighteenth-Century Feminist Mind*, p. 16.
- (43) Roy Porter, *English Society in Eighteenth Century*, 121.
- (44) Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration Until the Exclusion Crisis*, p. 2.
- (45) Anne T. Barbeau, *The Intellectual Design of John Dryden's Heroic Plays*, p. 107.
- (46) Boname Dobree, *Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720*, p. 16.
- (47) Jean I. Marsden, "Mary Pix's Ibrahim: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright", p. 1.
- (48) Mrs. Mary Pix, *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour [sic] of the Turks*, p. 5.
- (49) Ibid, p. 18.
- (50) Jean I. Marsden, "Mary Pix's Ibrahim: The Woman Writer as Commercial Playwright", p. 3.

- (51) Ibid, Prologue.
- (52) Andrew Swatland. *The House of Lords in the Reign of Charles II*, p. 93.
- (53) Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*, p. 61.
- (54) Ibid, 91.
- (55) Mrs. Mary Pix, *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour [sic] of the Turks*, p. 17.
- (56) William Davenant, *The Siege of Rhodes*, p. 284.
- (57) Ibid, p. 284.
- (58) Ibid, p. 292.
- (59) Ibid, p. 326.
- (60) Ibid, p. 298.
- (61) Ibid, p. 340.
- (62) Ibid, p. 340.
- (63) Ibid, p. 364.
- (64) Ibid, p. 288.
- (65) Ibid, p. 284.
- (66) Aaron Hill, *Zara*, p. 35,36.
- (67) Ibid, p. 33.
- (68) Ibid, p. 38.
- (69) Ibid, p. 51.
- (70) Ibid, p. 58.
- (71) Ibid, p. 77.
- (72) Roy Porter, *English Society in Eighteenth Century*, p. 39.

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